They tried to kill us. We won…

Let's eat!

Shabbat Ha-Hodesh, Rosh Hodesh, Parashat Tazria 5782

ח וְאָכְלוּ אֶת-הַבָּשָׂר, בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה: צְלִי-אֵשׁ וּמַצּוֹת,
עַל-מְרֹרִים יֹאכְלֻהוּ.

ט אַל-תֹּאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ נָא, וּבָשֹׁל מְבֻשָּׁל בַּמָּיִם: כִּי
אִם-צְלִי-אֵשׁ, רֹאשׁוֹ עַל-כְּרָעָיו וְעַל-קִרְבּוֹ.

Exodus 12:8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

9 Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; its head with its legs and with the inwards thereof.

"Jews and food; food and Jews – that's all there is."

- Sigmund Freud

shall remain behind: for we must select from it for the worship of the LORD our God; and we shall not know with what we are to worship the LORD until we arrive there." [27] But the LORD stiffened Pharaoh's heart and he would not agree to let them go. [28] Pharaoh said to him, "Be gone from me! Take care not to see me again, for the moment you look upon my face you shall die." [29] And Moses replied, "You have spoken rightly. I shall not see your face again!"

11 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will bring but one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; after that he shall let you go from here; indeed, when he lets you go, he will drive you out of here one and all. [2] Tell the people to borrow, each man from his neighbor and each woman from hers, objects of silver and gold." [3] The LORD disposed the Egyptians favorably toward the people. Moreover, Moses himself was much esteemed in the land of Egypt, among Pharaoh's courtiers and among the people.

[4] Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: Toward midnight I will go forth among the Egyptians, [5] and every first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; and all the first-born of the cattle. [6] And there shall be a loud cry in all the land of Egypt, such as has never been or will ever be again; [7] but not a dog shall snarl[a] at any of the Israelites, at man or

a Others "move (or whet) his tongue."

28–29: Moses only partially quotes Pharaoh, acknowledging that they will never again meet, but undermining Pharaoh's claim that it is Moses who will die.

11.1–13.16: The tenth plague, the exodus, and commemorative festivals. The composite nature of this section is indicated by differences in the ritual instructions (e.g., 13.3–10 n.), discontinuities in the narrative, and verbal and other links to the various sources in the Torah. Source critics agree that one component of this section is from the Priestly source (11.9–12.20; 12.28, 40–41; 12.43–13.2); they disagree over which parts of the remainder belong to J, E, and (in some views) D. The most puzzling issue is the premature location of 12.14–20: God refers to the exodus in the past tense (v. 17a), though the event does not occur until vv. 37–41, and He commands that the day be commemorated by eating unleavened bread for a week, though the reason for doing so does not occur until vv. 34 and 39. Vv. 21–27 (J) are unaware of this command: When Moses conveys God's instructions about the pesaḥ sacrifice, he tells the people instead to commemorate the event in the future by reenacting the sacrifice. He informs them of the seven-day festival of unleavened bread only later in 13.3–10, after the text explains why the people ate unleavened bread on the day of the exodus. The redactor's reason for placing vv. 14–20 right after vv. 1–13 (both units are from P), despite the resultant disturbance of the continuity, was evidently his desire to fuse the festival of unleavened bread and the pesaḥ offering—originally separate rites (see 12.14–20 n.)—into a single holiday with the same date (vv. 6, 18). He may have believed that the fact that the meal accompanying the pesaḥ offering included unleavened bread implied that they are part of the same festival, as if the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorated the fact that the people ate matzah with the pesaḥ offering (v. 8).

11.1–10: The announcement of the tenth plague. The final and decisive plague would be a virulent epidemic (Ps. 78.50) of preternatural specificity, causing the sudden death of all first-born Egyptians. This plague corresponds to the Egyptians' murder of the Hebrew baby boys (1.22; the Egyptian people's cooperation with Pharaoh's decree is implied by 2.2–3). Exod. 4.22–23 explains it as measure-for-measure punishment for Pharaoh's refusal to free Israel, God's "first-born." **11.1:** *He will drive you out,* see 6.1. **2–3:** See 3.22. *Much esteemed,* held in awe because of the power he has displayed. **4–8:** Although God does not tell Moses the nature of the final plague in vv. 1–3, according to the present form of the narrative Moses already knew it from God's words in 4.22–23. To make the narrative read more clearly, the Samaritan Pentateuch has Moses quote those words to Pharaoh here, and it also copies vv. 4–7 into God's words in vv. 1–3. According to that reading, then, in vv. 4–7 Moses is telling Pharaoh what God previously told him. Such additions to smooth out the narrative are typical of the Samaritan Pentateuch, and are also found in some Dead Sea Scrolls. **6–7:** This plague manifests the probative qualities of the second and third triads of plagues: It will be unprecedented (9.18; 10.6, 14), and God will make *a distinction between Egypt and Israel* (see 8.18–19; 9.4, 6–7)—signs of the

beast—in order that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

[8] "Then all these courtiers of yours shall come down to me and bow low to me, saying, 'Depart, you and all the people who follow you!' After that I will depart." And he left Pharaoh's presence in hot anger.

[9] Now the LORD had said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not heed you, in order that My marvels may be multiplied in the land of Egypt." [10] Moses and Aaron had performed all these marvels before Pharaoh, but the LORD had stiffened the heart of Pharaoh so that he would not let the Israelites go from his land.

12 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: [2] This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you. [3] Speak to the whole community of Israel and say that on the tenth of this month each of them shall take a lamb[a] to a family, a lamb to a household. [4] But if the household is too small for a lamb, let him share one with a neighbor who dwells nearby, in proportion to the number of persons: you shall contribute for the lamb according to what each household will eat. [5] Your lamb shall be without blemish, a yearling male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. [6] You shall keep watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month; and all the assembled congrega-

a Or "kid." Heb. seh *means either "sheep" or "goat"; cf. v. 5.*

unique divine power beyond the event. **6:** *Loud cry,* measure-for-measure punishment for causing the outcry of the Israelites (2.23). **7:** *Not a dog shall snarl:* In contrast to the loud cry among the Egyptians, peace and quiet will prevail among the Israelites. **10:** *The LORD had stiffened the heart of Pharaoh:* See 4.21 n.

12.1–28: Preparations for the exodus. Israel is to prepare for the coming redemption with a sacrificial banquet while the final plague is occurring and is to commemorate the event in the future on its anniversary by eating unleavened bread for a week and reenacting the banquet. This banquet became the prototype of the postbiblical Seder, the festive meal at which the exodus story is retold and expounded each year to this day on the holiday of Pesaḥ (Passover), as explained below. **2:** Since the exodus will be commemorated on its anniversary every year (vv. 6, 17–18), the preparatory instructions begin with the calendar. Henceforth the year will commence with the month of the exodus, and months will be referred to by ordinal numbers rather than names (see v. 18; 16.1; 19.1; Lev. 23.24; etc.). Since the numbers will mean essentially "in the Xth month since we gained freedom," every reference to a month will commemorate the redemption. The first month (later called Nisan [Esth. 3.7; Neh. 2.1]—these later month names were borrowed from the Babylonian calendar during the exile) corresponds to March or April. In Jewish practice, this is the beginning of the liturgical year; it was also the beginning of the Babylonian year. The calendar year, starting with Rosh Ha-Shanah (the New Year holiday, in the seventh month!), begins in Tishri (September or October). (The older, nature-based, names of a few months are mentioned in 13.4; Deut. 16.1; 1 Kings 6.1, 37, 38; 8.2.) Because vv. 1–20 deal with the month in which Pesaḥ falls and with preparations for the holiday, they are read as an additional Torah portion on the Sabbath preceding the month of Nisan, or on the first of Nisan if it is a Sabbath, and that Sabbath is called Shabbat ha-Ḥodesh, "the Sabbath of the passage beginning 'This month.'" The rest of the ch, which includes the observance of the first Pesaḥ and the exodus, is read on the first day of Pesaḥ. **5:** *Without blemish,* a standard requirement of sacrificial animals (Lev. 22.17–25; Deut. 15.21; 17.1; cf. Mal. 1.6–8). **6–14:** Some of the vv. about the sacrifice reflect a different view of the tenth plague from that in the rest of the narrative. In the rest of the narrative, God Himself slays the Egyptian first-born; no special measures are necessary to protect the Israelites (11.4–7; 12.29; 13.15). But in some of the vv. about the sacrifice God is accompanied by "the Destroyer," an angel of death who presumably kills the Egyptians on God's command (v. 23; cf. Gen. 19.13–14; 2 Sam. 24.16; 2 Kings 18.35; 1 Chron. 21.15); the Israelites must apply the blood of the sacrifice to their doorways to prevent the plague from harming them (vv. 7, 13, 22 and 23), although no such measures were needed to protect them from the earlier plagues (8.18 9.4, 6, 26—all from J; 10.23, E); in v. 22 God warns all Israelites (not just the first-born) to remain indoors; in v. 23 He "protects" their houses from the Destroyer; and again in v. 27 He "protects" and "saves" them, presumably from the Destroyer. From these details scholars have conjectured that the sacrifice was not an original part o the narrative about the plagues bu was based on an older shepherds' rite observed on a spring night (perhaps the night before they set

JEWISH STUDY BIBLE.

tion of the Israelites shall slaughter it at twilight. 7 They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they are to eat it. 8 They shall eat the flesh that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw, or cooked in any way with water, but roasted—head, legs, and entrails—over the fire. 10 You shall not leave any of it over until morning; if any of it is left until morning, you shall burn it.

11 This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly: it is a passover offering[a] to the LORD. 12 For that night I will go through the land of Egypt and strike down every first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and I will mete out punishments to all the gods of Egypt, I the LORD. 13 And the blood on the houses where you are staying shall be a sign for you: when I see the blood I will pass over[b] you, so that no plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 This day shall be to you one of remembrance: you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD throughout the

a Or "protective offering"; Heb. pesaḥ. *b Or "protect" (Heb.* pasaḥ*); cf. v. 11, note a.*

out for summer pasture) when shepherds believed they were endangered by demons who could be warded off by remaining indoors and applying blood to their entrances. This view of the sacrifice and its blood as apotropaic (magically protective) is consistent with its Heb name, "pesaḥ," "protection"; see v. 11. According to this theory, the Israelites inherited this rite from their pastoral ancestors (see Gen. 46.32) but, because of its proximity in the calendar to the time of the exodus, they reinterpreted it as a memorial of the exodus and introduced it into the narrative of the tenth plague. Gradually they abandoned its demonological-apotropaic aspects in favor of its meaning as a commemoration of the exodus. Traces of this process are visible here: Of the vv. attributed to a source other than P, only v. 23 implies that the Destroyer does the killing; vv. 27 and 29 say that God did the killing, but v. 27, in stating that God "protected" and "saved" the Israelites' houses, preserves a trace of the older tradition that it was the Destroyer. In vv. attributed to P (12–13), only God does the killing; the Destroyer becomes merely a destructive plague, and the blood is merely a sign to identify Israelite houses (like the red cord in Josh. 2.12, 18, 19), not an apotropaic substance. **6:** *Keep watch,* to prevent it from becoming blemished or escaping during the interval. **8:** *Bitter herbs* are pungent condiments (popular among pastoral nomads) and *unleavened bread* (Heb "matzah," bread that has not risen) frequently accompanied sacrifices (29.2; Lev. 2.4–5; 6.9; 7.12; Judg. 6.19–21; etc.; leavened bread was forbidden with most sacrifices: Exod. 23.18; 34.25; Lev. 2.11; 6.10). Following the prescription of vv. 24–27, this banquet is reenacted annually at the Seder, the liturgical banquet which includes the eating of unleavened bread, bitter herbs ("maror," interpreted as recalling the bitterness of slavery; romaine lettuce or horseradish are commonly used), and other symbolic foods. A roasted shankbone is displayed as a token of the roasted meat, and the story of the exodus, accompanied by rabbinic interpretations, is expounded, based on vv. 26–27 and 13.8. (The provisions of vv. 10 and 11 are not reenacted.) **10:** The sacrifice must be used only for its sacred purpose; hence no leftovers may be saved for eating later. **11:** The Israelites are to eat while prepared to leave on a moment's notice. *Passover offering,* Heb "pesaḥ," which originally referred only to the sacrifice. Later it became the name of the entire festival, including the seven days of the Festival of Unleavened Bread ("Ḥag ha-Matzot"), originally a separate holiday. In most European languages it is also the name of Easter (as in French "Pâques"). The translation "passover" (and hence the English name of the holiday) is probably incorrect. The alternative translation "protective offering" is more likely; see v. 13. **12:** *Mete out punishments to all the gods of Egypt:* This probably means that the Egyptians' idols would be destroyed in the course of the plague *(Tg. Ps.-J.; Mek.),* just as the Philistine idol Dagon is smashed, and other plagues inflicted on the Philistines, in 1 Sam. ch 5 (Ibn Ezra), and just as Assyrian armies sometimes smashed the idols of conquered cities (2 Kings 19.18). **13:** *Pass over* (Heb "pasaḥ"): The use of this verb in Isa. 31.5, "Like the birds that fly, even so will the LORD of Hosts shield Jerusalem, shielding and saving, protecting ("p-s-ḥ") and rescuing," favors the translation "protect." So does context in v. 23 of the present ch. **14–20:** The Feast of Unleavened Bread. The haste of the Israelites' departure from Egypt would leave them no time to bake leavened bread (see vv. 34, 39). In the future, their annual week-long self-deprivation of leavened bread will serve as a reminder that God so overwhelmed the Egyptians that the latter ultimately hastened the departure of the slaves they had earlier refused to free. As it does here, the Torah usually speaks of this festival as something distinct and separate from the pesaḥ sac-

ages; you shall celebrate it as an institution for all time. 15 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day to the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

16 You shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day, and a sacred occasion on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them; only what every person is to eat, that alone may be prepared for you. 17 You shall observe the [Feast of] Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your ranks out of the land of Egypt; you shall observe this day throughout the ages as an institution for all time. 18 In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. 19 No leaven shall be found in your houses for seven days. For whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a citizen of the country. 20 You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your settlements you shall eat unleavened bread.

21 Moses then summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go, pick out lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover offering. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and apply some of

rifice rather than part of the same holiday (see vv. 24–27, 43–49; 13.3–9; 23.15; 34.18; Lev. 23.5–6; Num. 9.1–14; 28.16–17; see also Ezra 6.19–22; 2 Chron. 35.17; only Deut. 16.1–8, 16; Ezek. 45.21; and 2 Chron. 30.2, 5, 13, 15 describe them as a single festival). This has led to the theory that the pesaḥ sacrifice and the Feast of Unleavened Bread have separate origins, the former pastoral (see vv. 6–14 n.) and the latter agrarian. The avoidance of leaven in favor of unleavened bread—"bread of distress" (Deut. 16.3)—suggests that the latter may have begun as a rite of abstinence, perhaps expressing anxiety over the success of the coming grain harvest. The two rites were eventually brought together because of their proximity in the calendar and because unleavened bread was also eaten with the pesaḥ sacrifice (v. 8). In this view, then, the Festival of Unleavened Bread became a commemoration of the exodus because, like the pesaḥ sacrifice, it was observed at the time of year when the exodus took place. In the Bible, any agrarian significance the festival once had has been set aside in favor of its meaning as a commemoration of the exodus. **15:** *Unleavened bread:* The "matzah" was probably similar to the flat unleavened bread like pita that Bedouin still bake on embers. In earlier times it was disk-shaped and less thin than now. *Leaven* refers to leavening agents, such as sourdough or yeast, while *leavened bread* is any food prepared from dough to which a leavening agent was added to make it rise faster. According to rabbinic halakhic exegesis the prohibition covers any leavened product of wheat, barley, spelt, rye, or oats; in traditional Ashkenazic practice, rice, millet, corn, and legumes are also forbidden. *Remove leaven from your houses:* In traditional Jewish practice, the home is cleansed of leavened products in preparation for Pesaḥ and, on the night before the Seder, a few pieces of bread or other leavened products are hidden and "found" in a ceremonial search; the next morning the pieces are burned. Halakhic exegesis construes Deut. 16.4 to mean "no leaven *of yours* shall be seen," meaning that only leaven belonging to Jews must be eliminated. Leavened goods sold to non-Jews for the duration of the festival may be kept and stored out of sight in one's home. This avoids the economic hardship that would result from the destruction of large quantities of leavened goods. *Cut off:* The probable meaning is that God will cut him off (see Lev. 17.10; 20.1–6; 23.29–30), that is, cause him to die early and childless. This is the punishment for noncircumcision and cultic and sexual sins (v. 19; 30.33, 38; 31.14; Gen. 17.14; Lev. 7.20, 21, 25, 27; 17.4, 9, 14; 18.29; 19.8; 20.1–6, 17, 18; 22.3, 29; Num. 9.13; 19.13, 20) that are committed "defiantly" (Num. 15.30–31). **16:** The sacredness of these days is to be expressed by ceasing from work, as on the Sabbath (20.8–11; cf. Gen. 2.2–3), except that, on the festival, food may be cooked (contrast 16.23). **17:** Since the text reads lit. "You shall observe the unleavened bread," an especially stringent interpretation holds that the grain should be carefully guarded from the time it is harvested, or at least from the time it is ground into flour, to ensure that there is no fermentation. Matzah made in this way is called "matzah shemurah," "guarded matzah." **18:** Since holy days begin and end in the evening (Lev. 23.32), the festival lasts from the evening at the end of the fourteenth day through the evening at the end of the twenty-first day. **19:** *Stranger,* a foreigner residing among the Israelites. Although strangers are not obligated to offer a pesaḥ sacrifice (v. 48), they may not eat leavened food during the festival. This is perhaps to prevent them from accidentally contaminating Israelites' food with leaven, since bread was sometimes baked in shared or communal ovens (Lev. 26.26; Jer. 37.21; Neh. 3.11;

2

ffering, she placed a basket on the river,
: an empty one, without the precious
o
row. She watched it drift a little
shore. She threw one small stone in it,
ther, and another, till its weight
nuch for the water and it slowly turned
. She watched the Nile gape and
lder,
l its own green skin. She went
ıe others, to leave one ruler
ıer, one Egypt for the next.
;hts you still can see her, by some river
e willows hang, listening to the heavy
l
, those sons once hidden dark
s, and in her mind she sees her sister,
-eyed Pharaoh's daughter, lift the baby
t from the brown flood waters
him home to save him, such a pretty
so disarming, as his dimpled hands
his mouth already open
reast.

Passover Love Song

Hara E. Person

Exodus 12:1–20

The seder is a love song written
in the language of silver polish
and dishpan hands
freshly grated lemon zest
blanched almonds
ground pecans
shelled pistachios
pitted olives
sliced meat
matzah meal
white tablecloths
to-do lists
trips to Boro Park and Sahadi's

This is how it's done.

ashkenazi haroset
vegetarian chopped liver
my mother's real chopped liver
Bonnie's matzah ball soup
Israeli salad
gefilte fish terrine
chestnut farfel stuffing
tzimmes
leek and shallot kugel
salmon in grape leaves with pine nuts
turkey and brisket
coconut macaroons
sephardic lemon pistachio cookies
pecan meringues
chocolate dipped apricots

Remember.

tables stretched the length of the house
tulips on the mantle
my grandmother's blue glass plates
Aunt Hannah and Uncle Joe's silver
Nana's candlesticks
the silver salt bowls from my mother
Frieda and Solly's cut-glass horseradish pot
the wedding present seder plate
grape juice stains on the tablecloth
thin paperback haggadot
our mismatched family of friends
silly half-versions of songs
and don't lick the wine from your finger after
the plagues

Don't be fooled by the easy domesticity of
these words.
This is more than a recipe for nostalgia.
This is an urgent coded message of
survival
adaptation
love.

Read between the words.

Boiled Beet

Anna Swanson

Exodus 12:3–13

Each seder is a retelling.
We come together and taste our way
through the story: Matzo,
unleavened because fleeing women
can't wait for bread to rise;
Charoset, the mortar used
to bind stone together;
Bitter herbs, the taste of slavery.

She passes me the haggadah
and I read out loud about the shank bone,
the blood which marked the doors
of Jewish houses with a message

BRATE the ONE UNWAVERING JOY
of JEWISH LIFE: FOOD

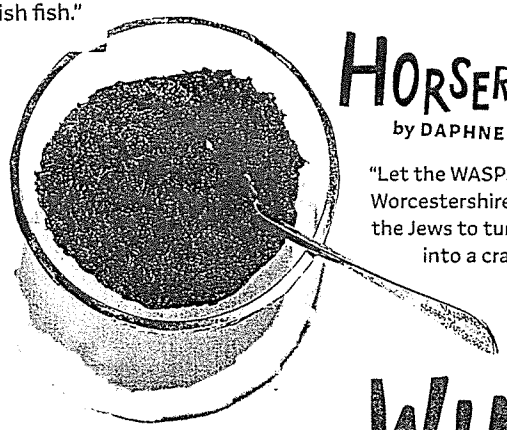
including

HERRING
by MAIRA KALMAN

rring have been swimming around
rge schools for thousands of years.
Occasionally, a predator comes
d eats them. And yet they survive.
The ultimate Jewish fish."

WHITEFISH SALAD
by TOM COLICCHIO

"The redheaded stepchild of lox."



HORSERADISH
by DAPHNE MERKIN

"Let the WASPs have their Worcestershire; leave it to the Jews to turn suffering into a craving."

E

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S

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n is as
conic."

GEFILTE FISH
by ÉRIC RIPERT

"It's not as bad as it's made out to be!"

WINE
by JILL KARGMAN

"I love that my people cherish wine enough to make a special carved chalice for it to toast each life-cycle phase."

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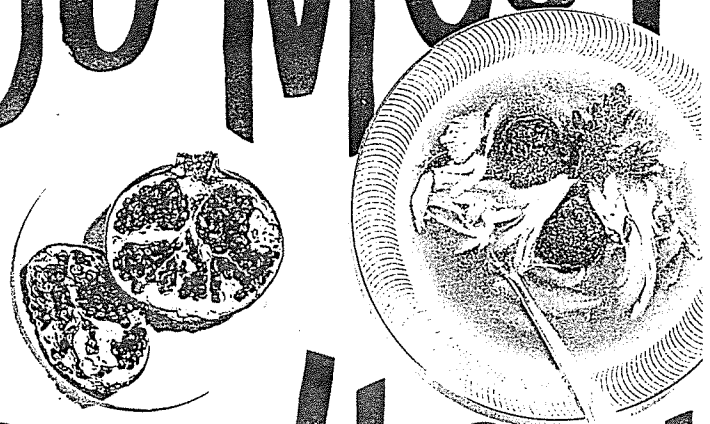
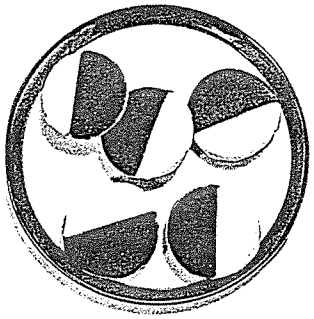


With 60 Recipes for Everything from Kugel to Kubbeh



A Highly Debatable List

ALANA NEWHOUSE
EDITOR IN CHIEF OF Tablet MAGAZIN

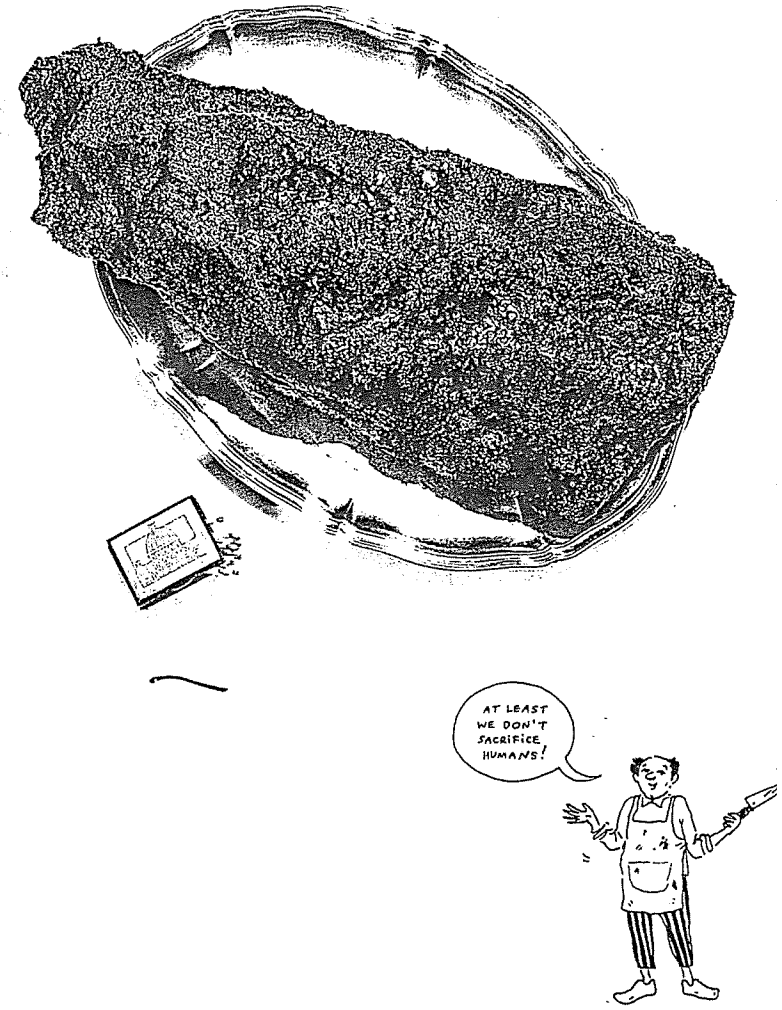
4

Burnt Offerings

(Sacrifices, Barbecue, Etc.)

By Liel Leibovitz

Aaron Franklin of Austin, Texas, probably the world's greatest barbecue pitmaster, smoked his very first kosher brisket in 2017. He wasn't having a religious awakening; he was honoring Ari White and Izzy Eidelman, two Jews who captured the coveted Brisket King NYC title (the king of "kosher bacon"), in 2016 and 2017 respectively. The sinewy cut, of course, has long been a staple of both Jewish cooking and American barbecue, but the latter's love affair with pork—pulled, ribs, or otherwise—meant that historically, Jews were largely absent around the barbecue pit. Not anymore, and amen to that: If you're looking for the world's first recipe for grilled meat, after all, look no further than Leviticus, which instructs the Israelites on how to build a pit and roast the burnt offering. With the bond between beef and holiness secured early on, and with kashrut paying close attention to slaughtering cattle in a specific way, sanctifying the moment of their sacrifice, it was only a matter of time before Jews returned to the fore of the meat scene.



Charoset

By MaNishtana

Passover is the most celebrated Jewish holiday in the world, reaching across the ever-widening denominational aisles to unite Jews in a shared sense of culture and history. For African American Jews, Passover feels ever more real, tangible. For us, the Seder plate isn't something symbolic of an event that happened to "ancestors" a long, long time ago in a country far, far away. It's about experiences that happened to family—our grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great grandparents—of whom we have photographs and maybe even had the privilege of actually knowing, in the country we actually live in.

When it comes to culture and history, no food merges the two as deftly as the chunky concoction known as charoset—representing the mortar from which the Jews formed their bricks in Egypt. Gibraltarian recipes use real ground bricks, and Persian ones include forty different ingredients for each year the Jews spent in the desert, while the charoset of African American Jews consists of the slave crops of pecans, cocoa powder, figs, and sugarcane. No matter what recipe you use, charoset pays homage to our ancestral story of slavery while representing a unique expression of Jewish Diasporic experiences anywhere across the globe.

Concord Grape Juice

By Rosie Schaap

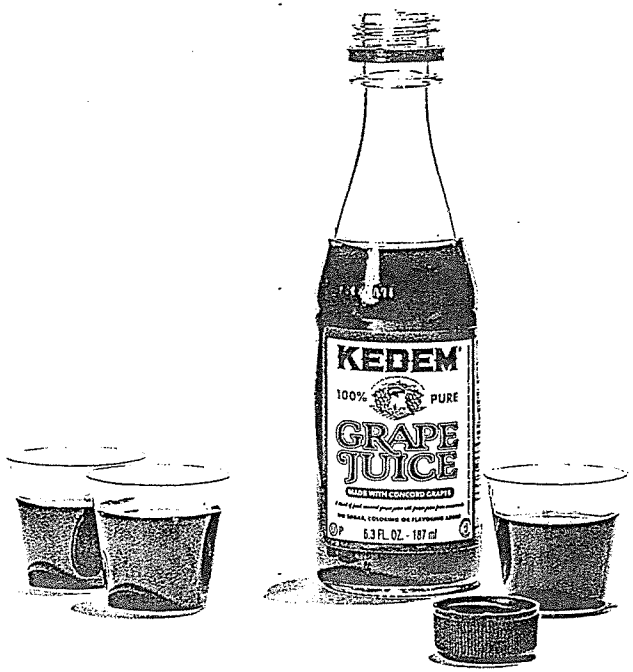
For a period that may have lasted just a few weeks, during a summer my family spent on Fire Island in the late 1970s, I'd march off to temple for Shabbat—alone and, in keeping with local custom, barefoot. My mother was suspicious of my sudden, newfound piety but figured it was my way of dealing with my parents' separation. I was no more than eight, and I already understood two things about myself, or at least about my future self: I was a hippie, and I was a Drinker with a capital *D*.

Sure, I liked the whole friendly, beach-casual, liberal-Jew vibe of the place, the guitars and folk songs and earnest long-haired older kids who paid attention to me—all so different from the stuffy Manhattan synagogues I was occasionally dragged to on High Holidays. But the biggest thrill was that I thought I was getting one over: I was sure I was drinking wine (page 278) out of those little Dixie cups. It was, of course, Concord grape juice.

We have the distinctly not-Jewish-sounding Ephraim Wales Bull, who grew the seedling from which the *Vitis labrusca* hybrid was propagated, to thank for the Concord grape. There is, at least, a soupçon of Old Testament pathos in Bull's story. "His discovery enriched others," John Mariani wrote in *The Dictionary of American*

Food and Drink, "but not himself: his gravestone reads, 'He sowed, but others reaped.'"

Many of the kosher wines served at the Seders of my youth were made from Concord grapes and were unpleasantly sweet. I say this even as an unrepentant wino: Where the juice of the Concord grape is concerned, I still prefer it unfermented. Such is the power of faith—or at least of a child's capacity for magical thinking—that I got pretty drunk off the stuff anyway, and still do.



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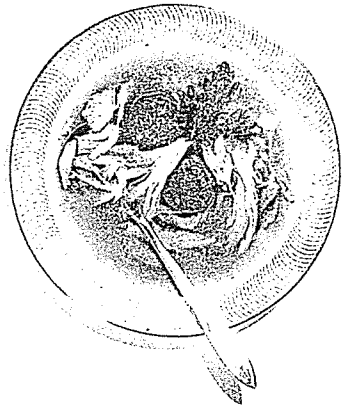

Chicken Soup

By Joan Nathan

Let's start with a hard truth: Chicken soup actually predates Judaism. It was, in fact, the Chinese who brought the chicken and its soup to the West. Ever since chickens were domesticated—between seven thousand and ten thousand years ago—the bird, bathed in water in a clay pot with a few vegetables to form a soup, has been a special dish in China.

But our own history with the dish begins illustriously and keeps on going. In the twelfth century, the great doctor and philosopher Maimonides learned from Chinese and Greek texts about chicken soup's medicinal qualities. Indeed, the idea of chicken soup as the "Jewish penicillin" derives from his treatise *On the Causes of Symptoms*, in which he recommends "chicken soup be used as a cure for whatever might ail you." Maimonides also prescribed a soup or stew made with an old hen or cock as a panacea for the common cold and other ailments.

The flavors of this once simple soup, made with water, chicken, onions, carrots, celery, dill (page 101), parsley, and an occasional parsnip, have evolved with the times. Years ago, when I lived in Israel, I tasted Yemenite chicken soup with garlic, cumin, coriander, fenugreek, and Persian *abgoosht* seasoning, which is flavored with cardamom and turmeric. And with the increase of immigration to the United States, we are discovering tasty recipes from the great Jewish Diaspora and beyond, introducing unexpected flavors and continually transforming this perennial comfort food. Over the years, we have treated our taste buds to Azerbaijani, Uzbek, and Colombian Jewish chicken soups laced with cumin, turmeric, ginger, and other ancient yet modern healing spices. And today, when I'm sick, I long for another alternative—Vietnamese pho with chicken.

Still, it's hard to separate oneself from the classic, and the role it has played in our lives, individually and communally—and anyway, who would want to?

JEWISH PENICILLIN: FACT OR MYTH?

In an experiment in 2000, a scientist at the University of Nebraska Medical Center proved what your mother has been saying for years: Chicken soup cures the common cold. The study, performed by Dr. Stephen Rennard, found that chicken soup inhibits neutrophil chemotaxis in vitro. (In plain English: "We found chicken soup might have some anti-inflammatory value" and "may ease the symptoms of upper respiratory tract infections.")

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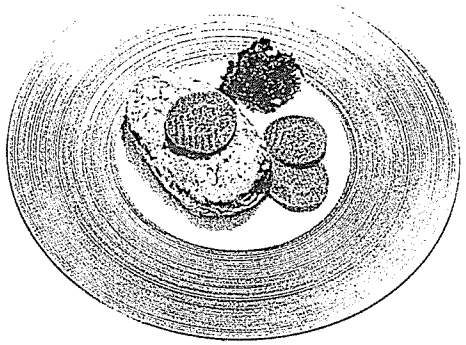
Gefilte Fish

By Éric Ripert

It's not as bad as it's made out to be!

I've been invited by friends many times over the years to celebrate Shabbat and Passover, and gefilte fish is always served. When I first tried it, friends warned me that it tasted like a bad pike quenelle—so naturally, I had pretty low expectations. But I've been pleasantly surprised on many occasions. When prepared properly, gefilte fish is moist, light, and full of flavor.



CARPS FOR KIDS

The Carp in the Bathtub is, of course, the greatest work of children's literature ever written about gefilte fish. Originally published in 1972, it tells the tale of a daring quest to rescue a fish before it is gefilted. Barbara Cohen's story, set in 1930s Brooklyn, is atmospheric and funny and deliciously illustrated by Joan Halpern in wavy-lined, stripey, pointillist, slightly psychedelic black-and-white style.

The story: Every year before Passover, Mama brings home a live carp and keeps it in the tub for a week, so it will be extra fresh and tasty when served at the Seder. One year, nine-year-old Leah and her brother, Harry, feel that this season's carp is special: friendlier and shinier and more bright-eyed than past carps. He even swims to the edge of the tub to visit the children whenever they enter the bathroom. Cohen writes: "Every time Harry or I had to go to the toilet, we would grab a crust of bread or a rusty lettuce leaf from the kitchen. While we sat on the toilet, we fed the bread or the lettuce leaf to the carp. This made going to the bathroom really fun, instead of just a waste of time."

The kids name the carp Joe and resolve to save him, hiding him temporarily in their recently widowed neighbor Mrs. Ginzburg's tub. Alas, their father orders them to bring Joe back, despite their big "fish are friends, not food" pitch. "It's your mother's fish and it cost her a lot of money," he tells them. They return the fish. Their mother kills it. This is a metaphor for the powerlessness of childhood. "We cried ourselves to sleep that night, and the next night, too. Then we made ourselves stop crying. After that, we felt as if we were years older than Mama and Papa." This is a good lesson! Sometimes life is unfair, and we have to suck it up, like a filter feeder.

Thankfully, Papa understands the kids' grief, and he gets them a cat.

Out of print for years (I blame the vegetarians and helicopter parents), *The Carp in the Bathtub* was republished by Kar-Ben in 2016; you should absolutely possess it, whether you have children or not. It is notable, however, that the greatest work of children's literature ever written about gefilte fish does not actually involve eating gefilte fish.

Marjorie Ingall

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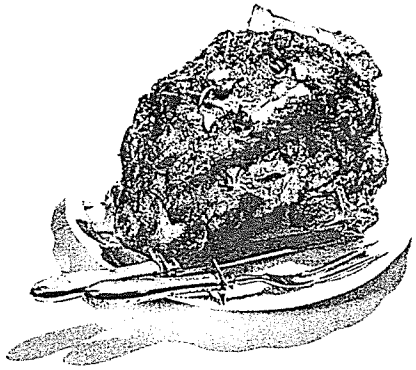

Lamb

(Not the Leg. And Definitely Not Roasted.)

By Ruth Reichl

Being a food editor is a great job—until the holidays roll around. They are the bane of every food editor's existence.

Consider the Seder. My first year as food editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, I called my sister-in-law in Tel Aviv to ask what she was planning to serve. She gamely sent me her recipes. These included an unusual charoset and a lovely leg of lamb roasted in mint. The photographs we took were beautiful, and I heaved a sigh of relief.

But I arrived the next morning to a flurry of irate phone calls. "What were you thinking?" readers wanted to know. How could I possibly print a recipe for a leg of lamb and call myself a Jew? As one caller

told me, "As a mark of respect for the memory of the temple sacrifices, the eating of a whole roasted lamb on Passover is forbidden by the code of Jewish law called the Shulchan Aruch, which was first printed in Venice in 1565."

Jews who strictly interpret this rule will not eat roasted meat of any kind for their Seder. Others simply refrain from roasted lamb. More than one caller explained, rather testily, that lamb was fine so long as it wasn't roasted—but not if it was a leg.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Don't you know that the hindquarter of an animal is never kosher, because it contains the sciatic nerve?" (Well, actually, no, I didn't. But it turns out that while American butchers rarely bother with the fussy work of removing the sciatic nerve, Israeli butchers do; in Israel, hind legs are kosher.)

I found this entire Passover episode so chastening that the next year—and every year after that—I hired an expert in Jewish dietary law to go over the recipes. When I tried hiring him to review our Hanukkah recipes, he laughed uproariously. "Oh, Ruth," he said. "Hanukkah's not a real holiday. You can put anything you want on the menu."

He stopped for a minute and then conceded, "Well, probably not ham."

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HOME-CURED GRAVLAX

by Susan Spungen

Serves 10 to 12

- 1 cup (240 grams) coarse salt
- 1 cup (200 grams) sugar
- 2 tablespoons (16 grams) coarsely cracked black peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon (5 grams) cracked coriander seeds
- 1 (2-pound/900-gram) skinless salmon fillet
- 1 bunch dill

Mix the coarse salt, sugar, peppercorns, and coriander in a medium bowl. Set aside.

Use a pair of needle-nose pliers to remove the small bones from the salmon (see Note).

Line a glass or ceramic baking dish with plastic wrap, leaving plenty of overhang, and sprinkle about half the salt mixture into the dish. Lay the salmon fillet on top and cover with the remaining salt mixture.

Very coarsely chop the dill and place it on top of the fish. Wrap tightly in the plastic wrap, then wrap in a second piece of plastic wrap.

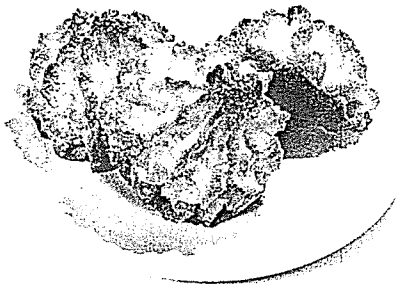
Place in the refrigerator and set something heavy on top, such as a small cutting board topped with some heavy cans, to weigh it down. Cure for 2 to 3 days, turning the fish occasionally.

When ready to serve, unwrap the fish, and wipe off and discard the salt mixture. Slice the fish across the grain on an angle, as thinly as possible.

Serve with bagels or toasted bialys (page 36) and cream cheese (page 94), or as part of an appetizing platter (page 31).

NOTE: The small pin bones will look like a row of white dots running along the fatter side of the fillet (not the side with the belly flap) near the center line. Run your fingertip along the flesh against the direction of the bones so you can feel where they are, then grip them firmly with the needle-nose pliers and pull them out.

11



Macaroons

By Molly Yeh

Odds are good that if you are a Jew who grew up in America, you can remember one specific macaroon that made you realize one very important thing: Canned macaroons are bullshit. For my friend Jeff, it was a chocolate macaroon his neighbor made. For Leah, it was a macaroon she tried at a Havdalah potluck. For me? It was a rice pudding–flavored macaroon I ate while walking to the subway in East Harlem after a visit to the magical Danny Macaroons factory. Living in a country with modern conveniences like flaccid store-bought canned coconut macaroons seems to have produced two eras in the lives of many: the one that came before the life-changing macaroon, and the one that came after.

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The latter era started to gain momentum around 2011, when suddenly everyone had become gluten-free. Bougie macaroons with crisp golden shells and gooey delicious innards were popping up at specialty stores and bakeries. The Jewish-food-blogging world was churning out carrot cake macaroons and matcha macaroons to Jews and gluten-free gentiles alike. And being able to make the distinction between the French macaron and the Jewish coconut macaroon was suddenly a skill required of every foodie (another thing everyone had become by 2011).

What the pedestrian foodie might not realize, however, is that the French macaron and the coconut macaroon are, in fact, cousins. They share an ancestor: an Italian cookie made of almonds, sugar, and egg whites, which won the hearts of Jews way back in the day because it could be eaten on Passover. After migrating to France in the sixteenth century, this cookie was eventually sandwichified and fancied up into the Parisian macaron we know today. Elsewhere, including in the States, coconut was subbed in for nuts to make a sturdier, more shelf-stable cookie. Franklin Baker, a flour miller in Philadelphia who became America's first large-scale shredded coconut producer in 1897, is largely responsible for this development. But in Sephardic traditions, macaroons made with almonds (or pistachios, or pine nuts) remain the norm.

No matter where you fall on your personal journey of macaroon discovery, whether you're pre-canned-macaroon epiphany or post, one thing is for sure: It's just not Passover without them.

12

MACAROONS

Makes 24 cookies

- 2 cups (240 grams) sweetened shredded coconut
- 2 large egg whites
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons (25 grams) sugar
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 350°F (177°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Process the coconut in the bowl of a food processor for about 2 minutes, until it is ground to a fine meal.

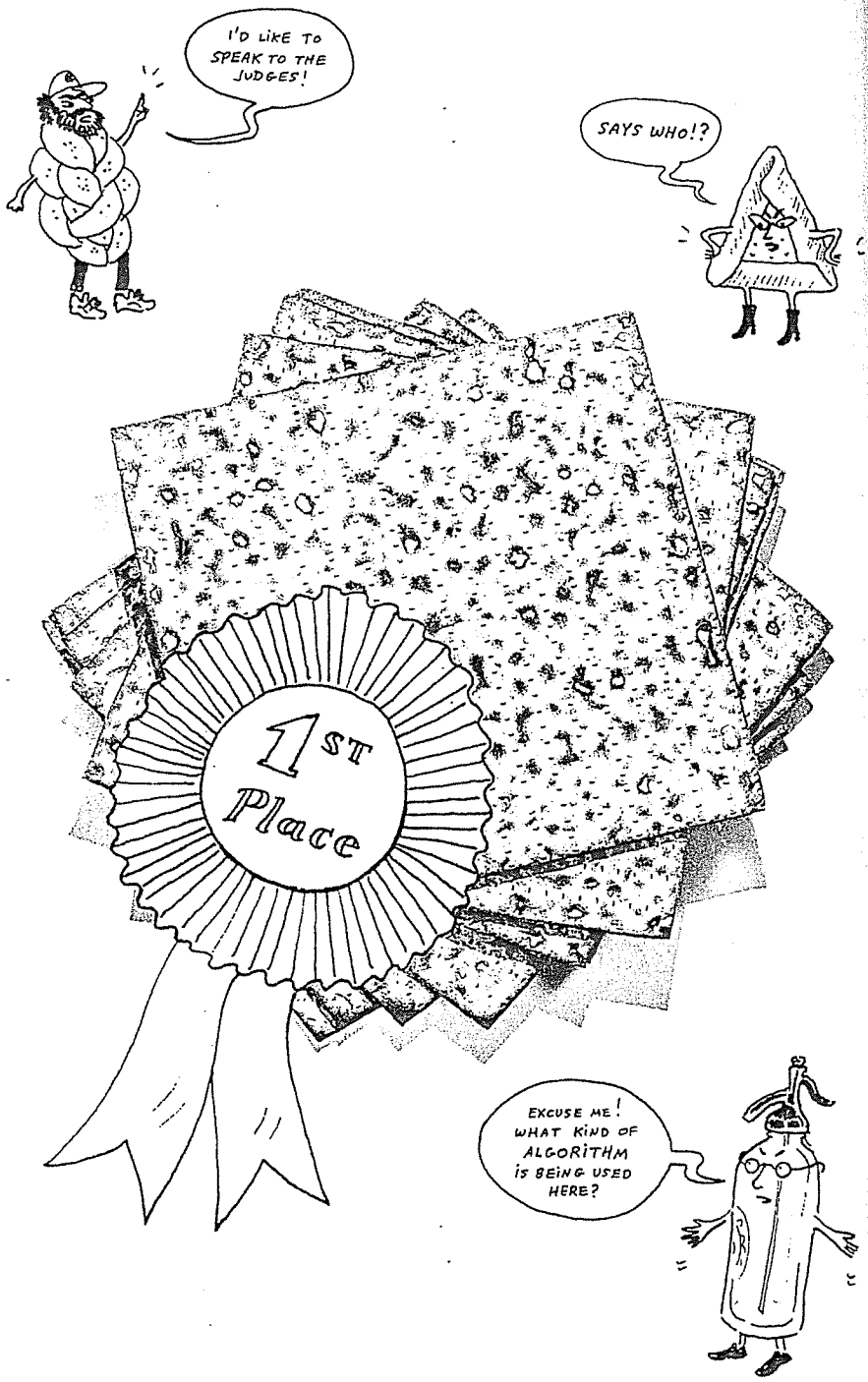
In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites and salt on high speed for 1 to 2 minutes, until soft peaks form. Gradually add the sugar and beat for 2 to 3 minutes more, until stiff peaks form. Beat in the vanilla. Gently fold in the coconut by hand with a rubber spatula.

Transfer the mixture to a large piping bag fitted with a ½-inch (1.5-centimeter) star tip. Pipe 1-inch (2.5-centimeter) macaroons onto the prepared baking sheet, spacing them 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) apart.

Bake until browned on the bottom and on the edges, 16 to 18 minutes.

Let cool on the pan for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

The macaroons will keep in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.



Matzo

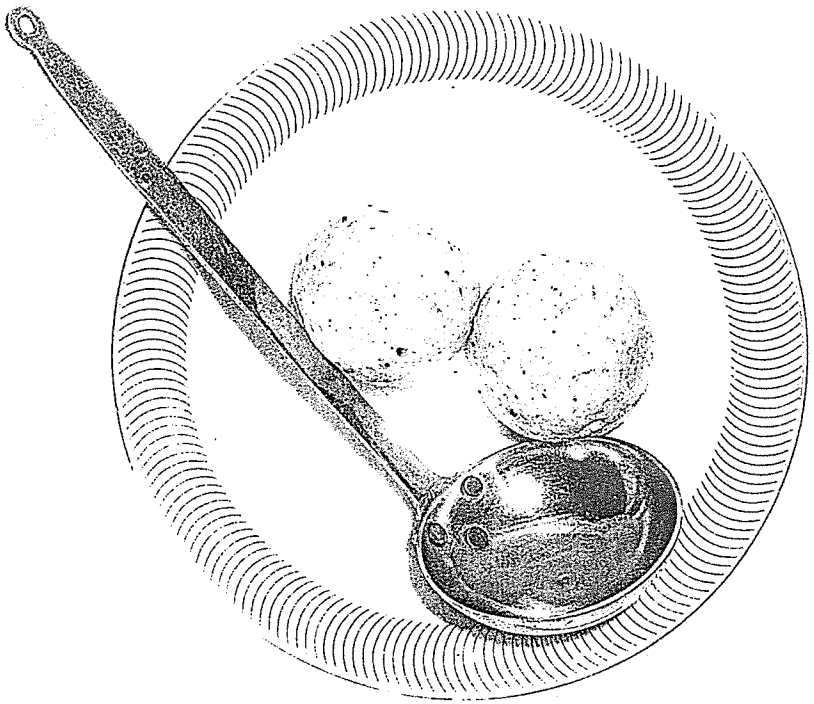
By Alana Newhouse

Perceptive readers will note that in putting together this book, we did not rank the entries. This wasn't merely a matter of self-interest, though we admit that the thought of spending hours fighting with critics about whether chopped liver was treated dismissively struck us as too close to a dystopian *Seinfeld* episode for comfort. But the truer reason here is that these foods represent the experiences of different people, places, and times in Jewish history. The majesty, allure, joy, and terror of this story reside in its diversity and complexity.

And yet it is not outlandish to argue that only one food was present at the creation of the Jewish people, and it has miraculously managed to sustain that bond over millennia: matzo—our unleavened bread of affliction and redemption. This is the only entry that is receiving a numerical value, because on a list of foods judged for their Jewish significance, none is more important.

It might not be anybody's favorite dish—it's certainly not the most delicious!—but it's arguably the only food that we all somehow eat, no matter where we live or where our family came from. The old saying "two Jews, three synagogues" accurately captures our age-old love of disputation and drawing distinctions, which can be fruitful and necessary but, at times, absurdly destructive. We might also do well to occasionally remember the gifts and pleasures that have come—for thousands of years—from staying committed to what we have in common.

13



14

Matzo Balls

By Joan Nathan

Here is my considered judgment: No Jewish dish—not one—is as comforting or iconic as the matzo ball.

With neither the heat of spicy Szechuan dumplings nor the delicacy of Italian gnocchi, there is no ambrosia quite like matzo balls, floating in homemade chicken broth, when you are sick or celebrating a Jewish holiday.

Matzo balls began as the German *Knödel*, a bready dumpling. Jewish cooks in the Middle Ages first adapted the dumplings to add to Sabbath soups, using broken matzo with some kind of fat like chicken or beef marrow, eggs, onions, ginger, and nutmeg. As Jews moved eastward from Germanic lands to Poland and the Pale of Settlement in Russia, they brought *kneidlach* (Yiddish for *Knödel*) with them. In Lithuania, kneidlach were filled with special bonuses like cinnamon or meat for the Sabbath. Though kneidlach arrived in America under different guises, the B. Manischewitz Company started packaging ground matzo meal like bread crumbs and marketed the dumplings in a box as "feather balls Alsatian style" in their *Tempting Kosher Dishes* cookbook of 1933.

The term *matzo ball* itself was first used in English in 1902 in the section on Jewish food in *Mrs. Rorer's Cookbook*, and the name stuck. Today matzo balls come in all sizes and varieties; there are those the size of tennis balls and even bacon-wrapped matzo balls.

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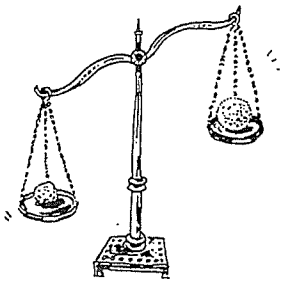
And, of course, there is the age-old discussion of "floaters" versus "sinkers." You can make floaters with the packaged mix by including baking powder—yes, baking powder—or by adding, as my mother-in-law did, soda water to the prepared mix. Today I make mine using matzo meal, spices like ginger and nutmeg, and fresh herbs like cilantro, dill, or parsley for flavor and color and cook them the way I like them—al dente. Now *that* is what I call a matzo ball!



MATZO BALL SOUP

by Joan Nathan

Makes 10 to 12 matzo balls; serves 6 to 8

FOR THE SOUP

1 (4-pound/1.8 kilogram) chicken

2 large yellow onions, unpeeled

4 parsnips

2 celery stalks, with leaves

6 medium carrots

6 tablespoons (20 grams) chopped fresh parsley

6 tablespoons (20 grams) dill sprigs

1 tablespoon (15 grams) kosher salt, plus more as needed

¼ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper, plus more as needed

FOR THE MATZO BALLS

4 large eggs

¼ cup (60 milliliters) schmaltz (page 238) or vegetable oil

¼ cup (60 milliliters) chicken stock

1 cup (130 grams) matzo meal

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

½ teaspoon ground ginger

2 tablespoons (6 grams) finely chopped fresh parsley, dill, or cilantro

1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed

Coarsely ground black pepper

15

Make the soup: Put the chicken in a large pot and add enough water to cover by 2 inches (5 centimeters—about 4 quarts/4 liters). Bring the water to a boil, skimming off the gray scum that rises to the top. Reduce the heat to medium-low so the soup is at a gentle but visible simmer.

Add the onions, parsnips, celery, carrots, parsley, 4 tablespoons (13 grams) of the dill, and the salt and pepper. Cover the pot with the lid ajar and simmer for at least 1 hour and up to 2 hours. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

Turn off the heat, cover the pot, and let the soup cool to room temperature. Refrigerate for 2 to 3 hours or up to overnight so the soup solidifies to a gel-like consistency and the schmaltz (fat) rises to the top and solidifies. Skim off the schmaltz and reserve it for the matzo balls.

Make the matzo balls: In a large bowl, using a soupspoon, gently mix the eggs, schmaltz, stock, matzo meal, nutmeg, ginger, and parsley, dill, or cilantro. Season with salt and 2 to 3 grinds of the pepper. Cover and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled, at least 1 hour and up to overnight.

When ready to cook the matzo balls, bring a wide, deep pot of lightly salted water to a boil. With wet hands, take some of the mix and mold it into the size and shape of a golf ball. Gently drop it into the boiling water, repeating until all the mixture is used.

Cover the pan, reduce the heat to a lively simmer, and cook for about 20 minutes for al dente matzo balls, and closer to 45 minutes for lighter matzo balls. To test their readiness, remove one with a slotted spoon and cut in half—the matzo ball should be the same color and texture throughout.

Just before serving, strain the soup, setting aside the chicken for chicken salad. Discard the vegetables, and reheat the broth. Spoon a matzo ball into each bowl, pour soup over the matzo ball, and sprinkle with the remaining dill sprigs.

NOTE: Like many Jewish foods, matzo balls are polarizing. First, there's the size: Some prefer a boulder big enough to occupy most of the soup dish, while others like a ball small enough to fit two or three to a bowl. Then, there's the texture. The larger balls, usually leavened with baking powder or seltzer, err on the light and airy side, aka "floaters." The more petite kneidlach typically correspond to a dense, "sinker" consistency. This recipe, which balances heft and fluff, lands somewhere in between.

Matzo Brei

By David Samuels

The ingredients are as basic as they come: matzo, eggs, pepper, salt. But matzo brei, like every other good thing on the planet, is about the doing, and because it is Jewish, there is a particular way it needs to be done. The matzo needs to be broken over a colander, so you can save the precious fine-grained dust. Then gently wash the matzo fragments until they start to get soggy. Add the matzo dust along with the eggs, salt, and pepper, and a kind of alchemy happens. Fry it up in enough butter to float a battleship, until you have something that looks like the proverbial dog's breakfast, or worse. Add grade A Vermont maple syrup, and you have something undeniably delicious.

Matzo brei tells a story that starts out where I live and includes nearly the entire history of my people, with asides about copper, fire, belief in God, and so forth. Once those conditions are no longer binding, the food you eat tastes different. It's part of someone's nostalgia trip. Matzo brei is impervious to that kind of treatment, which is why, when they grow up, your children will make their matzo brei for their children.

Is this not the entirety of the agony and the ecstasy of a 3,500-year-old religion in one dish, with the addition of maple syrup neatly folding in nearly everything that will seem worth preserving, two thousand years hence, about the whole North American Jewish experience—namely, New England, where the Puritans created a

16

safe haven for all faiths while teaching their children Hebrew at Harvard and Yale; and where the Boston Red Sox, who might also be the Brooklyn Dodgers, play baseball; and where Robert Lowell and Robert Frost wrote poems that could have been written in Russian, all of which is merely another way of expressing the gratitude of a hunted people for the nearly unbearable sweetness of life in this place. It is arguable that better maple syrup comes from Quebec, where Montreal is, and therefore, by extension, Toronto, and also Hollywood, which is secretly run by Canadians, some of whom eat matzo brei. So eat it, and smile. But only on Passover, or the spell will be broken and you may as well order a Big Mac at McDonald's for all I care.

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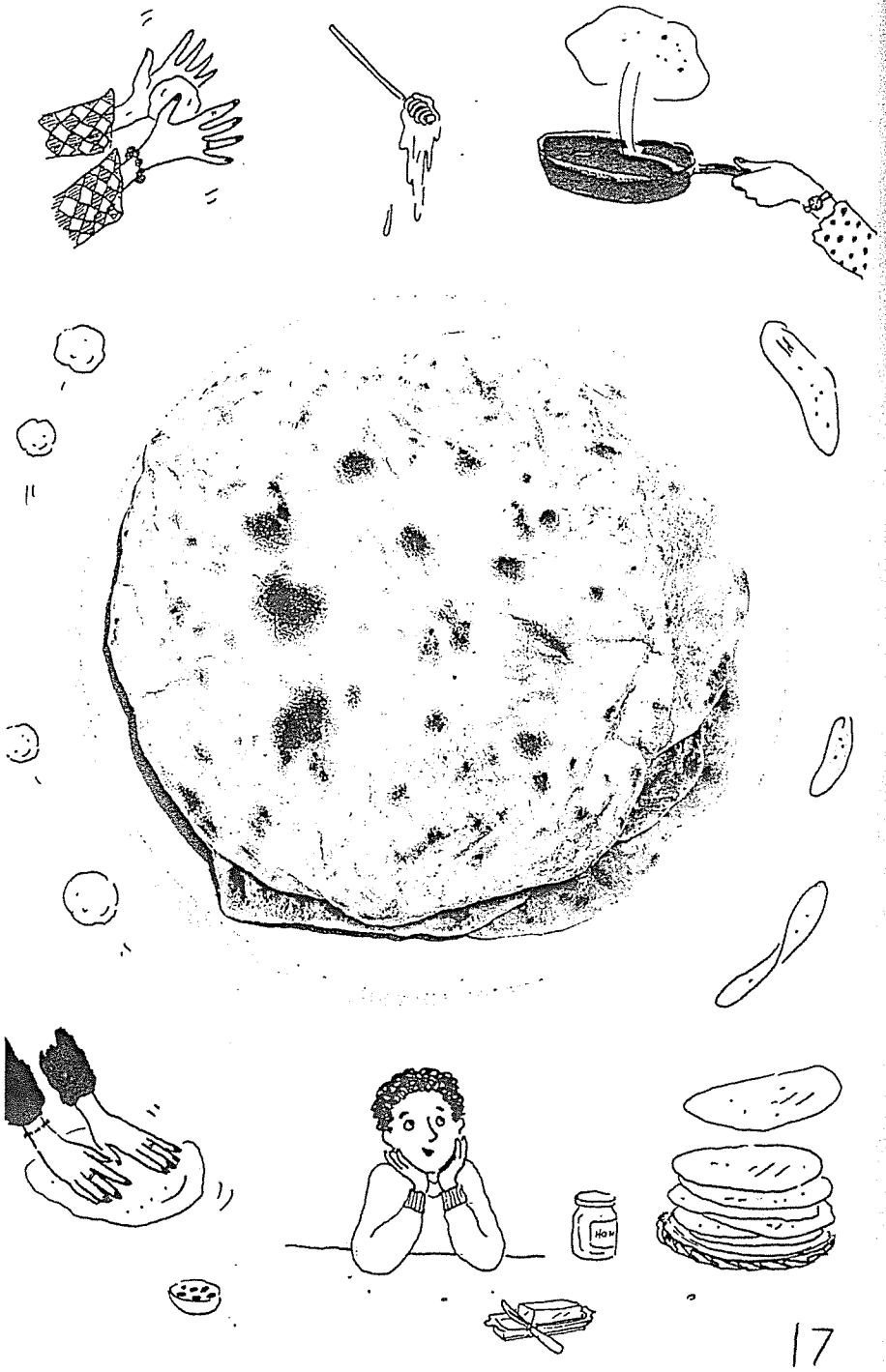

Mufleta

By Gabriel Stulman

The best part of Passover is when it's over.

When I was growing up, Passover was dominated by my mother's side of the family, extremely observant Sephardic Jews from Morocco. My mom believed Passover was a holiday absolutely worth staying home from school for, though mostly so we could help clean the house of *chametz*—she gave my siblings and me toothbrushes to get into the corners of the carpet. The Seder always started with my grandfather Joseph and his wife, Perla—the "Joseph" of my restaurant Joseph Leonard and the "Perla" of my old restaurant Perla Cafe. Everyone wore caftans and djellabas. Each passage of the Haggadah was read in Hebrew, with Sephardic rhythms and Moroccan songs. There was a break after every single passage for debate, which took place in several different languages.

We kept kosher, so I always brought my own lunch to school. But my brown-bag lunches that week were different. Even my Jewish friends couldn't believe it: "Your mom makes you eat matzo all week?" And let me tell you: Eating a peanut butter and jelly or turkey sandwich with matzo is a hot mess.

But finally, when the sun set on the last day of Passover, it was time for Mimouna—which meant it was time for fun. And not only because I was at that point very sick of matzo. My grandmother would come over, and she and my mom would make all these different Moroccan

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pastries, filled with dates, prunes, and pistachios. But the highlight of Mimouna was always *mufleta*.

The best way to describe mufleta is as a thicker crepe or blintz. It's not quite as thick as naan or as bready as pita. It's a bit like a tortilla, except puffier. Think of Neapolitan pizza and the blackened, crisp, burnt part under the crust. The perfect mufleta is thirty seconds away from that pizza—right before it turns black.

My mom and my grandmother rolled out the dough, threw it in a cast-iron skillet, and cooked it until it blistered. They stacked the mufleta like pancakes and covered them with a big kitchen towel for later, when they'd be warm, spongy, and a little bit oily from all the butter. That was the secret: all the butter. (Every time you finish cooking one, you add butter, so that when you put the new dough in, it oils up the bottom half.)

And then there were the fillings. The most popular were apple and honey, of course—lavender-infused honey, chamomile-infused honey. Then you'd line the mufleta with apples or bananas. My mom made a chocolate spread similar to Nutella, and I'd spoon that in. And that was the meal. You would just eat sweets for an entire dinner.

I have all these great memories of just stuffing my face with mufleta, and they came rushing back to me last year. My wife and I were invited to eat at Per Se, and the pastry chef, Anna Bolz, wanted to do something to surprise us. She had James Lauer, the general manager at our restaurant Fairfax, get in touch with my sister for recommendations. My sister told James about mufleta. Anna looked it up online, studied the principles of the dish, and made an entire mufleta dessert course at Per Se. It was like that scene in *Ratatouille* when the critic takes the bite of ratatouille and gets zapped back to being a kid. That happened to me. I literally cried in the restaurant.

18

HISTORY LESSON

Items symbolizing luck are central to Mimouna, and the festive table is decorated with "an array of symbols that are basically variations on a theme," explains Israeli historian Yigal Bin-Nun. Some families display a whole fish—even alive, swimming in a bowl of water—on the Mimouna table as a sign of good fortune, and also because the holiday is said to fall on the day when God parted the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross to freedom. Foods are often served in numerical groupings, such as seven green pea pods dotting a plate of flour to symbolize fertility and renewal. In some homes, Hanukkah gelt-like gold coins are strewn across the table.

Though the festival's name is often thought to refer to the twelfth-century's Rabbi Maimon (the father of Maimonides), Bin-Nun has uncovered folkloristic songs and historic sources that link it to the rituals of the Gnawa, a Sufi sect in Morocco whose adherents pray yearly through songs, parades, and ecstatic dancing to the goddess of luck, Mimouna. Sure enough, Bin-Nun says, during Jewish Mimouna celebrations, "songs are sung in honor of 'Lady Luck.' One of them is '*Lala mimouna/mbarka masuda*,' which means 'Lady Mimouna/lucky and blessed.'" The Arabic word *mimoun* also means "luck" or "good fortune."

Today in Israel, Mimouna is considered more or less a national party, and Israelis will point to its celebration as an example of peaceful relations not only between Sephardim and Ashkenazim but also between Muslims and Jews. After all, the culinary traditions of the holiday originate with Arab and Berber families who lent flour and yeast to their Jewish neighbors following sundown after Passover. In return, Moroccan Jews are said to have either given them the remainder of their matzo or opened their homes and eaten their first baked goods together—a tradition still maintained with Moroccan Jews leaving their front doors open on Mimouna eve.

Lara Rabinovitch

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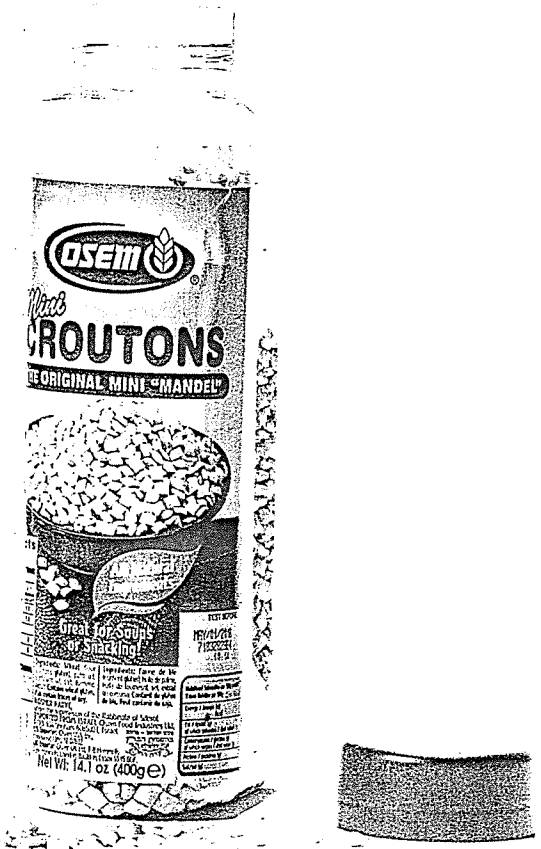

Soup Mandel

By Gil Hovav

Let's face it: Israelis think they invented everything. Everything! Stents? It was us. Cherry tomatoes? Us again. Disk on key? Yup. Sliced bread? Sure. And don't forget rice (and God!).

But when it comes to *soup mandel*, we may have taken it a bit too far. While the Yiddishe name implies that this godly creation was made for chicken soup, which we invented (hey, we invented chickens!), the old *mameloshen* name also means that the roots of the mandel are in Europe and not Israel.

Well, this may be the case, but we Israelis have improved it. Our *shkedei marak* ("soup almonds" in Hebrew) are smaller, baked and not fried, and so shiny yellow that you may want to put on sunglasses before you eat them. Up until not too long ago, this was due to frightening contents of something that gave Israeli shkedei marak a lovely look of nuclear waste. Now it is all natural (but still more than 25 percent fat)—seven thousand tiny, crunchy squares of yellow happiness in every package.

Ten Rules Of Shmiras Haloshon

Loshon hora means the making of a derogatory or damaging remark about someone. The Torah forbids one to denigrate the behavior or character of a person or to make any remark that might cause physical, psychological or financial harm.

Here are ten basic rules to remember:

1. It is loshon hora to convey a derogatory image of someone even if that image is true and deserved. (False derogatory statements are called motzi shem ra, slander.)
2. A statement which is not actually derogatory but can ultimately cause someone physical, financial, or emotional harm is also loshon hora.
3. It is loshon hora to humorously recount an incident that contains embarrassing or damaging information about a person even if there is not the slightest intent that they should suffer any harm or humiliation.
4. Loshon hora is forbidden even when you incriminate yourself as well.
5. Loshon hora cannot be communicated in any way, shape, or form (i.e., through writing, body language, verbal hints, etc.).
6. To speak against a community as a whole is a particularly severe offense. Harmful remarks about children are also loshon hora.
7. Loshon hora cannot be related even to close relatives, including one's spouse.
8. Even if the listener has previously heard the derogatory account or the information has become public knowledge and the subject will suffer no further harm by its repetition, it nevertheless should not be repeated.
9. R'chilus, which is telling one person a derogatory statement that another person said about them, is forbidden because it causes animosity between people.
10. It is forbidden to listen to loshon hora or r'chilus. If someone inadvertently hears loshon hora, it is forbidden to believe that it is true. One should give the person the benefit of the doubt. Assume the information is inaccurate or that the person does not realize they are doing something wrong.

NOTE: There are times when loshon hora is permitted or even required, i.e., when warning a person about potential harm, for example, a potential business or marriage partner. On the other hand, secondhand information and baseless impressions have momentous implications. The questions of when you are allowed or even required to speak loshon hora are complicated. A Rabbinic authority with expertise in the field of Shmiras Haloshon should be consulted in any of these cases.

Call the "Shmiras Haloshon שאלה Line" at (718) 951-3696 from 9–10:30pm to ask Halachic questions.

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