

BILGE KADIOĞLU – The “tornado” of the spice market



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An advertisement banner for the French Social Security system for expatriates. On the left, a family of three (a man, a woman, and a young boy) are smiling. The background is dark blue with white and red text. The text reads: 'LA SÉCURITÉ SOCIALE FRANÇAISE, MÊME À L'INTERNATIONAL' and 'Partir vivre à l'étranger en toute sérénité.' On the right, there is a red button with white text that says 'ME PROTÉGER À L'ÉTRANGER'. The logo of 'Café des Français de l'Étranger' is in the top right corner.

Bilge Kadioğlu was 25 when she took over the family shop in the heart of Istanbul's spice market. Life left her no choice. Bilge decided to make her youth, ambition, and femininity a strength. Five years later, her shop, Ucuzcular, number 51 in the market, was transformed. And she wasn't the only one... Like a small revolution, there was a "before and after Bilge" in the bazaar...

Bilge was studying management in the United States when her family asked her to take over the spice shop in Istanbul. Her brother and sister were still young. The shop had been there since 1886. Parting with over a century of family heritage was unthinkable. " *I wanted to be a businesswoman, wear skirts and suits ,*" Bilge says, laughing.

[Bilge Kadōoşlu, at number 51 in the Egyptian Bazaar \(photos LM\)](#)

She has no idea what the world of the spice market is like. *I used to come to the shop when I was a child. I associated it with the pistachio ice cream I was given every time I went.* Far removed from the taste of ice cream, Bilge Kadōoşlu is dropped into the bazaar, a world of spices and a masculine universe. *The first day, I felt like an alien.*

Management and Customer Relations:

Bilge is a fighter and an ambitious woman. Nearly 90 shops sell spices in the market, and almost 20 specialize in them. " *I had to stand out, and I wanted to put what I had learned during my studies to good use.*" The young woman decided to apply the management and customer relations techniques of large American companies to her small shop. " *Everyone thought I was crazy. People said there were only two options for me: give up and sell, or go bankrupt.*" She worked twelve hours a day, seven days a week for over two years. Today, the business is thriving. " *If we use the number 1 as a basis for evaluating the value of the shop when I started, it is now 6.5.* "



The secrets to

Bilge's success: She became a spice specialist. She researched Ottoman cuisine and Turkish specialties, creating a comprehensive product list. She obtained a certificate in herbal medicine and aromatherapy. It's possible to taste all the spices and even rate them. " *It's like a wine tasting, but with spices,*" she says. " *You can then place orders by sending me an email.* " But the secret to her business's success lies primarily in the quality of her products. A proponent of "slow food," Bilge is committed to promoting eco-friendly gastronomy and alternative consumption. The spices are fresh and are ordered weekly from small Turkish producers.

Ethics and Hygiene:

She successfully introduced new hygiene rules and covered the spices with plastic wrap. Samplers were made available to customers who wished to taste the products. Many nearby shops were inspired by her techniques. Hygiene rules are now applied by almost everyone. She taught her

colleagues the basics of sales. " *I believe in karma and I think that if you treat people well, they will do the same in return .* "



"Self-made woman," an American-style success story

. The young entrepreneur's success is growing. She's making headlines, featured in tourist guides, working with renowned chefs, and even appeared on a popular cooking show on NTV. " *When I started four years ago, I announced that one day I'd have a full page in Hürriyet. Everyone laughed at me. But it happened!* "

She's still young and full of plans. She's thinking of partnering with her brother and expanding her business internationally. But Bilge Kadıoğlu's dream is to have a cooking show on TV. " *I want to travel. I don't care about the money; what matters to me is the experience. I'd like to introduce Turks to other cultures through spiced cuisine. Inshallah !* "

Lola Monset (<http://www.lepetitjournal.com/istanbul>) **Tuesday, February 26, 2013**

Learn more: His shop's [website](#) .



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