THE CHEFS

IN THE TURKISH MICHELIN GREEN STARRED RESTAURANTS:

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN SUSTAINABLE GASTRONOMY

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

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Date …….....

ABSTRACT

The Chefs in the Turkish Michelin Green-Starred Restaurants:

Challenges and Opportunities in Sustainable Gastronomy

This thesis examines how chefs at Michelin Green Star (MGS)-awarded restaurants in Türkiye interpret and implement sustainability. Although MGS is presented as recognition of sustainable gastronomy, its criteria remain undisclosed. Based on interviews with chefs at all Turkish MGS-awarded restaurants from 2023 to 2025, field observation, and analysis of Michelin's public communications, the study shows that most chefs had not aimed for the MGS award before receiving it and did not fully understand the criteria even afterwards; their sustainability efforts — local sourcing, circular systems, labor ethics, and cultural preservation — often predated it. The central finding, theorized as *the Michelin Conflict*, is that symbolic validation privileges environmental metrics while sidelining social, cultural, and labor dimensions. Key challenges include limited access to certified ingredients, poor recycling infrastructure, and exploitative labor conditions; opportunities appear in waste-reduction innovations, strengthened local networks, and emergent social claims beyond legal frameworks. The thesis introduces *SAGE AURA*, a reflexive concept on algorithmic influence in qualitative research. It concludes that sustainable gastronomy resists reduction to checklists or opaque awards and thrives where chefs co-construct meaning with their communities and ecosystems, contributing to debates on sustainability and recognition in global gastronomy.

ÖZET

Michelin Yeşil Yıldızlı Türkiye Restoranlarının Şefleri: Sürdürülebilir Gastronomide Zorluklar ve Fırsatlar

Bu tez, Türkiye'de Michelin Green Star (MGS) ile ödüllendirilen şeflerin sürdürülebilirliği nasıl yorumladıklarını ve uyguladıklarını incelemektedir. MGS, sürdürülebilir gastronomiyi ödüllendirmektedir; ancak kriterleri açıklanmamıştır. 2023–2025 arasında Türkiye'deki tüm MGS ödüllü girişimlerin şefleriyle yapılan görüşmeler, saha gözlemleri ve Michelin'in kamuya açık iletişimlerinin analizi, çoğu şefin ödülü almadan önce MGS ödülünü hedeflemediklerini ve ödül sonrası da bu kriterleri tam olarak bilmediklerini; yerellik, döngüsel sistemler, emek etiği ve kültürel koruma odaklı sürdürülebilirlik çabalarının ödülden önce de mevcut olduğunu göstermektedir. *Michelin Çelişkisi*, sembolik onayın çevresel ölçütlere öncelik verip emek boyutu gibi toplumsal ve kültürel boyutların geri planda kaldığı durumu ifade etmektedir. Başlıca zorluklar sertifikalı gıdaya erişim eksikliği, yetersiz geri dönüşüm altyapısı ve istismara açık çalışma koşulları; fırsatlar ise atık azaltma yenilikleri, yerel ağların güçlenmesi ve yasal sınırları aşan sosyal taleplerdir. Tez ayrıca nitel araştırmada algoritmik etkileri ele alan *SAGE AURA* kavramını tanıtmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, sürdürülebilir gastronomi kontrol listelerine veya kapalı ödül sistemlerine indirgenememektedir; şeflerin toplulukları ve ekosistemleriyle birlikte anlam ürettiği alanlarda gelişmekte ve bu çalışma sürdürülebilirlik ile tanınma üzerine küresel tartışmalara katkıda bulunmaktadır.

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This thesis arose from a deceptively simple question: What does sustainability mean to those who live it every day in the kitchen? In early 2025, I carried out fieldwork across Türkiye, conducting in-depth interviews with chefs from all restaurants awarded the Michelin Green Star. Without their generosity in sharing time, stories, and reflections, this research would have been impossible.

I am grateful to my colleagues and friends Alp Alpmen and İlker Karakılıç, who provided expertise and encouragement. Burak Varol supported me with MAXQDA training sessions. My thanks also go to the Boğaziçi University Library for ensuring access to essential resources, and to Professor Harp, whose book *Marketing Michelin: Advertising and Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* inspired this research and whose generosity in answering questions clarified important details.

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Finally, I thank Ada and Teo, whose presence has been my greatest source of resilience. It is to them — and to the memory of the children and women from the culinary world named on the following page — that I dedicate this work.

The very week I started contacting the chefs for this thesis in January 2025,

Mattia Ahmet Minguzzi

the beloved son of Chef Andrea Minguzzi,

was attacked in a most horrifying way at a marketplace,

just days after the Kartalkaya catastrophe, where three young ladies in culinary roles,

Eslem Uyanık
Esra Nazik
Şevval Şahin

lost their lives, along with 36 children who never returned to school in February:

Alya Altın, Mina Akişli, Vedia Nil Apak, Eren Bağcı,
Alican Boduroğlu, Elif Nas Boduroğlu,
Vedat Çetiz, Esat Çetiz, Sedat Çetiz,
Buse Dayı, Ela Dayı,
Ayşe Maya Doğan, Doğa Doğan, Lalin Doğan, Mavi Doğan,
Kemal Tokcan, Atlas Kaan Tokcan,
Ömür Kotan, Özüm Karataşlı, Oya Kanpolat,
Kerem Güngör, Pelin Güngör, Sümeyye Güner,
Bekir Sadık Gültekin, Muhammed Selim Gültekin, Yusuf Sinanettin Gültekin,
Dila İnal, Ela İnal,
Doruk Sarıtaş, Nehir Sarıtaş,
Pera Suyolcu, Alya Turan,
Demir Tüzgiray, Defne Tüzgiray,
Ala Dora Türkmen, Elif Derin Yalçın

Another lady chef lost her life due to male violence in September 2025:

Selin Angun

I wish we could have protected and sustained you all.

You will be remembered with profound love.

My commitment to honor your brief, beautiful presence will never fade.

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ABBREVIATIONS

(Please also see APPENDIX D for the Michelin Guide Distinctions)

Bib	Bibendum (The Michelin Man)
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
COVID-20	Coronavirus Disease 2020
MAXQDA	MAXQDA Analytics Pro 24.9
M1SR	Michelin One-Star-Restaurant
M2SR	Michelin Two-Star-Restaurant
M3SR	Michelin Three-Star-Restaurant
MAR	Michelin Awarded Restaurant
MBGR	Michelin Bib Gourmand Restaurant
MDG	Millenium Development Goal
MG	MICHELIN Guide
MGSR	Michelin Green Starred Restaurant
MGSRC	Michelin Green Starred Restaurant Chef
MSR	Michelin Starred Restaurant
RQ	Research Question
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
TMGSR	Turkish Michelin Green Starred Restaurant
TMGSRC	Turkish Michelin Green Starred Restaurant Chef
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

125 years ago, when The MICHELIN Guide (MG), also known as *Le Guide Rouge*, was first published in 1900, the total number of cars in France was not more than 3,000[1]. As a result, 3,500 copies of the Guide were more than sufficient. The primary aim behind this first edition was direct marketing: to motivate car owners to drive more, thereby increasing the wear on their tires. The Michelin brothers distributed this first copy for free to promote tire sales, marking the beginning of a journey that would eventually intertwine with the culinary world. The Guide was intended for motorists, not for food enthusiasts, as it is known today. Neither tourism nor sustainability featured in this early context. The goal was simple: increase tire sales by encouraging travel.

Thus, the Michelin Company not only reshaped the literal landscape of travel but also became an integral player in the world of fine dining, observing and influencing its evolution for over a century. Today, the Michelin Guide is arguably the most well-known restaurant rating system globally, continuing to influence the industry due to its extraordinary vision and flexibility— as demonstrated by the launch of the Michelin Green Star (MGS) in 2020 globally, and its subsequent introduction in Türkiye in 2022.

However, Michelin inspectors operate under strict confidentiality, and no publicly available, standardized criteria exist for obtaining a Michelin Star (MS), whether it be a traditional Michelin Star, a Michelin Green Star (MGS), or a

[1] Adapted from The Michelin Guide: A Historical Timeline (Michelin, n.d.), retrieved from https://guide.michelin.com/en/about-us

Michelin Bib Gourmand (MBG). In light of this opacity, asking Turkish Michelin Green Starred Restaurant Chefs (TMGSRCs) how they understand and practice sustainability may offer valuable insights. These insights can clarify shared values and operational practices, serving as a resource not only for food enthusiasts but also restaurateurs, policymakers, and sustainability advocates.

In this thesis, sustainability in gastronomy refers to the integration of environmental responsibility, social equity, and economic viability into food-related practices—ranging from sourcing and menu design to labor ethics and waste management. It emphasizes long-term resilience over short-term profit, and situates culinary decisions within broader ecological and societal systems.

1.1 Framing the problem: Sustainability recognition in fine dining

The emergence of sustainability as a core value in gastronomy has introduced a complex matrix of ethical, ecological, and institutional demands. Among the most prestigious symbols of sustainable excellence is the Michelin Green Star[2] (MGS), introduced by the Michelin Guide in 2020. This distinction purports to recognize restaurants and chefs with outstanding sustainable practices. Yet, the criteria underlying the Green Star remain largely opaque. Although the symbol carries institutional legitimacy, its evaluative mechanisms are not publicly detailed, rendering the system difficult to assess, compare, or emulate.

This ambiguity is intensified in regions where culinary traditions intersect with local sustainability practices—such as Türkiye. Since 2023, a small but symbolically important number of Turkish restaurants have been awarded the Green Star. However, as this research reveals, most of the chefs behind these establishments

[2] See GREY LITERATURE REFERENCES on page 131 for a complete list of Michelin-authored grey literature sources.

were unaware of the MGS criteria at the time they received the award. Their sustainability practices were already in place, informed by cultural traditions, personal ethics, seasonality, and circular use of resources. The Green Star, in their view, recognized what they were already doing. This disconnect raises a fundamental question: Can an institution truly evaluate sustainability if its criteria are unknown or irrelevant to those it recognizes?

This paradox forms the basis of what this thesis terms the *Michelin Conflict* — a disjunction between symbolic recognition and practical sustainability. It also sets the stage for a broader inquiry into the real-world conditions, challenges, and guiding principles that inform chefs' sustainable practices, regardless of Michelin's involvement.

1.2 Evolution of the research focus

Initially, this research aimed to examine how Turkish chefs pursued the Michelin Green Star through sustainability-oriented strategies. However, early interviews revealed that the participants had not aimed for the Green Star and were unfamiliar with the criteria used to award it. This unexpected finding necessitated a shift in focus—from a top-down evaluation of institutional frameworks to a bottom-up exploration of how chefs themselves understand, articulate, and operationalize sustainability.

This methodological pivot also raised a broader epistemological question: If sustainability is being practiced without reference to the frameworks that claim to define it, do those frameworks require reassessment? This question underscores this study's dual purpose: to contribute to current literature in sustainable gastronomy while also offering a critique of its institutional framing.

1.3 The research question & the conceptual model

This study is guided by the following research question:

What challenges and opportunities do Turkish Michelin Green Starred restaurant chefs encounter as they interpret and implement sustainability in practice? (Figure 1)

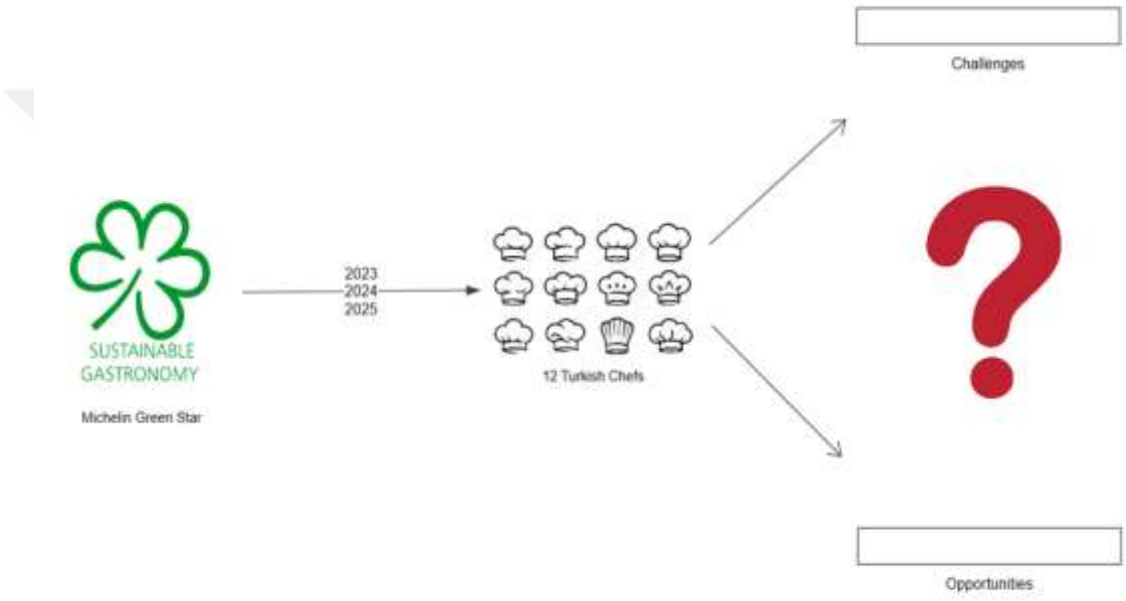


Figure 1. The original conceptual model

This question is not only timely but necessary. It invites reflection on how global sustainability frameworks intersect — or clash — with local practice. It opens space for chefs' voices to be heard directly, and for their lived experiences to shape how we understand what sustainability means in practice.

However, it should be kept in mind that Michelin distinctions, including the Green Star, are formally awarded to restaurants – or other culinary ventures such as *lokanta*s, farm kitchens, guest houses or *pansiyon*s – rather than to individual chefs.

Despite this, chefs often play a central and highly visible role in conceptualizing and implementing the sustainability practices that underpin these awards. For this reason, their insights remain essential to understanding how sustainability is interpreted, adapted, and practiced within the Michelin Green Star context.

1.4 Researcher statement of positionality and conflict of interest

I affirm that I hold no financial, professional, or personal affiliations with the Michelin Guide, its affiliated bodies, or any of the Michelin Green Star ventures or chefs referenced in this study. I have not dined at any of the restaurants awarded a Michelin Green Star in Türkiye, nor have I received any hospitality, sponsorship, or compensation of any kind from the participating establishments. This research was conducted independently, without institutional or commercial influence.

My engagement with the participants was guided by principles of anonymity, transparency, and respect for the complexity of their professional realities. The critiques developed in this thesis reflect solely the evidence gathered and do not represent personal judgment of any individual or institution. The purpose of this study is to contribute to a clearer and more critical understanding of sustainability in the context of fine dining — not to assign blame, but to expose contradiction where it exists.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This qualitative study investigates how chefs in Michelin Green Starred Restaurants (MGSRCs) in Türkiye perceive their contributions to sustainable gastronomy, and explore the key opportunities and challenges they have encountered in relation to the Michelin Green Star (MGS).

To ensure clarity for readers unfamiliar with the Michelin Guide's evaluation framework—including its inspection process and the criteria behind the Green Star distinction—a dedicated © MICHELIN reference section has been prepared listing relevant grey literature authored and published by Michelin on page 120. These non-peer-reviewed sources offer valuable insights into the Guide's internal discourse and serve to contextualize the chefs' perspectives explored in this study. Their inclusion also prevents duplication of publicly available information within the thesis, while maintaining academic transparency and proper attribution.

2.1 The Michelin Guide

Originally launched in 1900 by the Michelin Tire Company to encourage road travel and, indirectly, tire sales, the Michelin Guide has grown into a global authority on fine dining (Harp, 2001). Over the decades, it developed a reputation akin to a culinary "Bible" (Pearlman, 2024), reinforcing elite gastronomic standards, often from a Eurocentric perspective (Lane, 2013).

According to Warde (2012), food consumption serves as a social signal embedded within hierarchies of taste, class, and legitimacy. Within this framework, the Guide's iconic star system institutionalized culinary judgment, transforming

dining into a performative and aspirational act. By the post-war period, receiving a Michelin star signified more than quality—it denoted cultural prestige.

The Guide also contributed to constructing the idea of gastronomic tourism. Scholars such as Long (2022) and Ray (2024) note that the destination became the plate itself. The Guide reshaped the relationships between food, geography, and identity.

The star system, formalized in the 1930s, reduced the complexity of culinary assessment into one-, two-, or three-star rankings, functioning as a portable measure of taste (Jones & Zeitlin, 2008). This helped chefs position themselves not merely as artisans, but as cultural producers (Ray, 2024).

Importantly, the Guide transformed the identity of the chef. As Batat (2020a) notes, the chef evolved from craftsman to curator of experience, increasingly seen as a visionary and storyteller. However, this prestige has not come without criticism. The Guide's global expansion has been critiqued for promoting an unacknowledged French-centric value system under the guise of universalism (Batat, 2020a, p. 64). This tension is particularly relevant when considering the perspectives of chefs outside Western Europe, such as those in Türkiye.

Building on this institutional framing, the next section turns to the Michelin Green Star—an addition that shifts the Guide's focus from culinary excellence to environmental and ethical values.

2.2 The Michelin Green Star

In response to growing ecological and ethical concerns, the Michelin Guide introduced the Green Star in 2020 to recognize restaurants with exemplary sustainable practices. Unlike the quality-focused star system, the Green Star

emphasizes local sourcing, waste reduction, biodiversity, and community engagement (Michelin, 2021). Its introduction marked a shift: sustainability became central to culinary prestige.

López Ganem and Kennedy (2024) argue that sustainability is now an essential aspect of culinary identity. Batat (2020a, p. 69) reinforces this view, suggesting the Green Star reframes chefs as both artists and responsible societal actors. However, the sustainability infrastructure varies widely across national contexts (Ray, 2024; Pearson, 2022).

In emerging culinary scenes such as Türkiye, sustainability often reflects inherited or necessity-based practices rather than formal certification. Practices like cooking with seasonal ingredients or reducing waste have long existed but were not labeled as "sustainable." This thesis explores these bottom-up practices in relation to top-down recognition models.

To further unpack this relationship, the next section situates the Green Star within the broader discourse on global sustainability agendas.

2.3 From global goals to green stars: Framing sustainability in gastronomy

The foundational concept of sustainable development, first formalized in the Brundtland Report[3] (1987), emphasizes meeting present needs without compromising future generations. Global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) have since reinforced the need to assess sustainability through environmental, social, and economic lenses.

[3] World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). Our common future. Oxford University Press.

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, based on people, planet, and profit (Gopalakrishnan et al., 2012; Dao et al., 2011), remains a dominant model despite critiques of being too generic (Purvis et al., 2019). The TBL is relevant to evaluating sustainability in gastronomy, particularly luxury or fine dining contexts.

The Michelin Green Star aligns, at least rhetorically, with several SDGs—notably SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). The January 2021 Michelin Press Kit clarified that the Green Star is not a formal certification but a recognition of values such as waste reduction, ethical sourcing, and community engagement (Michelin, 2021).

While the Green Star engages with global sustainability rhetoric, the next section examines how chefs embody these values through practice.

2.4 The chef as ethical actor: Institutional framing meets practice

Chefs are increasingly seen as cultural and ethical influencers (Svejenova et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2023a). Many promote sustainability based on intrinsic motivation, rather than external awards (Batat, 2020a). The chefs interviewed in this study similarly emphasized continuity of values over external validation.

Pizzetti (2024) illustrates how chefs engage in sustainability through caring actions like composting or repurposing leftovers. Mrusek et al. (2021) link sustainability with organizational well-being, showing that value-driven leadership fosters both staff satisfaction and innovation.

Understanding chefs' motivations requires attention to local contexts and histories, which the next section explores through the lens of Turkish culinary heritage.

2.5 Local ıdentity, cultural heritage, and the Turkish context

Studies by Fusté-Forné (2023), Ray (2024), and Warde (2012) emphasize the role of terroir, cultural heritage, and regional identity in sustainability. In Türkiye, sustainability is often embedded in tradition. Practices like low-waste cooking and local sourcing predate formal sustainability discourse.

This thesis, therefore, positions sustainability as a locally embedded process—shaped by tradition, constraints, and cultural priorities. In emerging regions like Türkiye, sustainability is often practiced informally. Thus, this study adopts a qualitative, bottom-up approach, privileging chefs' interpretations over institutional narratives.

However, interpreting sustainability exclusively through lived experience does not negate the importance of evaluative frameworks. In contexts where symbolic recognition—such as the Michelin Green Star—rests on opaque standards, comparative examination of alternative certification systems becomes essential for understanding what benchmarks, if any, guide sustainability judgments in practice.

To further contextualize Michelin's approach, the following section compares the Green Star to other sustainability assessment systems.

2.6 Comparative evaluation systems in sustainable gastronomy

Several certification systems offer structured assessments of sustainability. The Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA) uses the Food Made Good framework, while ECOCOOK® applies science-based metrics to evaluate environmental, social, and economic impact. Though Relais & Châteaux and Gault & Millau are not certification bodies, they promote aligned values such as biodiversity, culinary ethics, and regionalism.

Several of the Turkish MGSRs featured in this study have also received recognition from SRA and ECOCOOK, suggesting institutional overlap. These frameworks offer more transparent, measurable standards than Michelin.

Michelin's symbolic strength contrasts with its lack of methodological transparency. By comparison, SRA and ECOCOOK align with SDG 17, emphasizing accountability and partnerships. It is plausible that Michelin, especially in emerging regions, tacitly incorporates these pre-existing certifications into its evaluations, though this remains unacknowledged.

This comparative context raises critical questions: - Can Michelin's symbolic model remain credible without transparency? - Might formal partnerships with certification bodies improve alignment with global goals? - How do chefs perceive Michelin compared to systems with measurable standards?

These questions underpin the discussion of the *Michelin Conflict* later in the thesis and frame potential directions for future research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological design of the study, justifying the qualitative approach, data collection strategy, analytical tools, and ethical considerations. It also reflects on how unexpected insights led to a reconfiguration of the research direction. The methodology aligns with the research aim: to understand how chefs in Michelin Green-Starred Restaurants in Türkiye interpret and implement sustainability in practice.

3.1 Research design

This study adopts a qualitative exploratory design to understand how chefs in MGSRs in Türkiye perceive and navigate sustainability. The research aims to uncover underlying motivations, values, and lived experiences rather than to quantify attitudes or behaviours. As noted by Creswell (2013), qualitative inquiry is appropriate when the goal is to explore complex human processes through open-ended, inductive reasoning. Given that sustainable gastronomy involves ethical, environmental, and cultural dimensions, an exploratory approach allows for a deep, contextual interpretation of chefs' narratives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

To date, there is no academic research that systematically explores how the Michelin Green Star is interpreted or implemented by chefs in Türkiye, particularly in relation to sustainability practices. This study addresses this gap by examining how sustainability is constructed, challenged, and enacted by those working within the Michelin-recognized ecosystem.

Given the novelty of the Green Star and the lack of previous research on how its recipients conceptualize sustainability, this study employs a qualitative, exploratory design. As Tracy (2010) argues, qualitative methods are particularly appropriate for research questions that aim to uncover meaning, complexity, and subjective experiences. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how chefs define, implement, and reflect on sustainability within their unique contexts.

The study also draws on literature that frames chefs as ethical actors (e.g., Batat, 2020a; Pizzetti, 2024), reinforcing the appropriateness of an interview-based approach that privileges reflexivity and personal values.

3.2 Sampling strategy

The research focuses on MGSRCs in Türkiye from 2023 to 2025. At the time of data collection, this comprised 10 establishments. No additional demographic filters were applied because the study sought to engage with the entire bounded population of Michelin Green-Starred restaurant chefs in Türkiye. As the population was both limited and institutionally defined, purposive sampling aimed for maximum participation rather than demographic representation.[4]

Participants were identified and contacted through publicly available communication channels. The initial approach was typically made via Instagram direct messages, followed—when necessary—by email or phone contact obtained from officially established websites. No chefs were excluded; variation in interview depth was due to availability and scheduling constraints, not selection bias. All 12 chefs agreed to contribute to the research.

[4] Important Note: Three of the chefs (C3, C4, C12) are no longer working at the Michelin Green Star awarded restaurants. All three left voluntarily due to personal or professional transitions. One of the restaurants does not operate, either. It was shut down soon after the MGS award. Specific award years have been withheld throughout this study to preserve full anonymity.

Although variation in region, restaurant scale, and cuisine type was evident across key informants, this diversity emerged organically rather than through stratified sampling. Given the limited number of eligible participants, stratification by gender, region, or restaurant model was not feasible, though future studies could explore these dimensions further.

3.3 Data collection: Semi-structured interviews

Data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in Turkish. This format provided consistency in thematic coverage while allowing flexibility to explore emergent issues and unanticipated directions (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Interviews were conducted online, depending on participant preference and feasibility.

Each interview lasted between 60 and 180 minutes and was recorded with participants' informed consent. The interview protocol was designed around five key thematic areas: sustainability practices, motivations, perceived challenges and opportunities, views on the Michelin Green Star, and future aspirations.

As the study progressed, the interview guide evolved to reflect an emerging finding: most participants were unaware of the MGS criteria at the time of receiving the award. While this adaptive process enriched the dataset, it may have introduced slight variation across interviews in how specific topics were explored and identified.

3.4 Data analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase method, codes were generated inductively to allow themes to emerge organically from the data rather

than imposing predefined categories. MAXQDA Analytics Pro (version 24.9) software facilitated the coding process and enabled the researcher to manage, compare, and visualize emerging patterns.

While the analysis followed a thematic logic, particular attention was paid to participants' metaphors, contradictions, and emotional tone. This interpretive stance draws loosely on narrative and discourse-analytic sensitivities without formally adopting those methods. The aim was to remain grounded in participants' own framings of sustainability while recognizing the symbolic and affective registers through which they expressed their perspectives.

In parallel to this inductive process, the researcher employed algorithmic tools to guide literature exposure and theoretical framing, as outlined in the following section.

3.5 SAGE AURA: A meta-methodological reflection

This study also incorporated SAGE AURA (Systemic Algorithmic Generation of Exposure for Augmented Understanding of Relational Awareness) as a reflective meta-methodology. SAGE AURA is not a data analysis method but rather a lens for examining how algorithmic systems shape the researcher's encounter with knowledge. It acknowledges that contemporary field discovery is increasingly mediated by platforms such as AI-enhanced search engines, academic databases, and visibility-driven algorithms.

To deepen the breadth and diversity of literature engagement, tools such as Perplexity AI, Litmaps, ResearchRabbit, and Scopus AI were consulted. These systems recommended new research directions, identified thematic clusters, and shaped how the researcher encountered relevant bodies of theory. While human

interpretation remained central, this process was dialogic—reflecting a hybrid form of literature discovery.

Importantly, SAGE AURA did not analyze the empirical data nor determine coding strategies. Its contribution lay in scaffolding the architecture of the literature review, framing analytical concepts, and revealing theoretical pathways that may otherwise have remained opaque. While still an experimental and unvalidated tool, its use here signals the importance of recognizing algorithmic mediation in contemporary qualitative scholarship. Potential limitations of this approach, including exposure bias and platform-specific filtering, are acknowledged and discussed further in Chapter 6.

3.6 Trustworthiness and research rigor

To ensure the credibility and reliability of findings, this study adhered to the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the data, iterative coding cycles, and member checking. Participants were invited to review their transcripts and summaries of key themes to ensure accuracy and resonance.

Transferability was supported by providing rich, contextual descriptions of chefs' experiences and restaurant environments.

Dependability was maintained via a detailed research journal that documented methodological decisions throughout the data collection and analysis phases.

Confirmability was pursued by acknowledging the researcher's positionality and using MAXQDA to preserve a systematic audit trail.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from SBİNAREK Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Participants were assigned anonymized codes (e.g., C1, C2) to preserve confidentiality. Given the limited size of the Michelin Green Star community in Türkiye, even minimal demographic disclosure (such as city or cuisine type) could risk identifiability. Therefore, personal and contextual information was intentionally kept sparse in the write-up.

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. All digital recordings and transcripts were securely stored and deleted upon completion of the analysis.

3.8 Methodological limitations

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample size was small, though appropriate for an exploratory qualitative design focused on a bounded population. Second, the data reflects self-reported perceptions, which may be shaped by social desirability bias or retrospective reinterpretation.

Thematic coding and analysis were carried out solely by the researcher due to time constraints. While this allowed for deep engagement and consistency, it limited inter-coder reliability. To address this, the researcher maintained a detailed audit trail documenting all coding decisions, theme development, and analytic shifts. Reflexive memoing was employed throughout the process to surface potential biases and methodological reflections.

3.9 Reorienting the inquiry: From criteria to practice

The study initially set out to understand how chefs aligned their strategies with the Michelin Green Star's sustainability criteria. However, early interviews revealed a surprising pattern: most participants were unaware of these criteria or had not actively engaged with them. This insight prompted a reorientation of the inquiry—from an assessment of institutional compliance to a grounded exploration of sustainability as practiced by chefs on their own terms. This pivot in research focus was discussed with the thesis supervisor and deemed appropriate for an exploratory, qualitative design. As the ethical approval covered open-ended interviews and grounded thematic analysis, no amendment to the original research protocol was required.

This shift repositioned the study as a bottom-up inquiry into how sustainability is understood, adapted, and enacted at the micro level. It also laid the conceptual foundation for the *Michelin Conflict*, a term developed in this thesis to capture the tension between institutional recognition and locally grounded sustainability practice.

CHAPTER 4

PORTRAITS

This chapter presents the chefs behind the ventures with a Michelin Green Star in Türkiye. Their stories—rooted in diverse geographies, motivations, and operational models—began long before the arrival of Michelin Green Star in 2022. Instead of viewing sustainability as a standardized checklist, each chef interprets it through context-specific practices informed by local conditions and personal values. The following sections highlight distinct voices, each offering a situated perspective on what sustainable gastronomy means in practice. Thus, they serve as contextualized micro-case analysis to preserve narrative integrity and highlight variability.

The twelve chef portraits presented in this chapter serve as the empirical foundation of the thesis. Each narrative offers a situated perspective on how sustainability is interpreted and enacted within a specific restaurant context. While no two chefs share identical models or motivations, their accounts reveal overlapping themes—ethical labor, local sourcing, waste reduction, and institutional skepticism—that will be synthesized in Chapter 5. These portraits should not be read as isolated cases but as interlinked expressions of a broader pattern: sustainability emerging from practice, not prescription.

4.1 Chef 1

C1 manages a seasonal culinary venture that operates three months a year (June–August). The chef describes a sustainability-oriented approach structured around self-production, preservation techniques, and collaborative networks. A significant portion of the ingredients is grown on a 7-acre farm managed by the venture,

supplemented by produce from affiliated partner farmers. Preservation methods, including lacto-fermentation, pickling, drying, and salting, are emphasized to maintain ingredient availability outside the active season. The venture also maintains a small greenhouse/showroom for on-site cultivation and guest engagement.

C1 reports that organic waste is minimized through a composting system and by feeding scraps to livestock—specifically chickens and goats. Livestock care is carried out in consultation with veterinarians and tailored to breed-specific nutritional requirements. Soil quality is monitored through regular analysis.

Seed conservation practices are integrated into the fermentation processes, particularly for heirloom varieties. Seafood preservation is conducted using traditional techniques, including drying and garum-style sauces. The team collaborates with a range of experts and producers in the region, with C1 highlighting this network as essential to sustaining the venture's operational model.

The chef notes that while the team is currently majority female, this was not a targeted hiring strategy. Emphasis is placed on shared alignment with the venture's sustainability values, developed through education and internal communication. Community engagement is pursued through regular participation in regional events and festivals.

C1 states that the Michelin Green Star has increased visibility and guest interest, leading to a rise in reservation requests. In response, the venture will transition to a tasting menu-only format in the current season, aimed at improving experience consistency and reducing food waste. Communication with Michelin inspectors and guests regarding sustainability practices is reported to be transparent. Remaining challenges include packaging waste and the limitations of local recycling

infrastructure. C1 expresses a need for broader systemic support to make sustainable operations more accessible and economically viable.

C1 exemplifies a chef-driven model of self-sufficiency and agroecological care. Their commitment to preserving Anatolian ingredients and investing in staff mirrors a deeply relational sustainability logic. While the Green Star offered visibility, their core practices long predated it. C1 reflects a case where sustainability is lived and iterative—not performed in response to external criteria.

4.2 Chef 2

C2 is the chef and co-owner of a family-run venture committed to sustainability through the use of locally sourced, seasonal ingredients. The chef reports maintaining direct partnerships with farmers, including offering financial pre-support to enable pesticide- and fertilizer-free cultivation using traditional methods. Efforts to preserve heirloom varieties—such as the Sakız artichoke—are emphasized, with surplus purchases used to support continuity in production.

Sustainability is described as a holistic approach integrating environmental, social, and economic dimensions. C2 notes that urbanization and the conversion of agricultural land into residential developments have disrupted traditional farming practices and contributed to long-term ecological and economic pressure in the region. Illegal fishing practices are also identified as a threat to local seafood sustainability and price stability.

Technology is used in the kitchen to reduce waste and improve workflow efficiency. The chef highlights the importance of economic stability in sustaining these practices and notes that the venture prioritizes employee well-being. Long

working hours—often exceeding 12 hours daily—are reported as routine in the profession leading to health problems in the long run.

While Michelin recognition is acknowledged, C2 states that the awards have not significantly altered daily operations. Chefs commonly interpreted the award as a form of validation rather than a driver of behavioral change. The chef emphasizes that their approach to sustainability is internally driven, rooted in longstanding commitments to the local community and environment.

C2's narrative is structured around emotional care and craft-based attention. Their emphasis on fermentation, reduced menus, and team cohesion reveals sustainability as a form of rhythm and balance. The Green Star is acknowledged but not central. This case highlights how affective atmospheres and aesthetic minimalism can become sustainability tools.

4.3 Chef 3

C3 emphasizes sustainability through waste minimization and full ingredient utilization. Techniques such as freeze-drying are employed to extend shelf life, while food scraps are repurposed into new products or dishes. Although the venture prioritized seasonal sourcing, C3 acknowledges the constraints posed by contemporary agricultural practices. Sustainability is defined in terms of resource conservation and responsible operations, with the chef expressing concern over the term's frequent appropriation for marketing purposes.

The venture operated as a casual dining establishment, where menu planning was oriented around ingredient efficiency, cross-utilization, and minimizing surplus. Supplier relationships are described as a central component of the operation, with an emphasis on transparency in sourcing and production processes. Sustainability

practices reportedly extended beyond the kitchen to include waste management systems throughout the establishment.

C3 reports that Michelin recognition resulted in increased public attention and guest volume, but did not alter the fundamental approach to sustainability or cooking practices. The chef expresses resistance to being defined by the award alone and continues to explore local culinary traditions alongside technical innovation. Plans to establish an independent restaurant are linked to a desire for greater autonomy, expanded collaboration with local producers, and the development of educational activities related to sustainability.

Challenges identified by C3 include the operational demands of waste minimization, the need to maintain consistent quality, and potential tensions with investors or owners. Nonetheless, the chef describes these constraints as part of a learning process. Teamwork, internal communication, and knowledge-sharing within the kitchen are highlighted as key components in maintaining morale and facilitating both professional and personal growth.

C3 offers a regionalist sustainability model rooted in collaboration with nearby producers and intergenerational knowledge. Their refusal to import ingredients underlines a strong place-based ethic. Sustainability is expressed as both resistance and devotion—resisting culinary homogenization while sustaining cultural heritage. C3's story complicates assumptions about scale, visibility, and sophistication.

4.4 Chef 4

C4's approach to sustainability draws heavily from a background in maritime life, shaping a culinary philosophy rooted in self-sufficiency and a strong connection to

nature. For them, a dish reflects the chef's entire lived experience — culture, education, and personal history interwoven. Their rapid rise in the profession is attributed not only to dedication, but also to a perspective they believe sets them apart.

Their sustainability practices emphasize meticulous waste management, including composting and structured kitchen organization. Fermentation is used not only to deepen flavor but to repurpose byproducts, creating both ecological and economic gains. Ingredient sourcing focuses on seasonal and local produce, with a notable emphasis on foraging — though environmental pressures such as wildfires and land loss are recognized as threats to this model.

C4 expresses skepticism toward the Michelin Green Star, particularly its emphasis on material substitutions over behavioral transformation. They argue that real sustainability should prioritize reductions in overconsumption and waste rather than cosmetic changes. Staff well-being is positioned as part of their sustainability vision, with suggestions such as profit-sharing and workplace solidarity. Looking ahead, C4 plans to build collaborations among chefs and restaurants, advocate for collective sustainability efforts, and continue to use media visibility to spotlight alternative culinary models.

C4 embodies a counter-institutional position, openly skeptical of Michelin and driven by a personal sufficiency ethic. Their practice is shaped more by conviction than reward, and their critique of extractive tourism exposes systemic contradictions within the industry. C4 demonstrates how sustainability can emerge from constraint and improvisation rather than abundance. Their story foregrounds the affective and political costs of culinary work.

4.5 Chef 5

C5 and their spouse have cultivated a space that blends culinary practice with cultural and ecological engagement. More than a restaurant, their establishment functions as a platform where intellectuals, environmentalists, and history enthusiasts gather, drawn by the couple's longstanding dedication to sustainable sourcing, regional identity, and the preservation of local knowledge.

Waste reduction is integral to their operations. Leftovers are repurposed as animal feed, and recycling systems have been in place for years. Their practice extends beyond the kitchen, engaging with broader environmental concerns. Their establishment has long been a partner in alternative tourism, cooperating with publications such as Atlas and organizing cultural and ecological tours. Their activism also includes founding and supporting environmental platforms that work to protect the surrounding landscape.

The Michelin Green Star is not seen as a personal accolade alone but as recognition of a collective effort — the community, the land, and the ethos embedded in the region. Despite increased media attention, they do not foresee a sharp rise in customer numbers, citing their remote location and the selective appeal of their offering. Their intention is to preserve the integrity of their current approach: a place where food, nature, and culture converge around shared values rather than commercial scale.

C5 positions sustainability within a fine-dining logic that values high-quality local sourcing and staff empowerment. While initially surprised by the Green Star, they now see it as validation. Their approach mixes bottom-up practices with top-down recognition, creating a hybrid logic. C5 illustrates how institutional awards can consolidate, rather than initiate, sustainability work.

4.6 Chef 6

C6's trajectory in sustainable gastronomy is shaped by a philosophical re-evaluation of consumption itself. This reorientation led them to embrace slower production cycles, food waste reduction, and ultimately, the ambition to establish Türkiye's first vegan fine-dining restaurant. Their culinary philosophy is not merely technical but ethical, rooted in the belief that gastronomy should reflect a broader respect for ecological limits.

The restaurant is positioned not only as a dining venue but as an educational space, particularly for younger generations. C6 regards Michelin recognition as a means rather than an end—a platform that amplifies their advocacy for plant-based cuisine and the cultural potential of Turkish ingredients. The chef deliberately uses the term "plant-based" instead of "vegan," signaling an effort to promote inclusivity while avoiding ideological rigidity.

The visibility associated with the Green Star has heightened public expectations and internal performance pressure. C6 views this not as a burden, but as an impetus to expand their impact. Their kitchen operates with a collaborative and continuously learning team culture, with an emphasis on innovation in both technique and meaning. One of their upcoming initiatives includes an Istanbul-themed menu that integrates storytelling, drawing on history, memory, and cultural symbolism.

C6 challenges the assumption that fine dining and health-consciousness are incompatible. They aim to demonstrate that sustainable gastronomy can also meet diverse nutritional and cultural needs. Their future plans include further research into inclusive menu design—specifically, how dietary restrictions can be addressed without compromising creativity or ecological principles. They seek to act not as an

authoritative figure, but as a mentor and guide in the evolving field of sustainable fine dining.

C6 emphasizes educational transfer, generational storytelling, and minimal waste as key components of their sustainability vision. Their metaphor of cuisine as "a verb" reframes food as process rather than product. The Green Star aligns with their goals but remains secondary to internal values. C6's profile demonstrates how ethical narratives shape everyday culinary systems.

4.7 Chef 7

C7's approach to sustainable gastronomy predates their Michelin recognition, rooted in a long-standing commitment to local sourcing and ecological responsibility. Beginning in 2010, they developed close relationships with regional producers, prioritizing freshness, seasonality, and low-waste kitchen operations. The restaurant's two-acre garden plays a central role in this system, supported by companion planting methods and integrated pest management using flowers instead of chemicals.

The chef places significant emphasis on organizational culture. Long-term staff retention, open communication, and shared experiences—such as annual culinary trips across Türkiye—are central to team cohesion and development. An open kitchen layout reinforces transparency and cultivates a familial atmosphere between staff and guests.

While the Michelin Green Star is seen as affirmation, it is not the source of their sustainability efforts. Instead, it functions as a platform to publicize an ethos already in place. The award has increased visibility and demand, but C7 resists

standardization by maintaining a flexible, ingredient-driven menu that changes daily based on seasonal availability.

The chef's interaction with the Michelin inspection process was marked by confidentiality, but sustainability was clearly a focal point of evaluation. Importantly, C7 understands sustainability as an integrated system that includes production, team management, guest experience, and long-term planning. Future goals include the adoption of solar energy and infrastructural improvements, though logistical challenges—such as waste disposal—persist. Nonetheless, their rural location facilitates traditional, ecologically embedded practices often difficult to implement in urban contexts.

C7 views the Green Star as a lever to support broader change in the sector, using the recognition to champion local, heritage-based food systems and to promote a culture of responsibility that reaches beyond the kitchen.

C7 articulates sustainability through collaborative ethics and responsibility-sharing. Their partnership with a producer and prioritization of labor dignity shifts attention away from ingredient purity toward relational justice. C7's discomfort with the spotlight reveals a tension between individual recognition and collective labor. This case offers a quiet but powerful example of ethical interdependence.

4.8 Chef 8

Chef 8 is responsible for the culinary direction of a family-run restaurant where sustainability is approached as a lived commitment rather than a checklist. Their practices include cultivating their own produce, composting organic waste, and operating a closed-loop system that incorporates chickens and their manure as natural fertilizer. The building infrastructure also reflects this ethos, with sustainable

materials and water-harvesting systems in place. For C8, sustainability is not confined to the restaurant's operation but is part of a broader lifestyle orientation.

The interview also highlights the restaurant’s social dimension. C8 emphasizes close relationships with local producers, educational outreach to students, and fair pricing in supplier relations. Internally, they invest in staff training and emphasize employee well-being. The restaurant employs a notably diverse team, with a significant number of women in specific departments, reflecting a broader commitment to inclusion and equity.

C8 offers a nuanced critique of the Michelin Green Star. While acknowledging the visibility and promotional value of the award, the chef questions its depth. In contrast to the Michelin framework, which they perceive as relatively superficial in its sustainability assessment, they hold up the Food Made Good certification as a more rigorous and transparent model. According to C8, the Green Star has not materially altered their practices; rather, it has simply drawn attention to a system already in place.

C8 also discusses systemic challenges in sustainable gastronomy. These include high costs, logistical burdens, and insufficient infrastructure for waste management in urban areas. However, they also recognize emerging opportunities in the form of a growing consumer base that is willing to support environmentally and ethically responsible dining. In their view, sustainability remains both a practical obligation and a personal value—independent of external recognition.

C8 combines culinary refinement with political restraint. Their subtle practices—like reduced lighting, limited menus, and non-verbal cues—express a sustainability that is more sensory than discursive. The Green Star is recognized but

de-emphasized. C8 represents sustainability as restraint: quiet, deliberate, and anti-excess.

4.9 Chef 9

Chef 9 articulates a culinary philosophy grounded in sustainability and cultural preservation. Central to their approach is the adaptation of Turkish culinary traditions to contemporary contexts, with a deliberate emphasis on working with local farmers and producers who use traditional methods. Their ingredient sourcing strategy is seasonal and regionally specific, guided by a long-standing collaboration—over a decade—with a local farmer to understand seasonal patterns and soil dynamics. This long-term engagement underscores a commitment not only to sustainability but to epistemic continuity in local food knowledge.

To minimize food waste, the restaurant employs multiple strategies, including offering three distinct tasting menus—regular, vegetarian, and allergen-free—which are preselected by guests. This system reduces surplus and allows for precise kitchen preparation. C9 also stresses the role of consumer education in shifting food habits toward sustainability. Supply chain unpredictability is cited as a major challenge; producers may cease the production of certain ingredients without notice. In such cases, the restaurant removes items from the menu, indicating a responsive and adaptive operational model.

In discussing the Michelin Green Star, C9 downplays the symbolic value of the award, viewing it more as an acknowledgment of ongoing social sustainability efforts rather than as a motivator or primary goal. Their focus remains on long-term systemic change rather than external validation. To that end, C9 is developing a digital platform – surdur.org – designed to track and share the restaurant's

sustainability metrics—including energy use, waste reduction, and composting practices. The platform aims to foster transparency and offer a replicable framework for other restaurants, reinforcing their commitment to sector-wide collaboration.

On the social dimension, C9 emphasizes efforts toward gender equality, describing seasonal shifts in the gender balance among staff, with a noted openness to team-specific needs. The kitchen operates on principles of democratic participation and mutual respect, described by the chef as a "family-like" atmosphere.

Nonetheless, significant structural barriers persist. Budgetary limitations hinder the implementation of certain sustainability innovations—such as solar energy installations—while the absence of reliable public infrastructure for recycling and sustainable sourcing presents ongoing difficulties. C9 stresses the necessity of stronger collaboration between restaurants, suppliers, and local governments to address these systemic gaps.

They also warn against performative or surface-level sustainability—what they explicitly term "whitewashing"—arguing that sustainability must be integrated at every level of practice, not merely adopted for optics. Ultimately, their vision is one of continuous learning and iterative development, grounded in both local knowledge and a forward-looking ethical framework.

C9 adopts a systems-level orientation, building platforms, tools, and supplier networks to amplify sustainability beyond their kitchen. Their critique of symbolic awards reflects a desire for deeper change, both infrastructural and educational. C9 is not only a chef but an ecosystem designer. This case signals what sustainability leadership could look like after symbolic recognition.

4.10 Chef 10

C10 serves as both head chef and co-owner, managing a Michelin Green-Starred Restaurant (MGSR) in partnership with their father. Located outside of Istanbul, the restaurant defies urban fine-dining conventions by adopting a deeply rooted farm-to-table philosophy, which predates the restaurant's opening by over a decade. Initially met with skepticism due to its rural setting, the venture has since gained recognition for elevating Turkish gastronomy through a sustainability-driven lens.

R10's operations exemplify a vertically integrated model of sustainable gastronomy. In addition to the restaurant itself, the team oversees a 60-acre olive grove, livestock operations (cows, sheep, chickens), a cheese factory, and an olive press. These diverse production lines not only ensure ingredient traceability but also stimulate the local rural economy through sustained collaboration with neighboring farmers. However, the chef candidly acknowledges the financial burden of such a model, estimating annual agricultural costs at 3 to 5.000.000,-TL as of March 2025. Despite this, C10 sees the investment as essential to maintaining ethical standards and long-term sustainability.

Importantly, C10 frames sustainable gastronomy not merely as the use of organic and local ingredients, but as the creation of refined, exceptional dishes from those resources. This dual focus on ingredient integrity and culinary excellence is central to the restaurant's ethos. In this light, the Michelin Green Star is interpreted as both validation of their commitment and recognition of the labor involved, even though the award has not substantially increased customer volume—something C10 attributes to Türkiye's challenging economic and political climate. The distinction, however, has intensified internal pressures, raising expectations and contributing to emotional and physical strain on the kitchen team.

Looking forward, R10 is planning to construct a large-scale greenhouse dedicated to seedling cultivation, expanding their self-sufficiency. They already utilize solar panels, practice composting, and maintain a commitment to whole-product usage, emphasizing minimal waste and closed-loop systems. Nevertheless, challenges remain. The inherent variability of natural ingredients complicates menu consistency, and the retention of skilled staff is an ongoing concern—especially given the allure of urban restaurants and social media visibility.

For C10, their restaurant's greatest impact may be inspirational rather than commercial. They believe their approach serves as a model for fellow chefs, encouraging the wider adoption of sustainable practices and fostering a renewed appreciation for regional produce among younger generations.

C10 operates at the intersection of luxury and locality, reinterpreting Anatolian cuisine for a global audience. Their choices show the tension between aesthetic control and ecological concern. While the Green Star affirms their direction, sustainability is framed more as a sensibility than a measurable outcome. C10's story reveals the limits of symbolic alignment.

4.11 Chef 11

Chef 11 stated that the Michelin Green Star recognized the restaurant's long-standing sustainability philosophy rather than any recent strategic change. Their approach integrates environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Environmentally, the restaurant uses solar panels, well water, and composting, and sources ingredients locally (mainly from the Thrace region) to reduce transportation emissions. Bi-monthly menu changes follow seasonal cycles and minimize waste, prioritizing functionality over aesthetic excess.

Socially, C11 emphasized equitable labor conditions, including a two-day weekly leave policy, private health insurance for staff, and a maximum 10-hour workday. Economically, they operate without external investors and aim for financial sustainability through long-term resilience. The chef's academic background supports this integrated approach.

C11 suggested a multi-tiered Green Star system (e.g., one to three stars) to better reflect differing sustainability levels and motivate further improvements. Although sustainability remains a developing concept in Türkiye—especially regarding sourcing certified organic products—C11 sees this as an opportunity to lead by example. Planned initiatives include tree planting for new furniture, filtered tap water service, and collaborative design projects with fine arts students.

Their reflections on prior experience in Denmark's Michelin-starred kitchens contrast strict, demanding labor with their current commitment to humane working conditions.

C11 offers a radical, politically engaged version of sustainability rooted in solidarity, food justice, and community nourishment. Their disidentification with fine dining challenges the very premise of the Green Star. This chef repositions gastronomy as a tool for systemic critique, not individual elevation. C11's section marks a turning point in your chapter's arc.

4.12 Chef 12

Chef 12 (C12) foregrounds sustainability as both an environmental and social responsibility. Central to their approach is the minimization of waste through in-house processing of ingredients, which they contrast with the inefficiencies of pre-processed goods sourced from large cash-and-carry wholesalers. They advocate

using all parts of the ingredient to reduce ecological impact, and emphasize that sustainability loses meaning when food waste is outsourced to industrial suppliers.

Staffing stability emerges as a critical dimension in C12's view of a sustainable kitchen. The chef argues that high turnover undermines sustainable routines, as onboarding new staff entails repetitive training in specific environmental practices. While noting that hiring decisions are sometimes mediated by restaurant ownership—particularly in "patron" establishments—C12 maintains that chefs should retain final discretion in recruitment, barring serious issues with a candidate.

C12 also reflects on the tensions introduced by formal recognition systems and organizational structures. They describe how bureaucracy in Michelin-awarded or corporate-run kitchens can impede swift and meaningful sustainability actions. Although the Michelin Green Star brings prestige and visibility, they caution against its potential to generate misinterpretation or managerial pressure, both internally and externally.

The interview closes with reflections on the broader personal cost of the profession. C12 speaks candidly about the mental and physical toll of long working hours, limited paid leave in Türkiye compared to international standards, and the erosion of work-life balance. Having experienced both authoritarian and collaborative kitchen cultures, they advocate for a shift away from intimidation-based hierarchies towards a more humane, respectful work environment.

C12 blends lived hardship with creative practice, using every element of the kitchen—including architecture, staff structure, and ingredients—as raw material for ethical design. Their "respectful cuisine" frames sustainability as care work. The Green Star is treated as both recognition and contradiction. C12 exemplifies the entanglement of sustainability, emotion, and survival.

The portraits presented in this chapter resist easy generalization. While each chef navigates their own context, resources, and convictions, their voices reveal a shared tension: the mismatch between lived sustainability and its symbolic recognition. Rather than drawing immediate conclusions, this diversity demands pause—a moment to consider how different logics of care, critique, and innovation unfold under a common institutional label. The following chapter synthesizes these narratives to identify cross-cutting themes and reflect on what sustainability means, and what it obscures, within the frame of the Michelin Green Star.

CHAPTER 5

THE SYNTHESIS

This chapter synthesizes the empirical narratives introduced in Chapter 4 by tracing the tensions, contradictions, and strategies that cut across the twelve chef portraits. The structure of this synthesis reflects the thematic clusters that emerged through inductive coding and chef reflections, rather than following the order of interview prompts. It foregrounds how sustainability is practiced, interpreted, resisted, and negotiated within the everyday realities of Türkiye's Michelin Green-Starred kitchens.

While the chefs operate in markedly different geographies, business models, and culinary traditions, certain fault lines appeared with striking regularity. These included ambivalent perceptions of institutional recognition, divergent philosophies of sustainability, improvisational operational strategies, and the affective toll of maintaining ethical commitments under pressure. Their recurrence across otherwise heterogeneous narratives is not incidental. Rather, it signals that shared dilemmas are embedded in the structural conditions of contemporary fine dining—particularly when filtered through the Michelin Green Star, which emerged as both a source of prestige and a generator of strain.

Section 5.1 begins by examining how chefs received the Green Star distinction. Although not the core research question, their interpretations—ranging from affirmation to confusion to critique—surfaced consistently. For most, the award was not a catalyst but a retrospective endorsement of long-standing practices. For some, however, it introduced new pressures and a symbolic burden that outpaced material support. The section thus lays the groundwork for understanding the

disjunction between recognition and practice—a tension that reverberates throughout the chapter.

Section 5.2 details the sustainability practices described by the chefs. Far from presenting a universal model, this section illustrates the diversity of approaches across environmental, economic, and social domains. Practices are grouped into three primary areas: sourcing, waste, and labor. Within these, chefs navigate infrastructural gaps, aesthetic expectations, ethical dilemmas, and personal philosophies—often shaping sustainability from below, in ways that both reflect and contest institutional narratives.

Section 5.3 directly addresses the central research question: What are the key challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainability in the Turkish fine dining sector? While the chefs outlined considerable barriers—ranging from supply chain instability and infrastructural voids to labor precarity and economic precarity—they also described opportunities emerging through adaptation, collaboration, and local innovation. This section is organized around structural constraints, internal dynamics, and emergent forms of leadership under constraint.

Finally, Section 5.4 draws out cross-cutting insights that surfaced beyond the formal interview structure. These include chefs' reflections on sustainability as a lived identity, their resistance to top-down narratives, and their critiques of institutional opacity. These patterns set the stage for the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 6: the *Michelin Conflict*—a term that captures the core paradox of symbolic recognition that fails to resolve, and sometimes intensifies, the operational and ethical contradictions it purports to reward.

5.1 The Michelin Green Star impact

The impact of the Michelin Green Star on restaurants emerged as both affirming and ambivalent. While many chefs noted positive effects on visibility, reputation, and internal motivation, others voiced concern over increased public expectations, superficial displays of sustainability, and the lack of transparency in Michelin's evaluative criteria. These mixed responses reveal the emotional, symbolic, and institutional weight carried by the Green Star, as well as the tensions it introduced into everyday practice.

5.1.1 The Michelin Green star: Meaning and perception

Interviewees offered a range of views on the symbolic significance of the Michelin Green Star. For several restaurants — C10, C11, and C4 — the award represented a form of external validation for sustainability efforts already underway. Yet others remained critical. C1 noted the absence of clearly articulated standards, while C8 compared it unfavorably to other systems such as the Food Made Good Standard. In some cases, chefs saw the Green Star as both a badge of honor and a burden—an ambiguous recognition that lacked precise evaluative substance.

This section references specific chefs (C1–C12) by code to highlight divergences in their interpretations of the Michelin Green Star and to trace variations in experience and critique.

5.1.2 Awards and recognition

The Green Star was frequently interpreted as recognition for sustainability-oriented work—by C1, C10, C11, C3, C8, and C9—yet its perceived meaning and importance varied. For some chefs, it acted as a powerful motivator or amplifier of sustainability messaging (C1, C6). Others, such as C12, warned that the concept of sustainability

risks being diluted into a marketing device, especially when not backed by rigorous evaluation. C8 observed that Michelin's recognition often prioritizes high-visibility markers—such as aesthetic presentation or online presence—over the depth of a restaurant's sustainability practices.

5.1.3 Comparative impact of different certifications

Several chefs explicitly compared Michelin's criteria to more robust sustainability certification schemes. C8 and C9 emphasized the transparency and methodological rigor of standards like the Food Made Good framework, which includes clearly defined benchmarks across sourcing, waste, energy, and social equity. Michelin's lack of published criteria stood in contrast. While some restaurants benefitted from the prestige of the Green Star—C1, C11, C3, and C7—others, such as C10, questioned its utility when customer interest remained static or even declined. This suggests that Michelin's reputation alone cannot guarantee impact or legitimacy.

5.1.4 The economic impact of Michelin and other awards

The economic outcomes associated with the Green Star were uneven. While several chefs (C1, C11, C6, C8) reported gains in visibility and, in some cases, bookings, others—C10, C2, and C4—noted no noticeable increase or even declines in customer turnout. C10 specifically attributed a drop in business to broader economic downturns and shifting domestic priorities, despite having earned the award. C2 noted that the absence of a physical symbol or clear public messaging about the Green Star limits its marketing potential. Comparisons with other certifications revealed that even less prominent schemes might offer clearer guidance and greater internal transformation than Michelin's more symbolic recognition.

5.1.5 Reputational gains and psychological pressures

The Michelin Green Star brought with it reputational prestige but also emotional weight. While most chefs—C1, C11, C2, C3, C4, C6, C7, and C8—welcomed the publicity and internal validation the award offered, others described the psychological strain of having to live up to the Michelin standard. C10 and C12 spoke about heightened customer expectations, while C12, C8, and C9 voiced concern that some restaurants might stage sustainability theatrics to retain the award rather than pursuing systemic improvements. C3 underscored this fragility, recounting how internal disagreements over priorities led to the closure of a Michelin-awarded restaurant.

5.1.6 Changes (and Non-changes) in operational practices

Operational transformations in response to the Green Star varied. Many chefs—C11, C2, C4, C7, C8—emphasized that their practices predated the award and remained largely unchanged. Others (C1, C6) admitted to adjusting operations to better align with expectations, particularly in customer communication and ingredient sourcing. C10, however, noted that even sustainability-oriented efforts were not immune to macroeconomic disruptions, highlighting the limits of individual action in a strained national context. C8 provocatively argued that the prestige of a Michelin star—red or green—should not be conflated with substantive sustainability impact, suggesting that restaurants may chase awards rather than outcomes.

5.1.7 Structural weaknesses in the Green Star criteria

A frequent critique focused on the vagueness of Michelin's sustainability standards. C1 saw this ambiguity as both liberating and problematic—allowing innovation while complicating accountability. C8 and C9 were more critical, calling the lack of

transparency a pathway to superficial compliance. C9 specifically contrasted Michelin's secrecy with the clarity of Food Made Good's assessment. The opaque inspection process contributed to perceptions of arbitrariness. Many chefs advocated for clearer criteria and alignment with established certification frameworks.

5.1.8 Critical voices and divided perceptions

The Green Star provoked admiration and skepticism in equal measure. C11, C8, and C12 voiced critical views on the motivations and impacts behind the award. C12 cautioned that sustainability risked becoming mere branding. C11 proposed a tiered Green Star system to better represent varying levels of commitment. Some—C1, C11, C2, C5, and C7—viewed the award as affirming existing values, while others—C8, C12—questioned its sincerity or relevance. C12 also pointed to public confusion about the distinction between Green and Red Michelin Stars.

5.1.9 Staff morale, stress, and emotional consequences

Staff responses reflected broader ambivalence. C1, C2, and C7 reported increased morale, pride, and cohesion. Others—C10, C12, C4, and C9—noted rising stress and pressure tied to Michelin recognition. Most gravely, C9 described a chef suicide linked to this emotional burden. While some restaurants converted the award into internal strength, others struggled with its implicit demands—particularly in under-resourced or unstable contexts.

5.1.10 Reflections and proposals for reform

Calls for reform were widespread. C1, C11, and C8 advocated for improvements to the Green Star model, including multi-tiered criteria that could distinguish varying degrees of sustainability. Many felt the current system rewards aesthetics and

superficial adjustments rather than transformative change. Suggestions included transparent checklists, SDG-linked frameworks, and actionable feedback. The consensus wasn't to abandon the Green Star—but to evolve it into a credible tool for systemic sustainability, not just symbolic affirmation.

5.2 Sustainability practices in action

This section examines how chefs operationalize sustainability across sourcing, waste, and labor practices. While methods differed by geography, scale, and philosophy, most chefs described sustainability not as an external standard but as an internal commitment—shaped by regional knowledge, ethical values, and adaptive creativity.

Environmental strategies included local sourcing, seasonality, reuse systems, and energy awareness. Waste reduction—through menu design, fermentation, and whole-ingredient usage—was often framed as both ethical imperative and creative challenge. At the same time, chefs expressed frustration with the lack of institutional recognition for these efforts, particularly when infrastructure and market conditions made such practices difficult to sustain.

Labor emerged as a parallel domain of sustainability. Several chefs extended their commitments to team well-being, fair conditions, and collaborative decision-making, treating sustainability as a social relationship, not just an ecological goal. These accounts frame sustainability as choreography—negotiated daily, never fully resolved, and always contextually shaped.

Across these narratives, a consistent theme emerged: sustainability practices preceded the Michelin Green Star and often continued in spite of it. These chefs were not simply responding to institutional trends—they were shaping sustainability from below, through situated action rather than symbolic alignment.

5.2.1 Environmental sustainability: locality, waste, and energy

Local sourcing and production is a near-universal practice, though realized in diverse ways. Some restaurants grow their own produce on-site (C1, C7, C8), while others lease land for cultivation or maintain long-term partnerships with local farms (C10, C11, C2). This commitment is often tied to minimizing transport emissions and supporting rural economies (C2, C4, C9). C2, however, expressed concern about the long-term viability of these practices in the face of tourism-driven land use and urbanization.

Waste reduction and repurposing strategies ranged from menu engineering to fermentation and composting. Chefs used freeze-drying, broth-making, and creative reuse of scraps (C1, C3, C10, C11, C8). C3 and C4 emphasized turning “waste” into culinary assets, reflecting a mindset of resource valorization. C9 noted that these efforts are undermined by the lack of reliable public waste infrastructure.

Renewable energy and green design were also incorporated. Solar panels were used for heating and electricity (C1, C10, C11, C12, C8), while others implemented rainwater harvesting (C8), energy-efficient appliances (C5), and natural construction materials. C5 highlighted that many of these methods were adopted before Michelin recognition, underscoring intrinsic motivation.

5.2.2 Economic sustainability: Community, circularity, and ethical investment

Economic sustainability was framed around supporting local producers and creating relational supply chains. Several restaurants source from nearby producers (C1, C10, C2, C5, C7, C8, C9), reinforcing traditional agriculture and foodways. C2 pays in advance for inputs and purchases full seasonal harvests to ensure producer stability. C8 provides equipment and technical training to small-scale partners.

Chefs also described relational investments—participating in community events, supporting local artisans, and maintaining long-term ties with suppliers (C5, C1). These actions emphasized economic circularity, not just cost efficiency.

5.2.3 Social sustainability: Labor ethics and industry critique

Chefs emphasized employee well-being as a core tenet of sustainability. C11, C12, and C4 highlighted efforts to ensure fair wages, health coverage, and humane working conditions—often in opposition to fine dining's exploitative norms. C12 argued that high staff turnover undermines both morale and sustainable consistency. C10, C3, C7, and C8 emphasized team cohesion, internal development, and fostering a respectful kitchen culture.

Gender equity appeared in a few teams (C1, C11, C8), though not always as formal policy. C6 viewed their vegan culinary philosophy as an ethical framework encompassing labor, ecology, and animal rights. C9 proposed the development of a collaborative online platform ("sürdür.org") to address fragmentation and share sustainability knowledge.

C2 pointed to the gentrifying effects of culinary success on rural communities, while C12 critiqued how social media and aesthetic expectations distort young chefs' perceptions of value and labor.

5.2.4 Local sourcing and community engagement

Local sourcing and community integration were among the most consistently reported practices. Direct collaboration with farmers, foragers, and fisherfolk was common (C1–C9), often involving flexible, seasonal menus built around ingredient availability.

Some chefs pursued ingredient recovery and culinary preservation in rural and coastal regions, reviving underused regional varieties. Others saw sustainability as cultural regeneration, not just emissions reduction.

Several chefs hosted educational workshops, collaborated with NGOs, or created platforms for regional artisans (C1, C5, C2, C8). These spaces became civic venues where sustainability, education, and cultural memory intersected.

C2 and C8 went further—pre-financing crops, offering agricultural training, and paying premium prices to secure the continuity of small-scale production. These choices reflect long-term commitments, not transactional procurement.

5.2.5 Waste reduction and circular practices

Waste reduction was framed as both ecological necessity and culinary creativity. Chefs composted kitchen waste (C1, C10, C11, C8), diverted scraps to animal feed (C2, C5), and repurposed by-products into powders, broths, and preserves (C3, C4, C12, C11). C3 and C4 exemplified how creative reuse can become a central part of a dish's identity.

Many chefs used preservation techniques like fermentation and freeze-drying to maximize ingredient lifespans. C9 noted that these approaches were constrained by the absence of municipal composting and inconsistent supplier practices.

Waste-awareness also shaped kitchen layout and workflow. Mise en place systems, portioning methods, and prep lines were optimized to reduce loss. However, some chefs resisted the aesthetics of waste-free fine dining—citing single-use garnish culture and excessive packaging as contradictory to sustainability goals.

Some chefs deliberately constructed menus around waste-derived ingredients, challenging diners to reconsider assumptions about quality and value. For most, these practices were not about Michelin compliance, but expressions of ethical craft.

5.2.6 Ethical labor practices

Labor sustainability emerged as a domain of strong divergence. Several chefs moved beyond hierarchical kitchen models, opting for horizontal team structures, profit-sharing, or transparent wage policies (C11, C12, C4). These structures were implemented in response to the historically extractive labor culture of haute cuisine.

Many chefs prioritized internal mentorship and chef development (C10, C3, C7, C8), sometimes formalizing training programs. One chef noted, “If your team isn’t emotionally and physically healthy, no amount of local sourcing can make you a sustainable restaurant.”

Social equity extended to suppliers—some chefs offered fair pricing and support, while others fostered gender-inclusive kitchens (C1, C11, C8). C6 expanded the ethical logic of sustainability by connecting it to veganism, minimalism, and moral philosophy.

Yet tensions remained. C2 acknowledged the unintended impact of their success on regional real estate and agriculture. C12 critiqued Michelin-induced stress and how social media idealization leads to burnout, especially among younger staff.

5.2.7 Economic viability of sustainable practices

Chefs were acutely aware of the financial precarity of sustainability. Initial investments in solar power, composters, or farm infrastructure required significant capital (C2, C8, C10). Operating with local, organic, or low-impact ingredients increased procurement costs and supply unpredictability (C9, C11).

In response, some chefs leaned into efficiency-based strategies such as whole-ingredient cooking, low-waste menus, and batch-prep systems (C4, C7). These adaptations occasionally allowed for cost recovery or even strategic advantage.

Others acknowledged trade-offs. C6 accepted short-term financial loss as part of long-term integrity. C2, by contrast, described their sustainability goals as admirable but difficult to finance—especially without institutional or investor support.

C12 warned of the commodification of sustainability: as the concept becomes trendier, it risks being reduced to branding instead of genuine transformation.

5.2.8 Government policies and infrastructure supporting sustainability

Chefs across the sample described working in a policy vacuum. Lack of state incentives, certification pathways, or public recycling infrastructure were frequently mentioned (C1, C8, C10, C11). Even when chefs sorted waste internally, municipal systems often failed to follow through (C4, C9), creating frustration and disillusionment.

A few cited local initiatives—herb festivals, water campaigns—as exceptions (C5, C7), but these were piecemeal at best. Larger ambitions, such as organic certification or zero-waste programs, were obstructed by bureaucracy and logistical incoherence (C11, C12, C3).

Some chefs viewed Michelin's role as partial compensation for state absence—but also questioned whether symbolic recognition without structural backing was sustainable or just performative (C4, C8, C11).

In response, C9 proposed a shared waste portal, while C4 called for an industry manifesto to guide bottom-up reform. These responses reflect a growing

collective consciousness, but also reveal the limits of voluntarism in the absence of enabling institutions.

5.2.9 Chefs' personal philosophy and culinary journey

Several chefs traced their sustainability ethos to early formative experiences. For C1, C2, and C6, sustainability was tied to family traditions—growing food, preserving produce, or minimizing waste out of necessity. For others, including C8 and C12, it was shaped by international training or exposure to ecological crisis.

Some chefs saw their work as a moral or philosophical extension of personal beliefs. C6 framed their vegan fine dining as both ecological practice and ethical commitment. Others highlighted creative autonomy and resistance to external frameworks—Michelin included—as essential to sustainability.

At the same time, many chefs acknowledged compromise. C4 and C10 spoke of the tension between ideals and financial survival. C12 questioned whether certification systems could ever capture the full scope of a restaurant's ethical commitments.

What emerged was not a unified doctrine, but a diversity of personal philosophies—from ecological minimalism to cultural revival—each with its own logic and emotional weight.

And yet, despite this philosophical variety, the repertoires of action overlapped. Sustainability, as practiced by these chefs, was grounded in shared gestures—ethical sourcing, waste reduction, team care—shaped by the unique biographies, geographies, and convictions of those who enacted them.

The next section, therefore, turns to these tensions — examining the challenges that chefs encounter in operationalizing sustainability under real-world

conditions, and the opportunities that have emerged as a result of experimentation, reflection, and collective learning.

5.3 Challenges and opportunities

This section directly addresses the central research question: What are the key challenges and opportunities faced by chefs implementing sustainability in Türkiye's Michelin Green-Starred restaurants? Drawing on the chefs' narratives, the findings are organized using the Triple Bottom Line framework (environmental, social, economic) to reflect the interconnected nature of their lived experiences.

Chefs described a wide range of obstacles: inconsistent waste and recycling systems, limited access to certified local goods, volatile ingredient prices, and high staff turnover. These were not minor operational issues but symptoms of broader structural gaps—often compounded by the very institutions that offer symbolic recognition.

Yet alongside these barriers, chefs articulated emergent opportunities: deepened relationships with producers, innovative approaches to sourcing and waste, and renewed focus on team cohesion and internal culture. In many cases, constraints and creativity were co-constitutive. Scarcity sparked improvisation; external pressure triggered internal clarity.

These tensions—between feasibility and aspiration, recognition and practice—reveal the adaptive resilience of chefs working within precarious systems. At the same time, they expose the limits of top-down sustainability frameworks, setting the stage for Section 5.4's deeper synthesis and the conceptual framework of the *Michelin Conflict*.

5.3.1 Challenges in sustainable gastronomy

The implementation and maintenance of sustainable gastronomy practices in Türkiye present a complex interplay of economic, social, operational, and environmental challenges. These are not isolated but interwoven across systemic, sectoral, and individual dimensions.

5.3.1.1 Economic barriers and market constraints

A dominant theme was the economic burden of sustainability. High costs related to sourcing organic, local, or sustainably packaged ingredients placed pressure on financial viability—especially in fine dining, where guest expectations are already elevated (C1, C2, C4, C5, C8, C9, C10, C11, C12). Additional investments in renewable energy, composting systems, and waste-reduction technologies exacerbated this strain (C1, C4, C5, C7, C9).

Some chefs observed that even after receiving a Michelin Green Star, their financial situation remained unchanged (C2), raising questions about the economic utility of the award.

5.3.1.2 Sourcing instability and supply chain vulnerabilities

Sourcing challenges were identified as deeply structural. Chefs described the inconsistency and unpredictability of local ingredients, the lack of organic certification systems, and the absence of reliable, sustainability-minded suppliers (C2, C3, C4, C5, C7, C9, C10, C11).

Environmental disruptions such as illegal fishing (C2), wildfires (C4), and urbanization-driven land loss (C2) further impacted ingredient availability. Even large suppliers, like Metro, were criticized for increased packaging waste, undermining restaurants' sustainability goals (C12).

5.3.1.3 Infrastructure and technological gaps

In many cases, restaurants operated in regions with insufficient infrastructure for waste management, especially for glass, compostables, and complex waste streams (C1, C3, C4, C7, C8, C9). Other deficits—such as unreliable internet and poor sewage systems—further complicated daily operations (C4, C5, C7, C8), making it difficult to implement sustainability consistently beyond the kitchen.

5.3.1.4 Operational pressures and labor realities

Staffing challenges emerged as a major pressure point. High turnover required constant retraining in sustainability protocols (C3, C4, C10, C12). Tasks like composting or ingredient sorting were difficult to maintain without long-term staff investment (C1).

Several chefs described poor work-life balance, unrealistic expectations, and emotional strain as key obstacles to labor sustainability (C3, C4, C6, C12). This underscores the point that sustainability is not purely technical—it is also affective and relational.

5.3.1.5 Social awareness and educational burdens

Many chefs felt that consumer awareness of sustainable gastronomy remained low in Türkiye (C1, C4, C6, C9, C12). Educating diners required sustained effort, yet this burden often fell disproportionately on chefs and managers.

Internally, continuous staff training on sustainability principles was essential but time-intensive (C1, C3, C4, C6, C12). These social challenges pointed to the need for cultural transformation, not just operational reform.

5.3.1.6 Critiques of the michelin green star

Although many chefs welcomed the Green Star, they also expressed pointed critiques. A lack of transparent, specific criteria, combined with pressure to perform symbolic sustainability, created stress and ambiguity (C1, C9, C12).

C11 suggested a tiered version of the award could better reflect different levels of sustainability engagement. C12 warned against the risk of greenwashing—where the award functions more as a marketing badge than a reflection of systemic practice.

5.3.2 Opportunities in sustainable gastronomy

Despite substantial barriers, many chefs articulated a compelling vision of sustainability as an opportunity—for experimentation, leadership, and systemic contribution. These opportunities were not abstract ideals; they were grounded in the specific realities of the Turkish fine dining scene.

5.3.2.1 Market differentiation and reputation gains

Several chefs framed sustainability as a strategy for market differentiation, particularly among younger, urban consumers who value transparency, ethics, and locality (C4, C8, C10, C11). The Michelin Green Star helped increase public visibility and, in some cases, served as a motivator for internal change (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C10, C11, C12).

At the same time, chefs remained aware that the award's symbolic weight required critical reflection and should not eclipse actual transformation.

5.3.2.2 Practice-based innovation

Chefs are increasingly turning to technique-based solutions in response to sourcing and waste challenges. These include nose-to-tail and root-to-stem cooking (C12), fermentation (C4), and menu engineering to reduce leftovers (C11, C3).

Other innovations included digital platforms to track sustainability data and internal self-assessment tools to support evolving standards (C9). These practices reflect a commitment to process innovation under constraint.

5.3.2.3 Business growth and scaling opportunities

Sustainability has also opened pathways to growth and diversification—whether through regional expansion, farm development, or the production of niche ingredients (C1, C2, C3, C8, C9, C10, C11).

Yet growth was not always the primary goal. Several chefs emphasized depth over scale—focusing on integrity, consistency, and community-level impact (C2).

5.3.2.4 Collaboration and knowledge exchange

A strong theme was the value of collaboration over competition. Chefs described partnerships with universities (C7, C11), other restaurants (C9), and students (C8) as key drivers of sustainability innovation.

This collaborative ethos contrasted with the high-pressure, individualist norms of fine dining. It suggested that knowledge-sharing models may help scale sustainability more effectively than awards alone.

5.3.2.5 Organizational well-being and cultural change

Internal organizational change was a major site of opportunity. Chefs described how improving working conditions, offering benefits, and expanding training aligned with their sustainability visions (C4, C10, C12).

For many, sustainability now included ethical labor, emotional health, and shared values—not just sourcing or waste. These commitments strengthened team cohesion and helped reduce turnover over time.

5.3.2.6 Situated and Niche opportunities

Some chefs identified context-specific leverage points. C5 used their touristic geography to int6egrate sustainability into regional storytelling. C6, meanwhile, developed a model of vegan fine dining grounded in environmental minimalism and culinary creativity.

These cases illustrate how local context and philosophical clarity can foster meaningful sustainability practices even within resource-constrained settings.

5.4 Emergent patterns beyond interview prompts

While previous sections reflected structured interview responses, this final section draws together insights that emerged spontaneously—through tangents, emotions, stories, and reflective commentary. These cross-cutting narratives often arose beyond direct prompts but revealed deeper tensions at the heart of sustainable gastronomy. Rather than offering additional typologies, this section surfaces how chefs navigate sustainability as a set of lived contradictions—where values, exhaustion, institutional pressure, and creative resilience collide.

The patterns that follow are not distinct themes but underlying dynamics that permeate earlier sections. They point to a broader paradox: sustainability is often demanded without being structurally supported, celebrated without being resourced, and symbolized without being substantively clarified. This unresolved disjunction—between symbolic recognition and operational feasibility—sets the stage for the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 6 – The *Michelin Conflict*.

5.4.1 Sustainability as identity

Many chefs described sustainability not as a checklist or branding strategy but as a lived identity rooted in upbringing, values, and cultural heritage. For some, it reflected practices learned in childhood—such as minimizing waste, working with the land, or preserving seasonal foods. For others, it was tied to philosophical convictions or formative professional experiences.

This framing shifted sustainability from being a technical obligation to a form of ethical consistency, influencing how decisions are made on a daily basis. The idea that sustainability is an extension of self, not a response to trend or pressure, was a consistent subtext throughout the narratives.

5.4.2 Resistance to institutional narratives

The dissonance between chefs' lived experiences and Michelin's symbolic narrative—what this thesis terms the *Michelin Conflict* — was a major undercurrent. Many chefs described the Green Star as an after-the-fact recognition, rather than a cause or driver of sustainable practices.

The award often failed to capture the complexity and hardship of sustainability work, instead reinforcing simplistic or aestheticized narratives. This gap between institutional signaling and operational reality produced frustration,

skepticism, and a sense that lived labor was being overshadowed by symbolic capital.

5.4.3 Reflections on institutional transparency

Chefs across the sample expressed a growing need for transparent, tiered, and locally adaptable sustainability assessments. Several – especially C11 – called for a multi-tiered Green Star system that could distinguish different levels or models of commitment.

There were also calls for institutional partnerships, especially those aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (e.g., SDG 17). These suggestions reflected a shared concern: unless institutions engage chefs as collaborators—not merely recipients of recognition—credibility and change will remain limited.

These critiques were not only reactive but constructive. Chefs did not call for the abandonment of recognition systems like Michelin, but for their evolution. Several – especially C11 – proposed a multi-tiered version of the Green Star, capable of distinguishing varying levels of sustainability commitment. Others advocated for institutional partnerships aligned with frameworks such as SDG 17, emphasizing the value of co-design, transparency, and contextual relevance.

These proposals underscore a core insight: chefs are not passive recipients of sustainability discourse—they are producers of situated knowledge. Their calls for more adaptable, equitable, and participatory systems point to the need for a shift from symbolic recognition toward structural alignment. This unresolved tension—between lived practice and institutional abstraction—will be taken up conceptually in the next chapter through the framework of the *Michelin Conflict*.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

This chapter advances the interpretive arc of the thesis by revisiting the empirical synthesis of Chapter 5 through a more critical and conceptual lens. Whereas the previous chapter mapped the recurring themes and strategies articulated by chefs, the present chapter foregrounds the tensions, contradictions, and generative frictions that surfaced both across and within their narratives.

It opens by restating the central research question and marking the methodological pivot from perception to practice – setting the foundation for two interlinked analytical moves. First, Section 6.2 examines the material, institutional, and psychological constraints chefs face in pursuing sustainable gastronomy. Then, Section 6.3 highlights the opportunities they have cultivated through localized innovation, ethical consistency, and strategic autonomy. These accounts underscore sustainability not as a checklist but as a situated, relational, and often exhausting pursuit.

Section 6.4 sharpens the focus on the Michelin Green Star—not simply as a symbol of recognition, but as a site of epistemic tension. While chefs welcomed the visibility the award brought, they also critiqued its evaluative opacity, institutional mismatch, and limited structural impact. These critiques crystallize into a conceptual formulation introduced here as the *Michelin Conflict*: the unresolved dissonance between institutional recognition and operational reality, between symbolic visibility and structural invisibility.

By shifting from synthesis to contradiction, the chapter repositions chefs not merely as practitioners of sustainability, but as epistemic agents negotiating—and at times resisting—the paradoxes embedded in contemporary systems of gastronomic recognition.

6.1 Restating the research focus

This study set out to investigate how chefs in Türkiye's Michelin Green-Starred restaurants understand, implement, and reflect on sustainability in their culinary practices. With the rise of sustainability as a recognized value in fine dining – particularly through the Michelin Green Star distinction – this research aimed to move beyond surface-level categorizations and explore how sustainability is actually lived, negotiated, and challenged on the ground. By engaging directly with chefs through semi-structured interviews, the study foregrounded their voices, experiences, and perspectives as the primary entry point into understanding what sustainability means and how it is enacted.

The central research question guiding this investigation was:

"What are the challenges and opportunities that chefs face in implementing and maintaining sustainability practices in Türkiye's Michelin Green-Starred restaurants?"

This question reflects a concern with both structural and relational aspects of sustainability, asking not only what obstructs or enables sustainable practices, but how chefs make sense of these dynamics in their own words and actions.

As outlined in previous chapters, the chefs interviewed operate in diverse geographical, cultural, and infrastructural contexts. Yet across this diversity, common threads emerged—particularly around shared tensions, creative strategies,

and institutional pressures. Chapter 5 analyzed these patterns thematically, offering a synthesis of how chefs perceive the Michelin Green Star, how they practice sustainability, and what obstacles and enablers they encounter.

This chapter builds on that synthesis by revisiting the chefs' accounts through a more focused interpretive lens. While Chapter 5 highlighted perception and practice, Chapter 6 centers on how chefs frame their work in terms of systemic constraints and generative possibilities. In doing so, it lays the groundwork for conceptualizing the disjuncture between symbolic recognition and operational feasibility—a tension that will be theorized through the framework of the *Michelin Conflict*.

6.2 Challenges

6.2.1 Infrastructural limitations

A recurring theme across interviews was the absence or unreliability of local infrastructure to support sustainable practices. Recycling systems were inconsistent or unavailable in certain regions, and many chefs expressed frustration at the logistical challenges this created.

> Now, if you are a small restaurant in Kadıköy and already have barely enough space to run operations, no one expects you to do composting, produce something, or even have room to place a recycling bin. Most of the time, that is simply not possible. (C1)

Even chefs working in major urban centers noted the difficulty of aligning operational needs with infrastructural availability. Basic practices such as composting or energy tracking were often unattainable due to regional limitations rather than lack of intent.

> We are able to do our composting. But within the city, a business does not have such an opportunity. There is also no possibility to recycle its organic waste. (C8)

> The restaurant had no electricity or running water. We still have no sewer system. We're still having a septic tank installed. It's 2025. (C2)

These limitations reflect a broader structural gap between institutional recognition of sustainability and the material realities of implementing it.

6.2.2 Access to certified local products

Many chefs emphasized a commitment to local sourcing, but noted that certification systems were inadequate, costly, or entirely absent in their regions. This lack of certification created tension between sustainable intent and formal recognition.

> In Türkiye, the most important thing is, um, obtaining organic certification. Hardly anyone gets it or makes the effort. But of course, if you want to be sustainable, you need to have these certifications. (C11)

This created practical and reputational challenges, especially in relation to the Michelin Green Star's implicit emphasis on traceability and formal documentation.

> A business needs to share this data and be able to truly explain what it does and why it does it. (C3)

The result is a paradox where chefs engage in sustainable sourcing practices that remain institutionally invisible or undervalued.

6.2.3 Cost pressures and financial risk

Rising ingredient costs and the financial risks associated with sustainable procurement emerged as a significant concern. Many chefs expressed that working sustainably was often more expensive and required careful balancing of budgets and principles.

> So, back then, using seasonal produce was a great opportunity. We used local ingredients. The price was cheap. (C10)

These financial strains were intensified by the high standards expected in fine dining, making sustainable choices a potential liability rather than a market advantage.

> A business needs to have a correct mathematical and financial infrastructure to ensure economic sustainability. (C9)

Cost considerations frequently clashed with the public image of sustainability, particularly when guests assumed that Michelin recognition equated to abundant resources.

6.2.4 Staff turnover and labor shortages

Several chefs cited labor as one of the most unstable dimensions of sustainability. High staff turnover, difficulties in hiring, and emotional burnout affected not just kitchen operations but the ability to maintain consistent sustainability practices.

> Because every new employee is trying to adapt to your understanding of sustainability. They’re breaking the rules. (C12)

> I don't know if it looks like it from the outside, but it's a job where you have huge varicose veins in your legs, standing for 12, 13 hours a day, working with eight hernias, cleaning rooms with a 40-degree fever, a very demanding job, a job where you have to improve yourself 24/7, a job where you can't stand still, constantly preoccupied with how to make a better meal than the previous one, a very psychologically and physically draining job. (C2)

In this context, sustainability became inseparable from labor conditions. Without stable teams, relational knowledge and shared values became harder to sustain.

6.2.5 Ambiguity of Michelin’s sustainability criteria

The lack of clear, transparent sustainability criteria from the Michelin Guide was a common source of confusion and critique. Chefs expressed uncertainty about how their efforts were evaluated and what benchmarks they were expected to meet.

> In fact, because Michelin itself was founded on an unsustainable mentality, they have become a benchmark that has grown too much and has become a standard-setting criterion in gastronomy. What they are trying to do now is, how can we turn this power into something useful? In other words, they are saying, "What can we do to make our say count now?" (C1)

> So, I think the criteria are being emphasized incorrectly. Well, the emphasis should be on waste reduction. Reduction, in other words, reduction should be achieved by changing behavior. However, the sector is changing materials (C4)

> I don't know what the criteria are. (C9)

> Sustainability is the hardest part. Now you're making a menu. But of course, the land doesn't give you, well, like a factory. So one day, there's tomato, the next, there's none ... One day it says it's there, the next it says it's not ... I mean, in Türkiye, we can't put fish names on the menu. It's always Catch of the Day ... Tomorrow, there's a special customer. They want Laos. You tell the fishmonger. Okay, brother, he says. The customer comes to the shop. They're just about to arrive, brother, Laos isn't fresh from the sea ... Now, Michelin comes in, and the inspector looks at the plate ... It has to be the standard size. A red mullet. One day it's big, the next day it's small. So, we say that. It's that difficult. I mean. I think the biggest challenge is to standardize it. (C10)

This opacity contributed to skepticism about whether the recognition genuinely reflected substantive practices or whether it functioned primarily as symbolic capital.

> The real problem is that I doubt what percentage of kitchens in Türkiye that claim to be sustainable are actually sustainable. The key to sustainability is certainly working with local produce, but whether the underlying system is sustainable is also crucial. If that's not the case, you can work as locally as you like, use as many geographical indications as you like, but for me, it's never sustainable. Unfortunately, sustainability has become a market. (C12)

> And from the first day we opened the hotel, we've always strived to provide good food and good service. Well, we already knew we were at a certain level ... Why couldn't they give it? The whole thing was a mess. News broke out. 30, 40. I don't know what. The same problems again in the second year. The Michelin stars. Well, I had a lot of back and forth, wondering if Şile was Istanbul or not, and the press reported it ... Our friends, our customers, our guests, everyone is asking, why isn't this place being evaluated? This is what it is. All of these, well, probably somehow contributed to this. They heard about us, you know, they knew they needed to come. And finally, they came. Well, we were very happy to get the star. Well, it was like our childhood dream anyway. (C8)

This institutional ambiguity undermined the motivational value of the award for some chefs and generated mistrust in its selection process.

6.2.6 Misalignment between institutional expectations and operational realities

A broader institutional misalignment was reported, where the ideals promoted by recognition systems like Michelin were out of sync with the everyday limitations chefs faced. Chefs felt that awards systems sometimes prioritized aesthetic markers over lived effort.

> So, let me add this first: there's no such thing as being sustainable to get the Michelin Green Star. No one would undertake such an endeavor anyway. Because the infrastructure costs hundreds of thousands of dollars just to get one green star. No one would do such a crazy thing. And no one would accept it. (C1)

Others noted that the expectations tied to Michelin visibility increased pressure without increasing capacity.

> The day after receiving the award ... approximately 550 phone calls were made. In total, in one week. What about these effects? What about 550 people calling 550 times on average from 4 people. Well, if you calculate it, how do you look at it? Nearly 2,000 people. They want to come to your restaurant and eat. Every evening, between 60 sessions and 80 sessions. If you imagine receiving it, your months are over. Sold out. (C3)

This misalignment created a feeling of being “caught in between”—upholding sustainability while being judged by frameworks that don’t reflect local complexity.

6.2.7 Emotional and moral burden

Several chefs described sustainability as an emotionally demanding commitment. The tension between values and viability produced exhaustion, self-doubt, and in some cases, isolation.

> If you lived with us for a week, you’d quit—let me put it that way, your profession. (C 10)

> Let me put it this way, I often forget to leave the kitchen. Sometimes it's evening. I say, "I haven't eaten." (C12)

This blunt comment encapsulates the emotional and physical toll of sustaining a values-driven kitchen under systemic strain...

> That's why they say they're having trouble finding staff. Yes, they are. ... Well, you'll have to work 10, 11, 12 hours a day. Actually, you'll give them one day off, but you'll pay them a little more than minimum wage. That's over. People need to understand that they need to share their earnings, or that the more I give, the more I earn. Well, when we understand that, the sector will improve soon. Currently in Türkiye. Well, the number of people satisfied with their current positions is 3-5 percent. (C12)

This emotional labor is rarely acknowledged in institutional narratives, yet it is central to the lived experience of sustainable practice in fine dining.

These seven challenges can be summarized under the mnemonic BICCCOS**,** evoking the word *because*. Each element represents a reason *why* sustainability proves difficult in practice: Burnout, Infrastructure, Certification, Cost, Criteria, Operations, and Staff. Framed as *BICCCOS*, these challenges highlight the structural barriers chefs must navigate to align ideals of sustainable gastronomy with their everyday realities.

6.3 Opportunities

6.3.1 Deepened relationships with local producers

Several chefs described how sustainability prompted stronger, more intentional relationships with local producers. Rather than relying on intermediaries, many emphasized direct sourcing based on trust and collaboration.

> We're still with this ocre producer. But now others are buying it, too. Others are buying from him, too. (C7)

> Our most senior employee has been with us for 15 years. (C7)

These relationships often extended beyond transactional dynamics, becoming partnerships shaped by shared values and local knowledge. Chefs highlighted this as one of the most meaningful outcomes of their sustainability work.

6.3.2 Practice-based innovation

Sustainability constraints often became drivers of innovation in kitchen processes, menu design, and procurement strategies. Chefs reported that limitations—such as ingredient availability or waste reduction goals – spurred creative experimentation.

> For example, we had fermented peach. We gave it to them, but we couldn't convince them. That is, we couldn't convince the guest that it only got that flavor with salt. (C1)

> We run the beets through the juicer. We separate the beet juice. Now, normally, you should be throwing away the beet pulp in the waste container at the back of the juicer. It all goes into the dryer. Then it goes through the mixer. It's a bright red powder. We use that powder as a garnish on a plate. Or to color bread. I mean, it's very stylish ... I'm talking about the mentality ... When you cut bread at a Michelin restaurant, having a swirl of red beet powder in it looks stylish. From another perspective, it's not spending money on it. It's a beauty that you're using it from materials you'd throw away. In other words, what we call sustainability. (C2)

> I think they check online or something, but they actually come here and say, "What's happening? What's going on? How many people are there in the garden team? How many people are there?" Here's the energy and the farms. If only they could look at them, not just one. They'd give us three Green Stars. I mean, if you saw what we do, sometimes you'd call it crazy. There's a lot of hard work here. Let me put it this way. Trees are cared for separately. Vegetable gardens are cared for separately. They're edible. Flowers are cared for separately. There's solar energy. Olive oil is produced. Potatoes are being harvested on the mountain land. Asparagus is being planted. I mean, if we work one unit in the kitchen, maybe. In the garden, we work three units. (C10)

Rather than seeing limitations as obstacles, many chefs framed them as openings for ingenuity and problem-solving. One chef described a preventative approach to food waste through guest coordination:

> We make sure to have them choose their menus before arriving, so that we can prepare accordingly and minimize the waste we might generate. (C9)

This tactic illustrates strategic adaptation beyond the kitchen, integrating sustainability into the entire dining experience.

6.3.3 Strengthened internal culture and team morale

Sustainability was also reflected in internal kitchen culture. Several chefs noted that ethical commitments extended beyond procurement and into how teams were organized, trained, and supported.

> So, in that context, I can't express how important it is for both me and the motivation of the teams that work with me. In other words, it's very important. (C1)

> But the 20- and 25-year-olds who work for me have another 25 years to go. They might even have another 30 years. Of course, they're much more excited. I'm working at a MGS restaurant. When they ask, "Where do you work?" they have a name they can proudly tell. They have a restaurant name. They're proud to say the name of their business. Of course, it's a much bigger motivation for them than it is for me. But it's also very important to me. (C2)

Efforts to create respectful, inclusive, and collaborative work environments were often described as part of a broader sustainability ethic—one that nurtures people as well as ingredients.

6.3.4 Public interest and guest education

A number of chefs saw increased public interest in sustainability as an opportunity to educate guests and shift expectations. The Michelin Green Star brought visibility, and chefs used that platform to initiate conversations about waste, sourcing, and seasonality.

> Yes, I'm being taken more seriously. As an authority. Now that's a nice thing. Of course, it's a nice thing. (C2)

> Our guests have become more aware. But there's been no change in our operations. We're continuing with our plans. We're not doing anything special again. (C11)

The dining room became a space for storytelling and value-sharing, not just consumption.

> Our guests are very curious, so they listen. What? What's it like? You know, this whole food adventure. (C7)

6.3.5 Ethical consistency and personal fulfillment

Several chefs described sustainability not just as a professional goal but as a personal ethic. Making decisions aligned with their values—despite institutional ambiguity—offered a sense of coherence and meaning.

> We didn't compete to get the prize. We didn't do anything. (C5)

> Sustainable gastronomy, for me, represents the hope of cooking in the future. (C6)

> What I want to maintain, of course, is to ensure that our culinary culture and traditions remain accepted in the future. Therefore, to ensure their preservation. (C9)

> I don't work for rewards. (C11)

This alignment between personal beliefs and professional action was often framed as a quiet but powerful reward.

6.3.6 Strategic autonomy and self-definition

Despite external pressures, many chefs emphasized the importance of autonomy—making decisions that made sense locally, even if they didn’t match institutional templates.

> Especially in Türkiye. It's either too expensive or something. They eat grass, what could be different? ... That's why we always try to be as modest and inclusive as possible. (C6)

> So, when you look at it, it's turned into a serious ecosystem. Of course, this has its pros and cons. Normally, we spend at least 3 million to 5 million Turkish Lira on agriculture. Right now, we spend a lot of money on agriculture. But when you look at it, if I were to buy this product from a market or a greengrocer here, it would be much cheaper. It would be the same for me. And it would be much more refined. So, here are the tomatoes we use. One large, one small, one medium, because there's no pesticide here. Now, sustainability. That's what it's like in my eyes. (C10)

This autonomy allowed chefs to define sustainability in their own terms and resist overly standardized interpretations. It also offered a buffer against the anxiety produced by vague or mismatched institutional expectations.

6.3.7 Shaping the field from below

Finally, some chefs reflected on their role in influencing the wider culinary landscape—not by following trends, but by setting precedents. They described their sustainability work as a contribution to broader change, even when that change was slow or institutionally unsupported.

> I'm talking about employee welfare here. Well, the sharing of profits from the top down. So, I'm talking about something other than a pool of benefits, salaries, and so on. And I'm interested in the concepts of cooperative competition. (C3)

> You're going to teach someone. They'll carry it forward a generation. So, we'll prevent it from disappearing. This is a lot. This knowledge. For example. I really enjoy it. That's why I think we need to pass on a lot of what we know. This is really one of the main reasons for education in the kitchen, in my opinion. It's important. Because without education, there's no sustainability. You can't do it. (C3)

> Conscience. It's something that should exist not only between humans but also between animals and nature. It made me re-evaluate these things and quickly and sharply shift my career in that direction. (C6)

In these accounts, sustainability became a form of leadership—not only in the kitchen, but within the evolving discourse of gastronomy.

In contrast, the opportunities can be synthesized as GILTALE — a term that recalls both *gilt* (the golden shine of recognition) and *ale* (fermentation as a symbol of culinary tradition). Together, the seven themes tell a "golden tale" of possibility: Guest education, Innovation, Locality, Team culture, Autonomy, Leadership, and Ethics. As *GILTALE,* these opportunities point to the ways chefs actively construct pathways toward a more meaningful and resilient practice of sustainability.

6.4 The Michelin conflict

6.4.1 Recognition, not motivation: the symbolic value of michelin

Several chefs framed the Michelin Green Star not as something they had deliberately pursued, but as a form of recognition that affirmed practices already long in place. Rather than functioning as a driver of sustainability, the award was described as validating a commitment already embedded in their culinary identity.

> Michelin has validated what I have been doing. That honours me. (C2)

Chef C2 emphasized the institutional credibility of Michelin, describing it as the most respected evaluation mechanism in the global culinary field. Still, there was nuance in this admiration. As C2 remarked, not everyone must respect Michelin, reflecting a blend of appreciation and self-assurance.

> There is no point in belittling its value. There is no point in exaggerating its value either. (C4)

6.4.2 Awareness and self-confidence

Beyond prestige, some chefs credited the Green Star with raising public and industry awareness about sustainability. For many, the award opened up new conversations without dictating their values or methods.

> It didn't affect us much. We're continuing the same way. I'd say so. We're doing what we do. (C10)

Despite the increased attention, most chefs emphasized that their practices were not shaped by Michelin expectations. They expressed a high degree of professional autonomy and intrinsic motivation, seeing the Green Star as a welcome acknowledgment but not as a compass for their decisions.

> Denmark. Yes, it may be a very sustainable country, both environmentally and economically, but it's not a very sustainable country, especially for chefs. Well, I can say this clearly. I'm talking about the culinary sector, where working conditions are very harsh. Michelin-starred restaurants have 14- to 15-hour shifts daily. This is in the kitchen. This isn't very sustainable either. It doesn't motivate employees socially. Of course, these are the experiences I've had here. I always say, "This seems absurd to me." In my own kitchen, there won't be anything like this. Everyone works 9 hours, maximum 10 hours. Depending on workload, it can go up to 10 hours a day or two, but I schedule shifts to no more than 9 hours, so everyone has a private life. (C11)

Across the sample, this sentiment echoed consistently. Recognition was appreciated, but it did not displace internal convictions or locally grounded decision-making.

6.4.3 Critical voices: Concerns about criteria and evaluation

While the overall reception was positive, some chefs voiced specific critiques—particularly around the opacity of Michelin's sustainability assessment. The absence of transparent criteria or follow-up communication raised questions about credibility and consistency.

> For example, you receive very little information about sustainability from Michelin. It's informational, but it's full of information. It's a bit more like that. I really feel it's for marketing purposes. But the Food Made Good Standard also provides very serious information. (C8)

> So, it means that what we do is somehow being seen and appreciated. Beyond that, as I said at the beginning, my reactions and statements when the Michelin Green Star was first recognized were along these lines: I don't know how or what they rated us to find us worthy of the Green Star, but what I really want to think is that they should have given us this star because of our work in social sustainability. That's our only hope. Therefore, our hope continues to be that way. (C9)

This lack of clarity, particularly when compared to other systems with defined benchmarks, produced a sense of institutional ambiguity. For some, this raised concerns about accountability and led to skepticism about whether the award always reflects substantive sustainability practices.

6.4.4 Suggestions for improvement: A tiered sustainability recognition

One of the most generative critiques came from a chef who offered a concrete alternative to the current one-tier Green Star. Drawing a parallel with the culinary star system, C11 proposed a multi-tier sustainability rating (e.g., One Green Star, Two Green Stars, Three Green Stars), which could distinguish varying levels of effort, impact, and innovation.

> But I have a humble criticism about this green star. So, what is it, if you ask? It's like a regular star. They don't give 1, 2, or 3 stars. So, not every restaurant is equally sustainable. This needs to be differentiated, which I believe restaurants should do to encourage them to do more sustainable work. (C11)

This suggestion reframes the Green Star as not just symbolic recognition, but a potential driver of continuous improvement. It reflects a desire for more rigorous standards and deeper alignment between sustainability recognition and sustainability in practice.

6.4.5 Conclusion: Affirmation without transformation

For most chefs, the Green Star acted as symbolic affirmation rather than a disruptive shift. It acknowledged existing values and lent public visibility to work already underway. Far from generating pressure or causing mission drift, the award often reinforced professional self-understanding.

At the same time, it invited critical reflection. A few chefs proposed rethinking the traditional rating model, not to reject it, but to enhance its legitimacy and depth. The suggestion of a multi-tier system captures a key tension: chefs want recognition to evolve alongside practice—not to remain a static badge but to function as a dynamic and accountable benchmark.

In this sense, the so-called Michelin effect – long theorized as a transformative force – appears, in the Turkish context, to function more as confirmation than transformation. These chefs' sustainability work arises from deeply embedded principles, not external incentives.

6.4.6 The Michelin conflict: Between principles and practice

Despite the symbolic benefits of Michelin recognition, unresolved tensions persist between sustainability as lived practice and sustainability as institutional recognition. The *Michelin Conflict*, as conceptualized here, is not an indictment of any single actor—it is a confrontation with systemic contradiction.

One source of tension is psychological pressure (SDG 3). Several chefs reported increased expectations from guests and staff following the award, contributing to emotional strain and performance anxiety.

> But my composting busboy – it (MGS) is incredibly valuable to him. It's being done in the background. These are the realities of sustainability. Now, patting you on the back while you're doing them and saying, "Yes, look, there's a reward and a reward for this, too." It sets a goal for them. Believe

> me, it's encouraging so many young people around the world to research and learn these practices and implement them in the future. I think this is incredibly valuable. Chefs can't ask for anything more. (C1)
>
> Unfortunately, just the other day, a chef I met in Rotterdam told me that his uncle was also a chef, but he committed suicide because he couldn't stand the stress of having a Michelin star. (C9)
>
> The negative impact of Michelin, of course, is serious stress. It puts a strain on the staff. (C10)

A second tension arises from the lack of transparency in evaluation systems (SDG 16). Without clear criteria or communication, chefs struggled to align their practices with Michelin's intentions.

> Similarly, they send out questions to businesses before the guide is released. They send out a questionnaire. And from that five-to-ten-question questionnaire, they decide whether a business truly deserves that star. I have no idea how they award it. (C9)

A third concern relates to greenwashing and symbolic performance (SDG 12). Chefs expressed frustration that surface-level gestures could be mistaken for deep commitment.

> There's something called whitewashing. We believe people shouldn't make that mistake with their carbon footprint. Plant this many trees to neutralize your footprint. How can that be? You already plant trees. For the sake of the world's future, but strive to reduce your footprint. (C9)
>
> Or, as some friends do, go to the grocery store and buy produce. Sharing photos of your fields and saying, "I'm sustainable." That's not sustainability. (C10)

Another layer involves the misalignment of evaluation models with local realities (SDG 17).

Several chefs described Michelin's framework as disconnected from their everyday challenges.

> Because now we have a problem. We earn money, but we can't spend it. Because we're already paying fifty percent of our earnings to the government, and we don't know what kind of taxation will be applied. Since we're paying fifty percent of our earnings to the government, we don't actually own the money we earn. The money is for the other half, and God forbid, the

> remaining money at the end of the year. How will we pay salaries if a disaster happens in the future? We're doing this because we have to keep it. We've become afraid to do everything. I wish it were easier. The government would give us incentives, interest-free loans to those who do this work. (C2)

> I don't think it's because of Michelin. I think it's because of Türkiye's current economic and political situation. That's why I'm talking about it. Well, it's 2025. Well, right now is the worst year since we opened. (C10)

Lastly, the gap between economic reality and institutional recognition (SDGs 8 & SDG 10) highlighted inequalities in how sustainability is resourced and acknowledged.

> Because the fine dining sector, the Michelin-starred sector, can actually be lower in terms of compensation than fast food. It's very competitive, and the quality-based factors are very high. Generally, most things are incredibly expensive, and therefore, the salaries allocated to the workers themselves aren't as high as those allocated to the services themselves. That is, if not the same. Therefore, as long as we explain that this is a sector that requires dedication and they accept this, they're happier. (C1)

> We brought in a consultant from abroad on edible plants. He's one of the top three consultants in the world. In fact, he still comes three times a year ... That's why we had all the soil analyzed. What's going on? What can be planted here? Well, as I said, we bought small cattle. We bought large cows. Well, we make cheese from their milk. We set up a small cheesehouse. Well, after that. We have the one in Bozdağ. We have the one in Ödemiş. We activated the fields. That's about it. And we use sustainable fabrics, right down to the staff's uniforms. So, we're doing everything we can to do this. I mean, it's a matter of what we can do. What can we do? By the way, no one can do this job hundred percent. In today's Türkiye. But we try to do it this way as much as we can. (C10)

Together, these reflections reveal sustainability not as a checklist or destination, but as an unresolved and deeply relational practice. The *Michelin Conflict* encapsulates this: the friction between institutional symbolism and operational reality, between recognition and risk, between aspiration and exhaustion.

6.5 The situated model of sustainability

The findings presented in this chapter suggest that sustainability in Türkiye's Michelin Green-Starred restaurants cannot be captured by universal models,

standardized criteria, or abstract frameworks. Instead, it must be understood as situated—shaped by the interplay of local conditions, personal values, institutional frictions, and practical constraints. Across both challenges and opportunities, chefs articulated a form of sustainability that is deeply relational and constantly negotiated rather than fixed or formulaic.

This model is situated in at least three key ways:

First, it is context-dependent. The chefs' strategies reflect their geographical settings, resource availability, and infrastructural limitations. Sustainability practices are not implemented in ideal conditions but are adapted to local systems—often through creative improvisation and ethical compromise. The same practice (e.g., waste reduction) means something different in İstanbul than in rural Anatolia, not because of philosophical disagreement, but because of what is materially possible in each place.

Second, it is relational. Sustainability was frequently described not only in terms of environmental care, but also through human relationships—between chefs and producers, chefs and staff, chefs and guests. It is enacted through emotional labor, ethical leadership, and shared responsibility, making it inseparable from the social dynamics of the kitchen and the broader food ecosystem. These relationships are not always smooth; they are often the very sites where tension, exhaustion, and adaptation unfold.

Third, it is resistant to institutional flattening. The chefs' accounts repeatedly emphasized autonomy, local relevance, and distrust of externally imposed standards that fail to capture their day-to-day realities. While many appreciated the symbolic value of Michelin recognition, few believed it accurately reflected the depth or

difficulty of their work. The call for a tiered Green Star system (6.4.4) captures this disconnect: a desire for recognition that evolves alongside practice, rather than simplifying it.

Taken together, these findings advance a model of sustainability that is not prescriptive but situated in lived experience. It is neither an institutional compliance checklist nor a branding exercise. It is a daily practice—contingent, improvised, and rooted in conviction. By emphasizing this relational and adaptive character, the chapter challenges dominant narratives of sustainability as a stable or scalable concept. Instead, it frames it as a moving target, co-produced by chefs working within—and often against—the limitations of their environments.

In this light, the sustainability practiced by these chefs is not simply a response to external demands. It is a form of professional and ethical authorship—a way of making meaning in conditions of uncertainty. As the next chapter will argue, this situated authorship is what makes the *Michelin Conflict* so significant. It reveals the fault lines between recognition and reality, and it asks what kind of institutions are needed to support sustainability not as a standard, but as a struggle.

This situated model of sustainability not only reframes how we interpret chefs' practiceas – it also raises critical questions about the institutional structures meant to recognize and support those practices. The tensions explored throughout this chapter point to a deeper contradiction between sustainability as lived, situated effort and sustainability as symbolic validation. It is in this gap that the *Michelin Conflict* takes shape—not as a rejection of recognition, but as a demand for alignment between values, labor, and legitimacy.

Chapter 7 builds on this foundation to examine how such contradictions can inform a broader critique of recognition systems, and what a more responsive and context-aware model of institutional support might require.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

This thesis set out to explore the challenges and opportunities of sustainable gastronomy through the lens of Michelin Green-Starred ventures in Türkiye. The findings revealed a structural contradiction between the public image of sustainability and the lived realities of those producing it. While chefs are central to implementing sustainable creativity, they are often excluded from sustainability as a lived experience due to long hours, economic precarity, and physical exhaustion. These tensions culminate in what this thesis defines as The *Michelin Conflict* — a paradox in which sustainability is celebrated on the plate, yet unsupported in the back of house.

This contradiction resonates with broader critiques of institutionalized recognition systems. Scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu (1986) have shown that symbolic capital—prestige, legitimacy, visibility—is often distributed by elite institutions with little accountability to the labor that produces value. In the case of the Green Star, this symbolic capital is awarded through a non-transparent evaluative system, leading to what Espeland and Sauder (2007) term “reactivity”: the pressure to adapt to institutional expectations that are opaque or unstable. In this study, chefs neither rejected nor romanticized the Michelin Guide; rather, they expressed ambivalence—welcoming recognition, but questioning its criteria and consequences.

As shown in Appendix F – The Dynamic Inventory of Michelin Ratings (Summer 2025), the number of Michelin-recognized restaurants worldwide increased from 10,972 to 11,128 between June and August 2025, with Green Star listings rising from 634 to 642. These shifts may appear modest but reflect the constant flux of a

global evaluation system. In such a dynamic landscape, consistent and transparent recognition of sustainability—especially across divergent local contexts—becomes increasingly difficult. This volatility amplifies the symbolic inflation of accolades (Frey & Neckermann, 2008), where the visibility of awards grows while their evaluative depth remains shallow.

At present, the Michelin Green Star primarily emphasizes external environmental practices: seasonal sourcing, waste reduction, and ecological responsibility. Internal dimensions of sustainability—such as staff well-being, fair labor, or psychological health—are conspicuously absent from the framework. Scholars such as Sloan, Legrand, and Simons-Kaufmann (2014) have outlined sustainability in hospitality as a triple-bottom-line concept, involving environmental, social, and economic pillars. However, Michelin's framework appears ecologically weighted, neglecting social sustainability metrics like SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Field interviews and observations confirmed this gap: Michelin does not currently assess how restaurants treat their own employees. The "internal customer" concept—long used in service management to signal staff care and organizational ethics (Zeithaml et al., 2006)—remains missing from current Green Star logic. This silence reinforces what Baum (2018) calls the "social sustainability blind spot" in tourism and hospitality discourse.

And yet, many chefs interviewed in this study are already exceeding institutional expectations. Without external pressure or public reward, they implement practices that support mental health, improve scheduling, foster team cohesion, and elevate dignity in labor. This reflects what Du Gay and Salaman (1992) describe as "ethical entrepreneurship"—a commitment to values beyond

market or institutional compliance. Their efforts also resonate with what Lamont (2012) calls “everyday boundary work,” where actors create their own legitimacy standards when institutional ones fall short.

A solution may lie in a tiered Green Star system—mirroring Michelin’s existing one-, two-, and three-star hierarchy for culinary excellence. A three-level sustainability model could offer a more meaningful benchmark, with top tiers reserved for ventures integrating environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Such reform could realign symbolic recognition with actual practice and give overdue visibility to chefs already leading by example. This parallels suggestions in recent scholarship (e.g., Huang, Hall, & Chen, 2023b) that certification systems should adopt graduated and localized standards to reflect sustainability’s complex realities.

In this light, these chefs are not merely adapting to sustainability—they are redefining it. These dynamics are further distilled into two mnemonic frameworks—BICCCOS and GILTALE—which will be elaborated in the following chapter. The next chapter builds on this synthesis by situating these insights within global sustainability frameworks, theoretical debates, and practical implications.

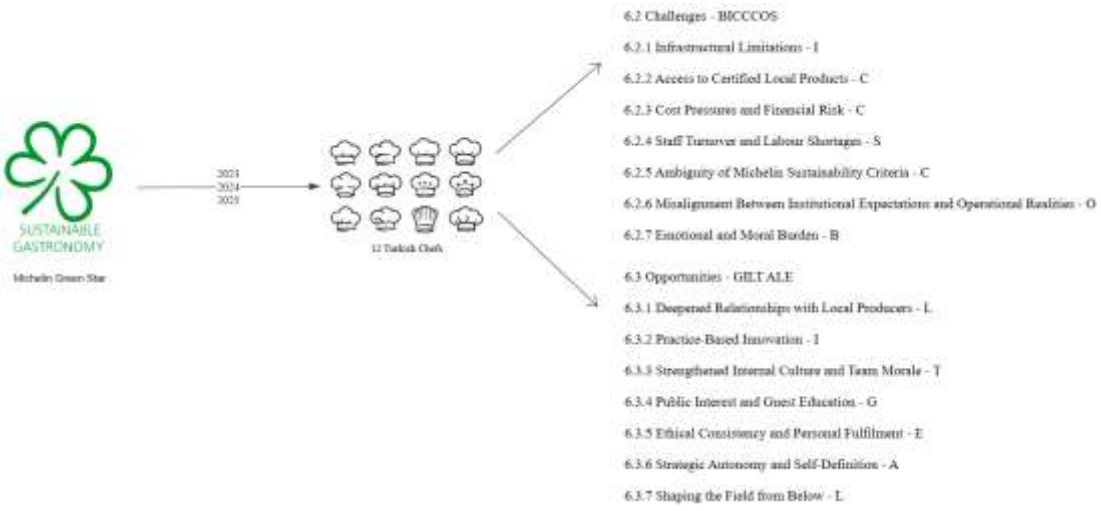


Figure 2. The final conceptual model

Chapter 7 situates these findings within global sustainability frameworks, theoretical debates, and practical implications.

7.1 Sustainable development goals

Sustainability, as defined by the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), integrates environmental, social, and economic dimensions. While Michelin's Green Star touches on SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), it falls short on SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). This incomplete alignment calls into question the comprehensiveness of Green Star recognition and its fitness as a global sustainability benchmark.

7.2 The Michelin conflict: Michelin Green Star $\stackrel{?}{=}$ sustainable gastronomy

The rise of the Michelin Green Star reveals a core paradox: while the award signals sustainability, it may not guarantee it. This tension is encapsulated in the *Michelin Conflict*—a term coined in this study to describe the gap between symbolic recognition and structural feasibility.

This inequity is exemplified by high-profile closures such as Noma[5], whose commitment to environmental sustainability could not compensate for unsustainable labor models (Mejia & Wilson, 2024). The question arises: Can a restaurant be truly sustainable if it fails to sustain its own workforce?

[5] https://guide.michelin.com/tr/en/capital-region/copenhagen/restaurant/noma

To capture this tension, the study introduces the symbol "$\stackrel{?}{=}$" – denoting an interrogated or unstable equivalence:

Michelin Green Star $\stackrel{?}{=}$ Sustainable Gastronomy

The symbol invites scrutiny. Does the Green Star measure holistic sustainability—or does it function as aesthetic signaling?

After extensive fieldwork and conceptual reflection, the study resolves this into a more assertive conclusion:

Michelin Green Star ≠ Sustainable Gastronomy

The dissonance is supported by findings such as Huang, Hall, and Chen (2023b), who found that Green Star restaurants often emphasize local sourcing but omit labor sustainability. The Green Star, in its current form, risks functioning as a marketing device rather than a rigorous standard.

In Türkiye, the contradiction deepens: as chefs navigate bureaucratic ambiguity and operational strain, sustainability becomes an informal ethos—practiced from conviction rather than compliance.

Beyond the chefs' critiques, a second layer of tension emerges from Michelin's global scale. Between June and August 2025, dynamic changes in accolades raise questions about the consistency and credibility of the Guide's assessments. A forthcoming accolade-tracking snapshot in Appendix F will illustrate the scale of these fluctuations and the logistical impossibility of upholding deep evaluation under such rapid expansion.

Read together, the findings coalesce into two mnemonic frameworks: BICCCOS and GILTALE. The first explains *because* sustainability falters under conditions of Burnout, Infrastructure, Certification, Cost, Criteria, Operations, and Staff. The second narrates a *gilt ale* of possibilities in Guest education, Innovation,

Locality, Team culture, Autonomy, Leadership, and Ethics. This duality underscores a central insight: sustainable gastronomy is simultaneously obstructed by systemic limitations and animated by generative practices. Positioned against the wider literature, these twin heuristics highlight how recognition emerges not as a stable outcome but as a contested field, shaped by both constraint and creativity.

7.3 Theoretical and practical implications

This study introduces two original contributions—*The Michelin Conflict* and *SAGE AURA*—that open new ways of thinking about sustainable gastronomy. While the findings emerged from interviews with chefs, their implications extend into wider academic and professional conversations about sustainability, awards, and research practices.

7.3.1 Theoretical implications

7.3.1.1 Michelin conflict as conceptual contribution

This thesis introduces The *Michelin Conflict* as a conceptual frame to describe the unresolved tension between institutional sustainability recognition and the lived conditions of those tasked with enacting it. While the Michelin Green Star claims to reward sustainable gastronomy, the award lacks clear, public criteria and largely ignores social sustainability, particularly labor ethics, staff well-being, and fair scheduling. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) theory of symbolic power, the Green Star operates as a form of symbolic capital – conferring legitimacy from above, yet rarely grounded in the material and moral struggles of those below.

The chefs interviewed in this study, though grateful for recognition, expressed limited awareness of Michelin's sustainability standards and voiced frustration over the opacity of evaluation mechanisms. This paradox challenges the

dominant logic of awards: they appear to measure sustainability but may, in fact, perform it. The *Michelin Conflict* thus builds on critiques of symbolic efficiency without institutional accountability (Espeland & Sauder, 2007) and contributes to the growing literature on critical sustainability, which interrogates how sustainability is defined, by whom, and with what consequences (Scoones, 2007; Kravčík, 2019).

In naming this contradiction, the thesis provides a diagnostic lens through which future researchers and practitioners can assess not only whether sustainability is being recognized—but how, for whom, and at what cost. The *Michelin Conflict* is not an isolated critique of a single award system; it is a heuristic for rethinking recognition as a broader sociotechnical apparatus, one that circulates institutional values under the guise of neutrality.

7.3.1.2 Rethinking awards through lived practice

This study also complicates the conventional belief that sustainability must be verified from above. The chefs in this research were already implementing sustainability practices—rooted in local knowledge, ethical care, and team resilience—long before Michelin arrived. These findings echo Lamont's (2012) call to study grassroots legitimation processes, in which actors produce their own standards of worth when institutional ones prove insufficient. In this context, sustainability emerges less as a checklist and more as a relational practice, shaped by lived experience rather than static criteria.

The discrepancy between what is awarded and what is practiced underscores the politics of recognition in contemporary gastronomy. Rather than assume that awards reflect excellence, this thesis calls for sustained ethnographic engagement with how chefs negotiate, reinterpret, and—at times—resist symbolic recognition. As

such, The *Michelin Conflict* contributes to a shift in food studies and tourism scholarship: from evaluating restaurants through institutional categories to understanding institutions through the eyes of those they evaluate.

7.3.1.3 SAGE AURA as methodological innovation

In addition to its conceptual contributions, this thesis introduces SAGE AURA (Search-Algorithm Guided Exploration: Algorithmically Uncovered Relational Access) as a methodological insight into how digital infrastructures shape fieldwork in the 21st century. Initial access to field sites was not mediated through official Michelin listings or culinary institutions, but through algorithmic pathways on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Spotify – surfacing unexpected actors, narratives, and atmospheres.

By naming this process, SAGE AURA builds on the emerging literature in digital ethnography (Pink et al., 2015; Lupton, 2021) and proposes that algorithmic visibility should be treated not merely as a convenience, but as a structuring condition of field emergence. It invites reflexive awareness about how researcher attention is shaped, filtered, and channeled in digital environments—especially in fields like gastronomy, where cultural capital is increasingly performed online.

In this way, SAGE AURA contributes to both qualitative methods and the epistemology of dsustainability research. It shows how discovery itself is relational—always mediated, always partial—and encourages researchers to be attentive to the technologies that shape their gaze.

7.3.1.4 Chefs as Situated Agents

Finally, this thesis advances the view that chefs are not passive recipients of institutional mandates but situated agents navigating a complex web of constraints, aspirations, and moral tensions. Their strategies are neither uniform nor linear—they are context-dependent, emotionally charged, and often improvised. In contrast to top-down visions of sustainable gastronomy, this study offers a grounded, agent-centered perspective, where sustainability is understood as a dynamic negotiation, not a fixed condition.

By repositioning chefs as epistemic agents, the study resonates with actor-network theory (Latour, 2005) and relational approaches to sustainability (Ingold, 2011; Bennett et al., 2009), which reject binaries between structure and agency, global and local. This approach underscores that meaningful sustainability cannot be imposed—it must be co-constructed through the lived experiences of those producing it.

7.3.2 Practical implications

For Michelin and Similar Institutions: Transparency is critical. If chefs do not understand how they are evaluated, awards lose credibility. Michelin must either clarify its sustainability benchmarks or risk institutional incoherence.

For Chefs and Restaurateurs: The lived messiness of sustainability should be recognized as valid. This thesis offers solidarity and visibility to chefs who work under contradictory conditions, often with little support or guidance.

For Policymakers and Tourism Planners: Award systems alone cannot substitute for infrastructural development. Governments promoting sustainable

gastronomy must invest in training, supply chains, and labor protections to make the vision viable on the ground.

For Sustainability and Food Researchers: Sustainability is not a label; it is a lived negotiation. Research must center the everyday frictions experienced by those tasked with making sustainability real under institutional strain.

Ultimately, sustainable gastronomy in Türkiye is defined by both the *BICCCOS* of systemic obstacles and the *GILTALE* of generative possibilities — a tension that redefines recognition as an ongoing negotiation rather than a fixed achievement.

7.4 Limitations and further research recommendations

This study opens pathways for further inquiry:

- Stakeholder Expansion: Future research could include staff, producers, diners, and third-party evaluators for a fuller picture.
- Cross-Country Comparison: Comparative studies across Green Star contexts could determine whether the *Michelin Conflict* is systemic or region-specific.
- Algorithmic Reflexivity: The SAGE AURA approach invites further study on how digital discovery shapes academic focus.
- Hybrid Methods: Combining fieldwork with live institutional tracking may uncover how dynamic accolades affect recognition politics.
- Metric Reform: Scholars could develop interdisciplinary, place-based sustainable gastronomy evaluation models beyond current branding efforts.

7.5 The July 2025 amendment to article 46

This regression further underscores the lived gap between symbolic sustainability and labor realities, reinforcing the critique advanced throughout this chapter. On 11 July 2025, the Turkish Parliament passed an amendment to Article 46 of the Labour Law under Bill 2/3186, allowing tourism-sector employees to work ten consecutive days before receiving a single rest day—without compensation for the additional labor.

Published in Resmî Gazete[6] (No. 32956, 14 July 2025), the amendment undermines basic labor protections and weakens social sustainability benchmarks such as SDG 8. While formal consent is required, the asymmetry of seasonal hospitality employment casts doubt on the voluntariness of such agreements.

This legal development contradicts Türkiye's sustainable tourism ambitions and reinforces the broader critique: symbolic sustainability often masks regressive structures beneath.

7.6 A brand new destination in the MICHELIN Guide – Cappadocia

On 29 July 2025, Michelin announced the inclusion of *Kapadokya* as the fourth Turkish region in its 2026 Guide[7]. Promoted as a place of "ancestral traditions," the expansion signals Michelin's continued global growth. Yet in light of this study's findings, the announcement raises critical questions: Will Michelin replicate the same recognition mechanisms in new geographies without revisiting its criteria? Or will it adapt to reflect local complexities?

[6] Resmî Gazete is the Official Gazette of the Republic of Türkiye, the government's legal bulletin where all national laws and regulations are published.
https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2025/07/20250714-20.htm
Resmî Gazete. (2025, July 14). 4857 sayılı İş Kanunu'na eklenen ek 9. madde; konaklama işletmelerinde haftalık izin düzenlemesi [Addition of Article 9 to Labour Law No. 4857; weekly rest regulation in accommodation establishments]. Resmî Gazete, No. 32956.

[7] https://guide.michelin.com/tr/en/article/news-and-views/cappadocia-michelin-guide-turkiye

7.7 Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the paradox of sustainability in fine dining by centering the voices of chefs navigating the symbolic weight of the Michelin Green Star in Türkiye. The narratives reveal not simply obstacles or triumphs—but a deeper structural contradiction.

Chefs committed to ecological ethics often work under conditions that erode social and economic sustainability. Symbolic gestures are amplified, while labor realities remain obscured. This contradiction is what this thesis names The *Michelin Conflict*: the distance between what sustainability claims and what sustainability demands.

Unless recognition systems evolve, sustainability risks becoming a performance. As this study has shown: sustainability is not a plate arrangement—it is a system. One that involves people, power, and pressure.

What we reward shapes what survives.

7.8 The final word: A clarifying critique

This thesis is not a condemnation of Michelin, nor of the chefs who work under its symbolic weight. Rather, it is an effort to clarify a structural contradiction: the growing distance between the ideals of sustainability and the realities of its recognition. The critique offered here is not adversarial, but diagnostic. It aims to bring recognition systems into closer alignment with the lived experiences of those they claim to celebrate.

What emerged from this research is that sustainability is not only about environmental practices or aesthetic presentation—it is also about labor, well-being,

and the ethics of daily operation. Recognition systems that overlook these dimensions risk reinforcing partial or performative models of sustainability.

The chefs in this study are not simply recipients of institutional judgment. They are agents navigating complex systems, often advancing sustainability in ways that exceed, challenge, or reframe formal criteria. Their accounts show that sustainability in gastronomy is not fixed—it is situated, negotiated, and uneven.

This thesis, therefore, does not offer a final answer, but an open invitation: to rethink how sustainability is defined, measured, and recognized; to move beyond symbolic validation toward substantive change.

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

To adapt these lines[8]:

So long as Michelin can market and chefs can cook,

So long lives this—and this gives life to sustainability.

Let this work serve not as a conclusion, but as a contribution—to a more grounded, inclusive, and critically engaged conversation about the future of sustainable gastronomy.



[8] Sonnet XVIII by Shakespeare

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Green Star Culinary Venture Chefs in Turkey at a Glance - The Demographic Profile										
Chef	**Gender**	**Birth Place**	**Age**	**Current Location**	**Formal Education**	**Formal Culinary Education**	**Culinary Industry Since**	**Chef Since**	**Still part of MGSR**	**(Partner / Owner / Family Enterprise / Wage-Earning)**
C1	M	Istanbul	28	İstanbul	High School	√	2011	2014	√	Wage-Earning
C2	M	Istanbul	39	İzmir	University	-	2008	2018	√	Founding Partner & Owner (Family)
C3	M	Gaziantep	35	İstanbul	University	√	2013	2018	-	Wage-Earning
C4	M	Mersin	38	İzmir	University	√	2015	2017	-	Wage-Earning
C5	F	Muğla	61	Muğla	Primary School	-	1988	1988	√	Founding Partner & Owner (Family)
C6	M	İstanbul	35	İstanbul	University	√	2007	2014	√	Wage-Earning
C7	F	İzmir	67	İzmir	High School	-	2006	2006	√	Founding Partner & Owner (Family)
C8	M	İstanbul	38	İstanbul	High School	√	2007	2010	√	Founding Partner & Owner (Family)
C9	M	İskenderun	48	İstanbul	Minor	√	2007	2007	-	Founding Partner Owner Chef
C10	M	İzmir	43	İzmir	University	√	2005	2005	√	Founding Partner Owner (Family) Chef
C11	M	Zonguldak	30	İstanbul	Master's Degree	√	2017	2024	√	Wage-Earning
C12	M	Adana	32	Muğla	University	√	2019	2024	-	Wage-Earning

APPENDIX B

MICHELIN GREEN STAR AWARDS IN TÜRKİYE

Michelin Green Star Awarded Culinary Ventures* in Türkiye						
Code	**Location**	**Michelin Green Star**	**Michelin One Star**	**Michelin Bib Gourmand**	**Michelin Young Chef**	**Michelin Sommelier**
V1	Muğla	2025			2025	
V2	İzmir	2024 2025	2024 2025			2024
V3	Istanbul	2024		2024		
V4	İzmir	2024 2025		2024 2025		
V5	Muğla	2025		2025		
V6	İstanbul	2025				
V7	İzmir	2025		2025		
V8	İstanbul	2025	2025			
V9	İstanbul	2023 2024 2025	2023 2024 2025			
V10	İzmir	2024 2025	2025 2025			2025
V11	İstanbul	2025				

* This includes not only restaurants but also other culinary ventures such as guesthouses, lokantas, and farm-based kitchens

APPENDIX C*

THE MICHELIN GUIDE CATEGORIZATION

The Michelin Guide Distinctions*

Accolade Award Distinction	Since	Description	Emblem Icon Logo Pictogram
Michelin 1 Star	1926	High Quality Cooking, Worth a Stop!	
Michelin 2 Stars	1931	Excellent Cooking, Worth a Detour!	
Michelin 3 Stars	1931	Exceptional Cuisine, Worth a Special Journey!	
Michelin Bib Gourmand	1955	Good Quality, Good Value Cooking	
Michelin Green Star	2020	Sustainable Gastronomy	

* The table is designed by the researcher depending on the information compiled from the Michelin Official Website - © MICHELIN

APPENDIX D

MICHELIN GUIDE CHRONOLOGY

The Michelin Guide Timeline*		
1889		The Michelin **Tire** Company
1900		The Michelin Guide first edition **free** for the motorists with its **blue** cover in August
1904		Michelin Guide Belgium
1908		The Bureau of Itineraries
1911		The Britain Guide
1920		Michelin Guide **sold** for seven francs
1920		Anonymous inspectors
1921		The number of itenerary requests - 19,000
1925		The number of itinerary requests - 155,000
1926		The Guide began to **award** stars for fine dining establishments
1931		A **hierarchy** of zero, one, two, and three stars was introduced
		Le Guide Rouge also known as **The Red Guide**
1936		The **criteria** for the starred rankings were published
1997		Bib(endum) Gourmand symbol - **Michelin Man** licking his lips
2015		**17 Sustainable Development Goals**
2020		The **Green** Star
2022		The Michelin Guide Turkey debute

* The table is designed by the researcher depending on the information compiled from the Michelin Official Website https://guide.michelin.com/us/en
© MICHELIN https://guide.michelin.com/us/en and
https://www.beyond.fr/food/michelin-guide-history.html
SDG logo © sdgs.un.org

APPENDIX E

ANALYSIS OF MICHELIN GUIDE RESTAURANTS

The Michelin Guide Distinctions*

Accolade Award Distinction	Since	Description	Emblem Icon Logo Pictogram
Michelin 1 Star	1926	High Quality Cooking, Worth a Stop!	
Michelin 2 Stars	1931	Excellent Cooking, Worth a Detour!	
Michelin 3 Stars	1931	Exceptional Cuisine, Worth a Special Journey!	
Michelin Bib Gourmand	1955	Good Quality, Good Value Cooking	
Michelin Green Star	2020	Sustainable Gastronomy	

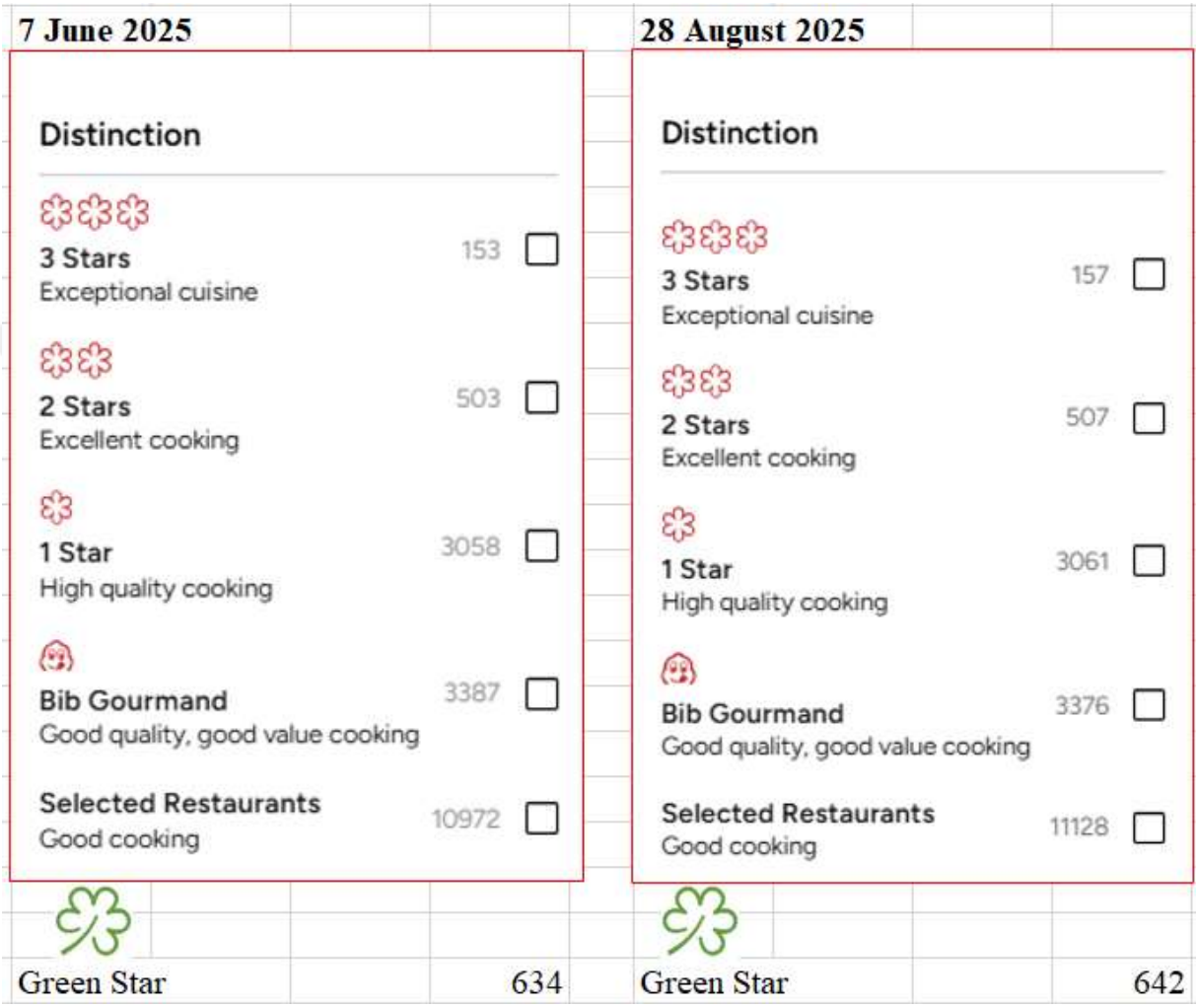
*Designed by the researcher depending on the information compiled from the Michelin Official Website on 7 June 2025 - © MICHELIN

APPENDIX F

THE DYNAMIC INVENTORY OF THE MICHELIN RATINGS*

GLOBAL TOTALS BY CATEGORY

June vs. August 2025



As of **28 August 2025**, the **Michelin Guide** lists a total of **11,128 selected restaurants** worldwide, marking a slight increase from **10,972** in **June 2025**. The updated global distribution of Michelin-recognized restaurants is as follows:

Michelin One-Star Restaurants (M1SR): 3,061 (↑ from 3,058)
Michelin Two-Star Restaurants (M2SR): 507 (↑ from 503)
Michelin Three-Star Restaurants (M3SR): 157 (↑ from 153)
Michelin Bib Gourmand Restaurants (MBGR): 3,376 (↓ from 3,387)
Michelin Green Star Restaurants (MGSR): 642 (↑ from 634)

*Designed by the researcher depending on the information compiled from the Michelin Official Website from June 2025 to August 2025 - © MICHELIN

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Michelin Yeşil Yıldızlı Türkiye Restoranlarının Şefleri: Sürdürülebilir Gastronomide Zorluklar ve Fırsatlar

The Chefs in the Turkish Michelin Green Starred Restaurants: Challenges and Opportunities in Sustainable Gastronomy

Mülakat
Interview

Şef/Chef # 1, 2, 3 . . . (Şefin/Mutfağının anonim kalması amaçlı kodlama kullanılacak)
İşletme/Restaurant # 1, 2, 3 . . . (The researcher will code the chefs/ventures to provide anonymity)

BÖLÜM 1
(Şefle İlgili Genel Bilgiler)
PART I
(General Information regarding the Culinary Chef)

Doğum Yeri / Tarihi :
Birth Place / Date of Birth:

Yaş:
Age:

2025 itibarıyla yerleşik olduğunuz ilçe/il?
Your current location as of 2025?

Aslen nerelisiniz?
Where are you originally from?

Eğitim durumunuz?
Education level?

Mesleğinizle ilgili aldığınız eğitim?
Any education regarding your occupation?

Mutfakta etkin göreve başladığınız tarih (yıl)?
Since when have been active in the kitchen (yıl)?

Şefliğe başladığınız tarih (yıl)?
Since when have you been a culinary chef (year)?

BÖLÜM II
(Michelin Yeşil Yıldız kazanan işletmeye dair genel bilgiler)
PART II
(General Information regarding the Michelin-Starred restaurant)

Michelin ödülü alan işletmenin konumu (ilçe/il)?
The location of the Michelin-starred enterprise?

İşletmeye ait Michelin ödülleri (kategori/yıl)?
Michelin awards of the enterprise (category/year)?

İşletmeye ait diğer ödüller (kategori/yıl)? Bilgi Notu
Other awards received by the enterprise (category/year)? Factsheet

Michelin Yeşil Yıldız ödülü alan işletmeyle bağlantınız (ücretli/ortak/sahip/aile) ?
Your affiliation with the Michelin starred enterprise (paid/partner/owner/family) ?

BÖLÜM III (Mülakat Soruları – 9 soru)
PART III (Interview Questions – 9 questions)

Türkiye Michelin Yeşil Yıldızlı İşletme Şefleri için Mülakat Soruları

I. Giriş ve Arka Plan
Sürdürülebilir gastronomi sizin için ne ifade ediyor? Sürdürülebilirlik kariyer yolculuğunuzda mutfak felsefeniz açısından nasıl bir rol oynadı?

II. Sürdürülebilir Uygulamalar: Geçmiş, Michelin Yeşil Yıldız ve Gelecek

1. İşletmeniz Michelin Yeşil Yıldız alana dek, mutfak şefi olarak uyguladığınız özgün sürdürülebilirlik uygulamalarını anlatır mısınız? Bu uygulamalar çevresel, sosyal ve ekonomik sürdürülebilirlik ilkeleriyle nasıl örtüşüyor?

2. Malzeme tedarikine yaklaşımınızı nasıl tanımlarsınız? Mevsimsellik, yerellik ve atık azaltımına nasıl öncelik veriyorsunuz? Uygulamalarınızdan somut örnekler paylaşabilir misiniz?

3. Michelin Yeşil Yıldız size ne ifade ediyor? Michelin Yeşil Yıldız ödülünün işletmenize ve ekibinize etkilerini (olumlu/olumsuz) nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?

4. Michelin Yeşil Yıldız, işletmenizdeki sürdürülebilirlik uygulamalarını nasıl etkiledi? Bu ödül operasyonel süreçlerinizi ve işletmenizin itibarını nasıl etkiledi?

5. Michelin Yeşil Yıldız kriterleri[9] ve bu kriterlerin sürdürülebilirlik üzerindeki etkileri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

6. İşletmenizdeki sürdürülebilirliği daha da geliştirmek için gelecekteki hedefleriniz ve planlarınız nelerdir? Michelin Yeşil Yıldız'ı korumak ve sürdürülebilir gastronomiye olan bağlılığınızı güçlendirmek için hangi yenilikçi stratejileri veya teknolojileri kullanmayı düşünüyorsunuz?

7. Mutfak sektöründe sürdürülebilir uygulamalara gitmek ve sürdürmek konusunda karşılaştığınız en büyük zorluklar ve gördüğünüz fırsatlar nelerdir?

8. Michelin Yeşil Yıldız işletmelerinin gastronomi dünyasında sürdürülebilirliğe yönelik daha geniş çaplı hareketi nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz?

III. Kapanış

İşletmenizin sürdürülebilirlik girişimleri veya genel olarak sürdürülebilir gastronomi hakkındaki düşünceleriniz konusunda eklemek istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı?

[9] https://guide.michelin.com/en/article/news-and-views/green-star-in-action-chef-interview-ricard-camarena

Interview Questions for Michelin Green Star Restaurant Chefs

I. Introduction and Background

1. What does sustainability mean to you? Could you describe your culinary philosophy and how sustainability has played a role in your career journey as a chef?

II. Sustainable Practices: Past, Present, and Future

1. Describe the specific sustainable practices you've implemented throughout your career, leading up to and including your time as a Michelin Green Star chef.
   How do these practices align with the environmental, social, and economic pillars of sustainability?
2. Describe your approach to sourcing ingredients. How do you prioritize seasonality, locality, and waste reduction? Can you share specific examples of your practices?
3. How has earning the Michelin Green Star specifically impacted your restaurant's sustainability practices, both operationally and in terms of its reputation?
4. What are your future goals and plans for further enhancing sustainability at your restaurant? What innovative strategies or approaches, including but not limited to technologies, do you plan to adopt to retain the Michelin Green Star and advance your commitment to sustainable gastronomy?
5. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities you foresee in implementing and maintaining these sustainable practices in the luxury dining sector?

III. Michelin Green Star and Sustainable Gastronomy

1. What does the Michelin Green Star mean to you? How would you evaluate the Michelin Star effect on your restaurant and team?
2. What are your thoughts on the Michelin Green Star criteria[10] regarding sustainability?
3. How do you think the Michelin Green Star restaurants influence the broader movement towards sustainability in gastronomy?

IV. Closing

1. Is there anything else you would like to add about your restaurant's sustainability initiatives or your thoughts on sustainable gastronomy in general?

[10] https://guide.michelin.com/en/article/news-and-views/green-star-in-action-chef-interview-ricard-camarena

Sustainable gastronomy focuses on respect for the environment and its natural cycles, local products, zero waste, composting, clean energy, etc.[11]

Sürdürülebilir gastronomi doğaya ve doğanın doğal döngülerine saygı, yerel ürünler, sıfır atık, kompost, temiz enerji ve benzer konulara odaklanmaktadır.

[11] https://guide.michelin.com/en/article/news-and-views/green-star-in-action-chef-interview-ricard-camarena

APPENDIX H

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER İNSAN ARAŞTIRMALARI ETİK KURULU
KATILIMCI BİLGİ ve ONAM FORMU

Araştırmayı destekleyen kurum: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

Araştırmanın adı: Michelin Yeşil Yıldızlı Türkiye Restoranlarının Şefleri: Sürdürülebilir Gastronomide Zorluklar ve Fırsatlar

Proje Yürütücüsü: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Duygu Salman Öztürk

E-mail adresi: duygu.salman@bogazici.edu.tr

Telefonu: +90 212 359 69 83

Araştırmacının adı: Jülide Banu Öztürk İnegöllüoğlu

E-mail adresi: julide.ozturk@bogazici.edu.tr

Telefonu: +90 0536 457 77 13

Değerli Şefimiz,

Bu çalışma, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sürdürülebilir Turizm Yönetimi Bölümü öğrencisi Jülide Banu Öztürk İnegöllüoğlu'nun "Michelin Yeşil Yıldızlı Türkiye Restoranlarının Şefleri: Sürdürülebilir Gastronomide Zorluklar ve Fırsatlar" başlıklı yüksek lisans tezi kapsamında yürütülmektedir. Sürdürülebilir gastronominin giderek artan önemiyle birlikte, Michelin Rehberi 2020 yılından itibaren sürdürülebilirlik çalışmalarına katkı sağlamak amacıyla Michelin Yeşil Yıldız kategorisinde değerlendirmelere başlamıştır. Türkiye'den Michelin Yeşil Yıldız ödülü alan işletmelerimizin şeflerinin tescil edilmiş bu önemli başarılarının izini sürerek sürdürülebilir gastronomi alanına katkılarının saptanması ve incelenmesi alanın tüm paydaşlarına ışık tutacaktır.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ortak paydası Michelin Yeşil Yıldız ödülü olan Türkiye işletmelerinde, mutfaklarını başarıya götüren şeflerimizin sürdürülebilir gastronomi alanındaki deneyimlerini inceleyerek hem sahaya, hem de akademik yazına katkı sağlamaktır. Şeflerimizin her birinin çalıştıkları ortam, kurdukları ekip, karşılaştıkları zorluklar ve bunlarla başa çıkış yöntemleri biriciktir. Bu nedenle, yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel mülakatlarla şeflerimizin alanlarındaki sürdürülebilirlik faaliyetlerinde yaşadıkları zorlukları ve fırsatları böyle bir çalışmayla değerlendirmek amaçlanmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın size sağlayacağı fayda, vereceğiniz yanıtlar sayesinde, Michelin Yeşil Yıldız ödülüyle kazandığınız başarıların akademik literatürdeki iz düşümüne tanıklık etmek ve sürdürülebilir gastronomi sahasını sistematik ve karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde anlamlandırmak olacaktır.

Bu araştırmada bize yardımcı olmanız için sizi de projemizin bir parçası olmaya davet ediyoruz. Çalışmaya katılmanız tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Katılımınız için sizden bir ücret talep edilmeyecek ya da size herhangi bir ödeme yapılmayacaktır.

Çalışma çevrimiçi araçlar vasıtasıyla sözlü olarak yapılacaktır. Bu görüşmeler yukarıda ismi belirtilen araştırmacının kendisi tarafından yürütülecek, ve daha önceden çerçevesi belirlenmiş, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri Etik İnceleme Komisyonu tarafından onaylanmış, "yarı-yapılandırılmış" görüşme soruları kapsamında gerçekleşecektir.

Sözlü olarak verdiğiniz cevapların çevrimiçi oturum sırasında otomatik olarak deşifre edilmesi ve yazılı metin oluşturulması amacıyla oturum sırasında video kaydı alınacaktır. Arzu ettiğiniz takdirde, kayıt sırasında kameranızı kapalı tutabilirsiniz. Araştırmacı mülakat boyunca kamerasını ve mikrofonunu açık tutacaktır. Görüşme sırasında alınan bu kayıtlar, araştırmacının kişisel bilgisayarında deşifre edilerek veri analizi gerçekleştirildikten sonra imha edilecektir.

Araştırma sonuçları sunulurken – sizden ayrıca izin alınmadığı sürece – cevaplarınız kimliğiniz ile ilişkilendirilmeyecektir. Çalışmanın herhangi bir noktasında onamınızı çekebilirsiniz. Onamınızı geri çekmeniz halinde o ana kadar sizden toplanmış tüm yazılı ve kayıtlı veriler araştırmacı tarafından imha edilecektir.

Bu çalışmanın sonuçları öncelikli olarak araştırmacının yüksek lisans tezinin tamamlanması için kullanılacaktır. Ayrıca, elde edilen bulgular sürdürülebilir gastronomi konusundaki akademik tartışmalara katkı sağlamak amacıyla akademik konferanslarda, hakemli dergilerde yayımlanacak makalelerde ve diğer akademik platformlarda paylaşılacaktır. Bu araştırmanın ortaya koyduğu bulguların paylaşılmasıyla, akademik literatüre katkıda bulunulması, politika önerilerinin geliştirilmesine destek olunması ve sürdürülebilir gastronomi alanındaki araştırmacılar ile profesyonellere değerli bilgiler sunulması amaçlanmaktadır.

Bu formda belirtilen kapsamdaki çalışmaya katılımınızı sözlü ya da elektronik ortamda onaylayarak, söz konusu araştırmaya kendi isteğinizle, hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın katılmayı kabul ettiğinizi belirtmiş oluyorsunuz.

Görüşme sırasında ya da sonrasında, çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız varsa araştırmacı Jülide Banu Öztürk İnegöllüoğlu (julide.ozturk@bogazici.edu.tr) veya **proje yürütücüsü Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Turizm İşletmeciliği Bölümü Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Duygu Salman Öztürk (duygu.salman@bogazici.edu.tr)** ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz. Araştırmayla ilgili haklarınız konusunda Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşerî Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri Etik İnceleme Komisyonu'na (SBİNAREK) (sbinarek@bogazici.edu.tr) danışabilirsiniz.

Şimdiden katılımınız ve katkılarınız için teşekkür ederiz.

Bana anlatılanları ve yukarıda yazılanları anladım. Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Katılımcının Adı-Soyadı: .....

İmzası: .....

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl): ...../...../ 2025

APPENDIX I

Code Book Generated Using MAXQDA Analytics Pro (version 24.9)

Sustainability Foundations

- Sustainability Definitions
- Sustainability Philosophy
- Triple Bottom Line

Chef Identity and Career

- Chef Identity
- Career Timeline

Sustainable Practices

- Environmental Practices
- Social Responsibility
- Economic Sustainability
- Local Sourcing
- Seasonal Ingredients
- Food Waste Reduction
- Operational Shifts

Recognition and Impact

- Green Star Impact
- Reputation
- Team Motivation
- Brand Recognition
- Award Retention Strategies

Future Strategies

- Future Sustainability Plans
- Innovation & Technology

Challenges and Opportunities

- Sustainability Barriers
- Opportunities in Luxury
- Systemic Challenges

Evaluation and Influence

- Criteria Evaluation
- Alignment vs. Reality
- Chefs as Change Agents
- Gastronomic Diplomacy
- Broader Impact

Emergent Insights

- Emergent Themes
- Unanticipated Insights

APPENDIX J

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (Sbinarek)

2025 AİLE YILI

Sayı : E-84391427-050.04-232582 20.05.2025
Konu : 2025-19T Kayıt Numaralı Başvurunuza İlişkin
Etik Kurul Onay Kararı (2025-04)

Sayın Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Duygu SALMAN ÖZTÜRK

Tez danışmanlığını yürütmekte olduğunuz öğrenciniz Jülide Banu Öztürk İnegöllüoğlu'nun "Michelin Yeşil Yıldızlı Türkiye Restoranlarının Şefleri: Sürdürülebilir Gastronomide Zorluklar ve Fırsatlar / The Chefs in the Turkish Michelin Green-Starred Restaurants: Challenges and Opportunities in Sustainable Gastronomy" başlıklı projesi ile Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'na (SBİNAREK) yapmış olduğunuz, *2025-19T kayıt numaralı başvurunuz*, 05.05.2025 tarih ve 2025/04 sayılı kurul toplantısında incelenmiş olup projenize etik onay verilmesi uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar, tüm kurul üyelerinin çevrim içi katılımıyla gerçekleştirilen toplantıda oy birliği ile alınmıştır. Onay mektubu, tüm üyeler adına Komisyon Başkanı tarafından e-imzalanmıştır.

Bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Saygılarımızla,

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Işıl ERDUYAN
Kurul Başkanı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.
Belge Doğrulama Kodu : 09AI-GYJ3-0D52 Belge Doğrulama Adresi : https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/bogazici-universitesi-ebys

Adres: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi 34342 Bebek/ İstanbul
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International sustainability frameworks not yet common in the Turkish fine dining context

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[13] Note: The sustainability rating and certification systems listed above—ECOCOOK®, Food Made Good (SRA) , Relais & Châteaux, and Gault & Millau—were either directly cited or observed among the Michelin Green Star restaurants (MGSRs) included in this research. The following section introduces additional international sustainability frameworks that, while globally recognized, were not reported or referenced by the MGSRs in Türkiye at the time of this research. Their inclusion serves to provide a broader comparative context and highlight potential future benchmarks for the region.

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