

Story 1554 (1992 Tape 2)

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Nasreddin Hoca¹ Awards Clink of Coins for Smell of Food

Once while a poor man was passing the front of a restaurant, he noticed the delicious aroma of cooking food. Looking through the front window of the restaurant, he saw a döner kebab machine² with a large stack of meat on it. He went up to the window and pressed his dry bread against the glass as if he were dipping it in the juice from the döner kebab. Then he ate the bread with great satisfaction

When the owner of the restaurant observed this, he went outside and demanded some money from the poor man. But man protested, saying, "I did not touch or eat any of your food. Why should I pay you for anything?"

After the two of them had argued about this for some time,

¹A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training. Nasreddin Hoca is Turkey's most popular comic folk character.

²Döner kebab is meat cooked on a vertical spit. A large quantity of lean meat, usually lamb, is placed on this spit and pounded down until it is so compact that it is almost like one solid chunk of meat. The spit is slowly turned before a rack of glowing coals (or a gas flame). As the outer edges of the meat are cooked, they are sliced off in bits about 1/4 inch thick and served au jus. From the verb dönmek, döner means turning.

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they decided to take the matter to court. The judge, Nasreddin Hoca, listened to both sides of the case very carefully. The restaurant owner complained, "This man ate bread with the smell of my döner kebab. He owes me something for that." Then the poor man told the Hoca his side of the story.

Nasreddin Hoca thought seriously about this matter for some time. Then he called both men to his office again. After placing several coins in a bag, the Hoca shook the bag. Then he asked the owner of the restaurant, "Did you hear the clinking of the money in this bag?"

"Yes, I heard that," answered the restaurant owner.

"Well, then," said the Hoca, "you have now received what the poor man owes you. Put that clink of the coins in pocket and leave."