



I must admit, there are only two instances when I feel the need to eat out in Victoria. First as a last bite before catching the Gatwick Express. And second, when I have arrived back from somewhere and desperately dived into the first restaurant I could find – because the food had been so bad in the country I had just returned from. I was surprised, therefore to discover that Wilton Street, five minutes away from the station, is buzzing with cafes and restaurants. Kazan, which opened here in 2001 has been forging a reputation among locals. It offers a modern twist on Ottoman cuisine in sumptuous surroundings. Unlike the traditional Turkish restaurants in North London, where you are likely to find open grills, or ocakbasis, at Kazan it's a more stylish affair.

Contemporary, ethnic furnishings and dimmed lighting create a warm, comfortable atmosphere. It's laid back nature is reflected in the menu as well, with lots of mezze dishes for social stick-your-hand-in dining. We started with a brilliant *tabouleh*, a parsley based salad. The *Borek*, a samosa-like pastry filled with feta cheese and spinach, was delightfully crisp. The *basturma*, spicey Turkish sausage, was so good that I was close to ordering a second plate. The *Kadinbudu kofte*, lamb kebabs shaped like ladies' thighs, had subtle flavours; while the sardines, stuffed with a garlic sauce and wrapped in vine leaves, was the pick of the starters, with its complex mix of flavours.

For the mains, the monkfish and prawn kebab was well executed. The prawns were plentiful and the taste subtle enough not to be overpowered by the meaty monkfish, which was nicely cooked. I was also happy to see a generous amount of green salad on my plate. My dining partner opted for the *hellimi* – a cheese-based kebab – served with mixed vegetables and pitta bread and rice. Again, a memorable dish that was cooked well and tasty.

The service is friendly and with cuisine as confident and tasty as this, it's a good enough reason to pay Kazan – and this part of London – a visit.