

ALIYAH

THE COOKBOOK

An ingathering of family histories & recipes

CINDY SILVERT



JEWISH
NATIONAL
FUND

ALIYAH
THE COOKBOOK

An ingathering of family histories & recipes

For Lois & Duvy

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"וְנִשָּׂא נֵס לְגוֹיִם וְאַסֵּף נְדָתַי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִפְצוֹת יְהוּדָה יִקְבֹּץ מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפֹת הָאָרֶץ
יְשַׁעִי הו 11:12

*"And He shall raise a banner to the nations, and He shall gather the lost of Israel
and gather together the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth."*
Isaiah 11:12

ALiyAH is a tribute to all those who made the journey.

Learn more at jnf.org/aliyahcookbook

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DREAMING IN ICE CREAM

ADAM

Czechoslovakia



It was the event of the season. You can almost see Adam's mind rewind the tape as he goes back in time to relive it. Twice a year they were treated to an off site adventure, this time they had romped around the country's modest waterpark. At some point on the way home, their sweaty bus would squeak into a gas station for the star attraction, the pit stop. The door was still hissing open as the kids squeezed out. There was magic in the air as they lined up for the ultimate treat, one small scoop. Today Adam's kibbutz is a financial superstar, but back then that scoop of ice cream was an indulgence. Both his grandfathers were ice cream aficionados who treated their grandson to the creamiest brands in the land. One even made his own: Lemon Ice. Between the mythical pit stop and favorite, possibly embellished childhood memories, Adam always loved the stuff.

His maternal grandfather was one of the 669 children secreted out of Czechoslovakia on Nicholas Winton's Kindertransport. Raised in England in a boarding school for the arts, Tomi Spenser would be the sole survivor of his family. As graduation approached, a concerned teacher pulled him aside and suggested that he bid adieu to the arts. For a Jew alone in the world, he counseled, medicine would be a better bet. So Tomi applied to medical school where he would meet his future wife. Upon graduation in 1949, the two doctors moved to the young State of Israel where they thought they would be safest, or at least, at home.

Sasa, the English-speaking kibbutz that Adam's grandparents helped build, is situated in the Western Galilee, a mile south of Lebanon. Dr. Spenser, Adam's grandfather, wound his way through the stark landscape treating Muslims, Christians, Druze and Jews with his young son in tow. The doctor was a welcome and respected member of the tribes and villages of the multi-cultured north, and his son Dani took note. Two generations later, Adam would incorporate his grandfather's values into his ice cream business.

Right before his army service, Adam joined his grandfather in England at a ceremony honoring Dr. Spenser's guardian angel. Sir Nicholas George Winton had been off to ski in the Alps in 1939 when he happened upon the Nazi madness seeping through Prague. His friends encouraged him to turn a blind eye but Winton refused. Rather, at great personal cost and danger, he arranged for the rescue of nearly 700 children. Only a handful would be reunited with their families.

Winton never spoke of it after the war. His wife only discovered photographs of "his children" accidentally, a good fifty years later. If not for her, thousands of Winton children, grandchildren and great grandchildren would have been denied the chance to meet and thank him. Sir Winton was visibly moved by the reunion, but was forever haunted by the children left behind. Sitting among generations beholden to the uncompromising humanity of one good man was the most powerful experience of Adam's life.

The official plan of Adam's post-army trip to Europe was to play music and eat a lot of ice cream, and so it was. Just as he was about to return home, his mother sent him a curious article about a man in the Canary Islands. Two years prior, 82-year-old Anthony Smith had been run over by a van... so he decided to build a raft and sail across the Atlantic. Adam felt compelled to meet him.

Smith happened to be an experienced adventurer who wanted to send a message to the world, two actually. The voyage was a picture-perfect publicity stunt for WaterAid, a clean water charity. He also wanted to set an example for octogenarians everywhere, that it's never too late to make your dreams come true. Anthony grew a following, and free labor, at his weekly lectures on life and his upcoming escapade.

Inspired, Adam began working on Anthony's raft by day, eating ice cream by night, every night. Eventually the owner of the gelateria offered him a job. All the while, Adam wondered how he was going to "cross his ocean." After honing his craft in Italy and Spain, he returned to Israel's North where there was a dearth of ice cream. Adam's dream was to build an ice cream parlor that would be an oasis of coexistence between Arabs and Jews. The gelateria in the Galapagos had been a little slice of heaven. Adam wanted to replicate that.

He spent six months looking for an Arab business partner with whom to share the dream. Alaa Sweitat, owner and chef of the popular restaurant Aluma, loved the concept and agreed to join Adam on the spot. That very day they chose their first location, right in Alaa's village of Tarshiha, where they're still dishing out the best ingredients and intentions.

Buza ice cream parlors are located among and staffed by every population in Israel. In fact, Buza employees – Arabs, Christians, Druze and Jews, are required to socialize together at least once a month, on Buza's dime. Over the past seven years Adam estimates that nearly 2,000 employees have had face-to-face engagement with people they otherwise would never have met. People who previously "had nothing in common," Adam explained, no longer fear or have an aversion to one another. One small step. Adam thinks that peace is a silly word. He believes that getting to know and respect others is the best, perhaps the only, way to forge a kinder world.

Last year Buza produced one million tons of ice cream at the once-modest kibbutz where Adam grew up. Kibbutz children are no longer limited to one scoop — as if. The delectable flavors change with the seasons, as many are infused with local ingredients. Pear & wine sorbet, for example, came about when Alaa's neighbor had fruit to spare. Others are more esoteric, like Rambam (Maimonides) Chocolate which is imbued with a seven spice elixir sanctioned by the great scholar, alchemist and possible chocolate lover.

It's been a while since Adam's first dance with decadence, back when scarcity was flavor of the month. Today, Buza is concocting flavors that speak to local consumers and honor their traditions. They have opened five old-fashioned ice cream parlors, and run tours and workshops at their visitors' center up North. Adam Ziv and his partner Alaa Sweitat are changing how and why business is done.

In 2017, Adam and Alaa won the UN's prestigious Flourish Prize, given to businesses helping to promote peace; moreover, Buza gets two thumbs up on Trip Advisor. Buza is creating employment opportunities in the North, where they are desperately needed, not to mention top-notch pit stops. Adam is still partial towards caramel cream while Alaa prefers sorbet, but they see eye-to-eye on the bigger things. In their unassuming way, these two visionaries have fashioned a recipe for hope in the uniquely complicated land of their forefathers.

LEMON ICE

GRANDFATHER'S

3 lemons
1 c heavy cream
1/2 c sugar

Finely grate the peels of 2 lemons. Squeeze all 3 lemons. Stir the sugar into the lemon juice until it's absorbed. Purée with an immersion blender or in a food processor. Whip the cream until it's thick. Gently fold the lemon mixture into the whipped cream. Freeze in a freezer-proof bowl or in an ice cream maker.



LYCHEE SORBET

FUN WITH ANY FRUIT

3 c lychee, strawberries or pear
5 c water
2/3 c white sugar

Pit and crush the fruit. Boil the water and sugar together until the volume is reduced by 1/3. Combine the fruit and syrup with an immersion blender, food processor or whisk. Play with the ratio of sugar to fruit for desired sweetness. Freeze in an ice cream maker or freezer-proof container.



MALABI

ROSE WATER ICE CREAM

1 c milk
1 c whipping cream
1 c sugar
1/2 c mascarpone
3 Tbsp cornstarch
1/2 tsp rose water, or less

Put all the ingredients in a pan, adding the rose water a few drops at a time. Stir on medium heat until the sugar melts and the syrup is sticky. Pour it into a mixing bowl and put it in the fridge. Remove after half an hour, or when cool. Remove & whip with beaters for five minutes, then place in freezer for 3 hours. Remove & whip again until smooth & creamy. After an hour or more, serve with a drizzle of syrup (below), peanuts & coconut. Too sweet? Replace 1 c sugar with 1/2 cup sugar & 1/2 cup liquid glucose.

SYRUP & GARNISH

FOR MALABI

- 1/2 c sugar
- 3 lemon geranium leaves
- 10 lemon verbena leaves
- 1/2 c boiling water
- 1/2 c salted peanuts
- 1/4 c shredded coconut

Put the sugar and leaves in a pan. Pour the boiling water on top of the sugar & leaves. Bring to a boil stirring constantly. Boil for a minute more while stirring constantly. Pour the syrup through a sieve into a container with a spout and refrigerate. Chop the peanuts and mix with the coconut. Serve malabi with a drizzle of syrup and a sprinkle of peanuts and coconut.



ADAM / Czechoslovakia



ADAM / Czechoslovakia



They didn't need to be invited. By the third year, the elevator repairmen were leveraging their technical skills for an invite to the best party in town. From then on, they were easily the guests of honor. Part urban legend, part inside joke, this went on for decades and would become a source of family pride. The non-stop flow of visitors to the Ben Shachars' 13th floor apartment was too much for the tiny elevator. And to think it had been a selling point when they bought the place. Gili and his siblings would race up the stairs rather than wait all day. Neighbors took turns hauling up his grandmother's groceries. Especially for Mimouna.

Ah, Mimouna — the marvelous Moroccan celebration that bursts forth as Passover mercifully winds down. After cooking and cleaning for months, rancorous Ashkenazi women schlep boxes to basements, wondering why they call it a holiday. Yet at the very same time, Moroccan communities everywhere let it rip: with ouds and fezzes and trays upon trays of sticky colorful cookies of all shapes and sizes. Mimouna is inarguably the definitive Moroccan celebration, and nothing compared to Gili's grandmother's spread, and to think that she came from — gasp — Romania. That five-foot-two, blonde-haired, blue-eyed powerhouse could out-bake many a Moroccan matriarch, and she proved it on a daily basis. Her packed, nameless lunch joint in the Carmel market is where Gili felt his first tingle. He was a foodie before it was a thing.

Ohad's mother was a seventh-generation Israeli, on her mother's side. Her father had been a shoemaker in Russia or Poland, depending on the day. The ever-changing border complicated life for everyone, but for Jews, who were often denied citizenship, it was particularly challenging. His grandfather belonged to "a generation of givers," according to his doting grandson. In 1948, he was among the fighters who conquered Atlit. Today, Atlit is a Jewish National Fund sponsored heritage site and museum. It tells the story of aliyah, Jewish immigration to Israel.

Ohad's grandfather had risen to the rank of Major General by the time he was injured in 1957 in Mivtza HaGalil, Operation Galilee. He would never walk again, but that didn't keep him from a life well lived. Ohad insists that his grandparents' house was always filled with people, food and joy. "There was always lots of food," he recalls, "in case someone drops in, in case someone's hungry." In case. In case. In case.

"Abundance suits Israel," Ohad wants me to know. It baffles the mind, but there's no denying it, the food scene here is stupendous. The average hotel breakfast in this country is a tour de force. "Post holocaust, post wars, post trauma..." Ohad shrugs as he trails off, as if to say that his people are making up for lost time. Indeed, this tiny arid country produces and exports fruits and vegetables around the world.

Ohad describes his grandmother's kitchen in a reverent tone. Today his kids "wait for the first rain," he tells me, "just like I did, because that means it's hamin season." Hamin, also known as chulent (the former Hebrew, the latter Yiddish) is comprised of beans, wheat, potatoes and meat. You either love it or hate it.

When asked what made his grandmother's hamin so good, Ohad is quick to answer: "Time," he says, "the more time, the more the flavors mingle and the crispier the dough." Then he shares some of her secrets. Surprisingly, Ohad's Iranian grandmother sneaks rolls of Yemenite dough called Jachnun, into her "Magic Pan," her "Seer Peleh". She seals off the pan with more dough to lock in flavor and moisture. A day or two later when she breaks the seal and lifts off the top, a steamy aroma casts a spell on all those present. Ohad and his cousins loved to eat and play in her kitchen in their youth. Today their children do the same.

Gili and Ohad both blogged about being dads, and they both love food. Gili is more of an entrepreneur while Ohad, the chef, has worked in some of Israel's top kitchens. Both were looking for more rewarding, meaningful work. So they kept their day jobs while experimenting in the kitchen after hours. They threw a dinner party/taste-test for friends who begged for more. Before long, Gili and Ohad were hosting soirées on Fifth Avenue. There's something about doing what you love.

Fast forward a recipe or two and Gili and Ohad are catering events most nights of the week. They're writing cookbooks and building a following, but it's not just about food. This duo is energized by connecting people to the land, and they believe in giving back. Their first major event was for ALUT, Israel's largest non-profit for autistic children and adults. When their workers and suppliers heard that Gili and Ohad were donating their services, they did the same. The two entrepreneurs also do what they can to support local farmers.

A week after I interviewed them, I joined Gili and Ohad at a bucolic organic farm at Beit Hanan, just outside of Rishon LeZion, Israel's first official city. I had invited myself to a photo shoot for their second cookbook, as had most of the entourage. We wound our way through fruit trees and muddy rows of root vegetables collecting oversized, pesticide-free produce. Afterwards, we gathered under the spotty shade of olive trees where we whet our appetites on soft, sweet peppercorn — right off the branch.

Ohad and Gili got to work while the rest of us watched. Ohad squeezed pomegranate juice over a slow-smoked Texan brisket. Gili made a salad of freshly picked fruit and vegetables. He chopped beet, carrot and radish leaves into tiny pieces and sprinkled them on top. Waste not.

The reds and greens glowed in the sunshine as the two chefs worked in silence. Eventually the cameraman asked Ohad to narrate the process. "Why?" Ohad asked, slightly annoyed, "You see what we're doing." The cameraman was caught off guard. He was, after all, hired to shoot video for their marketing campaign, but Ohad isn't one to upstage anything.

"Fusion is very Israeli," Gili tells me. Being half Moroccan and half Romanian, he's living proof. As a result, "It's hard to tell what comes from whom," he says. Not that it matters. Gili and Ohad mix and match their favorite dishes and techniques from around the globe with the freshest seasonal produce.

Oh, and they don't believe in cutlery. Gili and Ohad believe that people need to connect, literally, to their food, to other people, and to the land. They encourage eating that involves all the senses, eating that is tactile, mindful and social. Not for them protein shakes and drive-thru dinners. What a relief. Hinei ma tov, how pleasant it is, to sit together and savor nature's bounty.

So what exactly do these guys cook? The Book of Meat, their first cookbook is, as one might guess, for carnivores. "As grandmother used to say," the introduction quotes, "you can replace a good book, but you can never replace a good butcher." Still, The Book of Meat includes interesting sauces, cocktails and desserts – and they've created a collection of spices to enhance each dish.

Like their grandmothers before them, Gili and Ohad have experimented with the foods they grew up on, with herbs and spices from Africa, Asia and Europe. They have merged their colorful roots with modern sensibilities to create an assortment of unique, intensely flavorful eats. With the recipes included below, now you can too.

MEAT WITH CITRUS FRUIT

YING & YANG

- 1 orange
- 1 lemon
- 2 Asian oranges
- 1/2 red grapefruit
- 2 Tbsp of oil
- 2 lb Denver cut beef
- 2 Tbsp pickled lemon, recipe below

Cut the fresh fruit into 1-inch cubes. Heat a cast iron pan on high and add the oil. When the oil begins to smoke, add the meat. Wear gloves &/or watch out for splashing oil. Add the cubed fruit around the meat. Flip the fruit so it gets seared on all sides. Let the meat sear/blacken for 2-3 minutes. Flip meat over and sear for 2-3 minutes. Remove the meat from the pan. Mix the pickled lemon into the pan of fruit and stir. Pour the fruit mixture over the meat and enjoy.





MEAT KEBABS

EXTRA JUICY

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 lb ground chuck
- 1 lb ground rump
- 1 tsp sea salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 c eggplant
- ½ c fresh parsley
- ½ c fresh tarragon
- 4 garlic cloves

Combine the first five ingredients. Note: 3 lbs ground beef works too. Chop up the eggplant into tiny pieces. Chop the parsley & tarragon into tiny pieces. Mince the garlic. Mix the eggplant, herbs & garlic into the meat. Don't over mix it or the meat will toughen. Let the meat sit for 5 minutes or more. Form meat into palm sized balls or footballs. Slide the kebabs onto metal skewers. Brush on BBQ sauce, recipes below. BBQ kebabs on medium heat for 10 minutes. Turn kebabs every 2 minutes and brush on sauce. Eat with tahini &/or grilled vegetables.

ORANGE BBQ SAUCE

& OTHER FLAVORS

5 lg tomatoes
2 oranges, not peeled
3 white onions
1 hot red pepper
5 lg portabello mushrooms
3/4 c soy sauce
1/3 c lemon juice
1 c water
1/2 c honey
4 c crushed tomatoes

Chop the tomatoes, oranges, onions, pepper and mushrooms. Heat a pan on high heat, then add the above chopped ingredients. Stir for a few minutes until everything is seared or blackened. Add the remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer for 30 minutes or until the volume is reduced by 1/3. Purée with immersion blender. Pour the mixture through a fine sieve to remove the seeds and peel. Refrigerate in a sealed glass jar.



BBQ SAUCE

GONE ROGUE

MUSTARD

Combine the sauce with mustard using a 1:1 ratio.



CHOCOLATE

Melt a cup of bitter chocolate and stir it into the sauce.



FRUIT

Too tangy? Replace the orange with seasonal fruits of your choice.



PICKLED LEMON

AN IRANIAN MUST

2 lbs lemon
1/2 c sea salt
2 1/2 tsp sweet paprika
2 1/2 tsp hot paprika
1/2 c olive oil

Wash and slice the lemons and remove the pits. Combine the lemon and salt and place in a large colander. Cover the mixture with plastic wrap and place something heavy on top. Place the colander in a bowl. The colander should be suspended from the top of the bowl so that liquid can drain from the lemons into the bowl. Leave overnight in the fridge. Pour out the liquid from the bowl and put the lemon mixture in glass jars. Pour the oil over the lemon slices. Shut the jars & leave in a cold dark place for two weeks. After two weeks, combine with the paprika and transfer the jars to the fridge. For lemon spread, puree in a food processor.





STRAWBERRY GINGER CHUTNEY

SWEET & SPICY

2 c strawberries
1/4 c fresh ginger
1/4 c hot chili pepper
1/2 c sugar

Wash the strawberries. Hull the strawberries — remove the leaves & hard center. Chop the chili pepper and ginger into tiny pieces. Place all the ingredients in a pot on high heat. Stir while heating until the strawberries begin releasing liquid. Lower heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Store in a glass jar in the fridge.



GILI & OHAD / Iran, Morocco, Poland, Romania & Russia







3

A LUCKY BOY

MIKI

Hungary



His story is a montage of providential coincidences and the kindness of strangers, a series of modern-day miracles — at least the way he tells it. And the food? There's a seemingly endless supply of stories about the delicacies that captured the imagination of twelve-year-old Miki.

His face lights up as he describes the jam incident. If he hadn't been crazed by hunger he would have seen it for what it was: another malicious con. As it was, he found it impossible to resist. For a fraction of a second Miki and his fellow Auschwitz inmates thought that maybe, just maybe, a speck of holiday spirit had smiled upon them, even in that hell hole. So Miki "decided to be the hero," he chuckles with self-mockery, when the Lagerfuhrer, the cruel camp commander offered half a loaf for anyone who could empty a gallon of jelly.

Everyone gathered 'round as the Lagerfuhrer opened the plastic tub with the back of his knife. Miki dove in and began scooping up the sticky goo with his filthy fingers. He smiles with a faraway look and says, "Oh, it was sooo good," but it was too sweet for his shrunken stomach, so the sugary syrup started coming back up faster than he could choke it down. The Lagerfuhrer grunted his disgust. The game was over and Miki was played out. "I stared at those big black boots, wondering if they were the last thing I would ever lay eyes on," he tells me. Miki knew what came next: a quick shot to the head, but instead — silence, and confusion, for the Lagerfuhrer had yet to shoot someone that day. Instead, he gave the bucket a violent kick and stormed off. It was nothing short of a miracle.

The jam made Miki violently ill, which led to an “amazing” incident in the Auschwitz infirmary — typically a death sentence, but not for Miki. With neither medicine nor supplies, a compassionate P.O.W. nursed the boy back from the brink. Miki watched the stranger rip up his soft, ribbed shirt to wash and bandage his patient with. He lay Miki in his own bed, with its makeshift mattress and heavenly pillow. Miki should have been sent to the crematorium for overstaying the allotted time, but the patient log had been filled in inaccurately, so he “got lucky one more time,” Miki smiles.

He once noticed steam rising from a snowbank opposite the kitchen window. After a bit of digging he found a blackened, soggy beet. Just then, a friend of the family happened by, so Miki shared it with him. Besides, there was no way he could eat “the whole thing,” he insists. One small beet. Miki has since eaten many excellent meals, his sister's Nokedles, or dumplings, and Chicken Paprikash among them, “but nothing ever compared to that beet,” he maintains.

Miki was assigned to clean up the German guards' canteen for a time. “My job was to eat the most amazing things,” he says, referring to leftover scraps. “It was fantastic there!” he relates with great enthusiasm. When word got out that Miki was being sent to another camp, someone took up a collection of stale bits of bread. They were stuffed into the arm of an old shirt which was hidden in a blanket. As luck would have it, there was a mix up at the last minute and Miki never received the stash. He winces as he shares how this one ends.

Miki was unconscious when his camp was liberated. He woke up in a hospital in Czechoslovakia, unsure who to trust, or which language was safest to speak. A Yiddish-speaking doctor noticed and kept an eye on him. When he was up to it, the doctor helped the boy find his way home. Miki was one of the youngest people to survive Auschwitz. His parents and two youngest siblings were sent to their deaths on arrival. Three older siblings survived the camp but lost their spouses as well as their children. Miki found his surviving family with relative ease, of course he did, and "what a joy it was!" he recalled. Eventually, Miki joined two of his siblings in Israel where a fresh narrative was being written, based on self-determination not sorrow. Besides, "We didn't need to hear the stories to feel their pain," Miki's niece explains.

And Miki is not short on stories: about pranks he played, friends he made, and surviving the madness of it all. At 89, he can tell you the names, dates and location of every incident. He was hand picked by future Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and legendary general Moshe Dayan to "volunteer," he laughs, for the esteemed Unit 101. Miki had impressed Sharon with his bravery while clearing mines for the Burma Road, an alternate path to Jerusalem. His life threatening work enabled convoys to bring personnel, supplies, food and water to the besieged city, after hundreds of doctors and nurses had been killed en route.

World-renowned archeologist and future Chief of Staff Yigael Yadin chose Miki, the only paratrooper in his unit, for a special mission. He and three others were dropped near the caves of Qumran, by the Dead Sea, in pursuit of rare artifacts. Lost for days with scarce water in the unforgiving desert, Miki and his team delivered the goods: none other than The Dead Sea Scrolls.

MIKI / Hungary

The five and a half hours that I spend with Miki fly by as he shares an abridged version of his remarkable story. At some point, we break for an array of Hungarian delicacies made by his sister, Lilly. Incidentally, it was her I had come to interview, and then Miki dropped in. They both insisted that I hear the other's story, so I did.

Lilly and her daughter Ayala keep telling me that Lilly hardly cooks anymore, that "this is nothing." But I am stuffed from the salads, meatballs, liver, and cholent with dumplings. The latter are a gnocchi-like invention of Lilly's, they all brag. Lilly walks me through the process, and lets me know how much her grandchildren love them. After the meal, Ayala serves cookies and a hot drink. She asks Miki how he'll take his tea, mostly out of respect. She knows his schtick: black tea with three sweeteners, but this time he tells her to add honey. Ayala smiles. Her uncle Miki, the indefatigable hero of our story, has a way of making things sweeter.

CHICKEN PAPRIKASH

IN MUSHROOM SAUCE



2-3 packs of chicken leg quarters

1 lg onion

4 Tbsp oil, vegetable or olive

½ Tbsp paprika

½ Tbsp potato starch

4 c mushrooms

½ tsp salt

1 pinch black pepper

Remove the skin from the chicken. Separate the thighs from the legs. Chop the onion. Sauté the onion in 4 Tbsp oil on high heat, uncovered, for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Lower to medium heat until onions are light brown. Add chicken on top of the onions and raise the heat to medium high. Cover the pot and cook on medium high for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Transfer 1/2 c of the juice from the chicken pan into another pan on medium heat. Add 1/2 c water to each pan. Stir the paprika and potato starch into the pan with the chicken juice. Lower the heat to medium low and simmer for 5 to 6 minutes until it thickens up. Rinse and slice the mushrooms, then rinse them again. Place the mushrooms on top of the chicken juice, which has thickened to a gravy. Sprinkle salt on top of the mushrooms. Cook the mushrooms on high for 5 minutes stirring occasionally. Lower mushroom pan to medium heat and cook for another 10 minutes. Add the mushrooms to the chicken. Sprinkle with black pepper & serve.



FASHEERT

TURKEY PATTIES

- 1 sm challah roll
- 1 onion
- 1 garlic clove
- 2 lbs ground turkey
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 dash pepper
- 1 c oil, canola or vegetable

Soak the roll in warm water until it softens. Chop up the onion into tiny pieces. Mince the garlic. Mix all the ingredients together by hand. Heat ½ inch of oil in a pan on high heat. Wet your hands and form patties. Gently place the patties in the oil. Lower the heat to medium in 1-2 minutes or when patties begin to brown. Flip patties when the edges turn brown. Cook until both sides are golden brown, about 5 minutes.

NOKEDLES

DOUGHY DUMPLINGS

1 lg pot water
1 tsp salt
1 tsp olive oil
5 eggs
½ c water
1.5 -2 c flour
½ c oil, vegetable or olive

Fill a large pot with water and salt and bring it to a boil. In a large bowl, combine the eggs and ½ c water. Mix in the flour ½ c at a time until mixture is thick as cake batter. Wet hands and form dumplings. Cook the dumplings in boiling water for 5 minutes. Drain and rinse well in cold water. Add the nokedles to stew or fry them up. To fry them, heat ½ c oil on medium high heat. Sauté the nokedles until they are crispy and golden brown.



MIKI / Hungary



4

A BROTHER NOT FORGOTTEN

LILLY

Hungary



It was hardly the first time she was told to leave everything behind, so Lilly didn't put up a fight. Besides, she didn't have much to hold on to. The one and only thing she couldn't do without was family, or what was left of it. Her oldest and favorite sister Shari had come to spend Passover with the family the year the Nazis stormed in and seized their home. Lilly's parents and six of their children were transferred to the ghetto, and from there to Auschwitz. From that point on, the two sisters were inseparable. Ironically, it was the Americans that came between them when the factory they were forced to work at came crashing in on them. It was unintentional, they were told. A miscommunication among the allies was supposedly to blame, but that offered little comfort in the pandemonium that followed.

The sisters would both survive the attack, and the war. Shari was married in Italy, whereas Lilly and two of her brothers decided to move to Israel. While navigating their way out of Europe, the siblings met one of the founders of Kibbutz Ginegar, in the Jezreel Valley. He took Lilly and her brothers under his wing and encouraged them to join his collective farm, where he promised to look out for them. Soon thereafter, he was involved in a fatal accident. It was a devastating loss for the siblings who felt orphaned for a second time. So when representatives from The Jewish Agency came to their displaced persons camp and told Lilly and her brother to grab just their bathing suits and join them at the beach, that's what they did – leaving their family photographs behind.

They were given chocolate, an odd choice for a hot summer day, but didn't think much of it. Food was scarce and they weren't picky, nor were they off to the beach. Unbeknownst to Lilly and the rest, they were about to board a boat headed for Palestine — in defiance of the British restriction on Jewish immigration. It was a difficult journey on a wreck of a ship: two women gave birth prematurely and at least one drowned, Lilly recalls. One such ship has been preserved at Atlit, once a detention camp, now an historical site.

When they ran out of water, they were given more chocolate, "bitter Italian stuff," Lilly says with disgust. The thought of it still turns her stomach. They scrambled inland when the ship neared Caesarea. Her brother Shami and future husband Shmuel were arrested by the British and sent to an internment camp in Cypress for having smuggled hopeful Zionists into Italy.

Without its founder, their guardian angel, to protect and care for them kibbutz life was a bitter disappointment, so Lilly and her brother decided to leave. Shami took over as mother and father: he rented an apartment in Jerusalem for himself, Lilly, and Miki, their younger brother. He chose a profession and even a husband, for his sister. It was a challenging, and yet, an exhilarating time. The three siblings were planning brighter futures when the War of Independence broke out.

Shami was one of its first casualties, that's all they were told. Lilly received the news right after learning that her fiancé had been injured in battle. "You've suffered enough," he told her from his hospital bed, and swore he wouldn't marry her if he lost a limb. Fortunately, he fought the gangrene, made a full recovery and married her. They worked hard and were blessed with healthy children, but the grief caught up with her. Lilly would cry uncontrollably until her husband eventually said, "This is no way to raise a family," and she knew he was right. So she stopped and, "hasn't cried once in the seventy years since," her daughter Ayala confirms.

For 66 years the family "lived on the edge." They were left to speculate on where and how Shami had fallen. He had survived the holocaust, been reunited with his siblings, and made it to their homeland, only to vanish without a trace. The War of Independence was mayhem: a hodgepodge of barely trained, under-armed men and women fighting for their lives. The equipment was outdated and scant; communication was slow and unreliable. For over half a century, the family was left hanging.

In 1998, fifty years after the War of Independence, Israel's army archives entered the public domain. A few years later, a man named Dani Tzelner reached retirement. His father Tzvi had been a decorated soldier whose country had demanded too much of him. Dani was 16 when his father died. He yearned to know more about him, and dedicated his retirement to doing just that. Dani poured through documents of every kind until somewhere in that mountain of history, he would find information that would bring comfort to both his and Lilly's family.

Commander Tzelner was known for his prowess on the battlefield, as well as his big heart. Apparently, he had a soft spot for the army's lone soldiers, its orphans and survivors, and was particularly impressed by and fond of Shami. He had written much about him in his exhaustive war log, read now for the first time. Lilly and her siblings could have written it word for word: Shami fought bravely and selflessly in one of the deadliest battles for Jerusalem. Lilly's daughter, Ayala, read highlights of a newspaper article that details the story. The events took place seventy years prior, yet she read it as if it were hot off the press.

Commander Tzelner had wanted to delay the battle at Armon Hanatziv. He knew that the rising sun would expose and endanger his men, but his urgent requests were never received. Not long after dawn his worst fears were realized. There were many casualties that morning, but Shami was not among them. However, upon safely returning to his base, he learned of fellow soldiers lying in the field. Without a moment's hesitation, Shami returned to retrieve the fallen, where he was shot and killed. He was 24 years old. A small, faded picture of Shami fills Lilly's living room.

Lilly and her husband moved back to Kibbutz Ginagar where they raised their children and grandchildren. She's still sewing and cooking at the ripe young age of 91. A good while into our conversation, Ayala asks her mother if she would like to take a nap. Lilly waves off the suggestion, insulted. Lilly and her brother Miki, a commanding 89-year-old with a twinkle in his eye, are re-living their greatest hits. Five hours in, I get the impression they're just warming up.



HAMENTASHEN

A PURIM CLASSIC

DOUGH

1/2 c butter flavored margarine, or butter
3/4 c sugar
3 eggs
1 lemon
1/2 c orange juice or sour cream or milk
2.5 c flour
1 pinch salt

Bring the margarine or butter to room temperature. Whip the margarine or butter in a mixer on medium speed. Slowly add the sugar while mixing. Add 2 eggs, one at a time while mixing. Grate 1/2 the lemon. Add the grated lemon and liquid (orange juice, sour cream or milk) and mix. Sift the flour. Slowly add the sifted flour and the salt while mixing. Let the dough sit at room temperature for an hour. Roll out the dough on a floured surface until it's 1/4 inch thick. Dip the lip of a glass in flour and use it to cut circles into the dough. Place 1 heaping tsp of the filling into the middle of each circle of dough. Fold three sides of each circle of dough over the filling to form triangles. Gently pinch the dough together over the filling. Beat the remaining egg and brush it over the dough. Bake at 350 for 10 to 15 minutes or until golden brown.

OZNEI HAMAN

HAMENTASHEN IN HEBREW

POPPY SEED FILLING

1/2 c poppy seeds
3/4 c milk
1/2 c sugar
1 lemon
2 Tbsp honey
1/4 c margarine or butter, unsalted
1/2 c walnuts
1/4 c cookie or graham crumbs

Purée the poppy seeds. Mix the poppy seeds and milk in a pot. Stir the mixture on low heat until it thickens. Add the sugar and continue stirring. Zest the lemon. Squeeze the lemon. Stir in the lemon zest, lemon juice and honey. Remove from heat and cool. Cut the margarine or butter into small pieces. Mix the margarine or butter into the mixture. Break the walnuts into small pieces. Mix the nuts and crumbs into the filling. Allow filling to cool before forming hamentashen.



BLINTZES

A HUNGARIAN CLASSIC

DOUGH

4 eggs
3 c water, or 2 c water & 1 c milk
2 c flour
1 tsp sugar
1 pinch salt
5 Tbsp oil

Mix the wet ingredients in a blender, food processor or by hand. Slowly add the flour, sugar and salt until the batter is smooth. Heat a pancake or crepe pan on medium heat. A regular flat pan will also do. Using a paper towel, lightly rub the pan with oil. Spread a thin layer of the batter on the pan, about 1/4 of a cup. Flip the blintz after a minute or when the edges become golden brown. Remove the blintz from the pan. Wipe the browned oil off the pan with a paper towel. Wipe fresh oil onto pan and repeat.

CHEESE FILLING

1 lemon
1 c whole ricotta
1 c cream cheese
1 egg
2 Tbsp confectioners' sugar
1/8 tsp salt
Fresh fruit or preserves

Grate and squeeze the lemon. Combine all the ingredients in a mixer on medium until smooth. Leave in the fridge for an hour.

SHAPING THE BLINTZ

Scoop 3-4 Tbsp of mixture into a crepe/blintz. Spread the mixture in a 4" x 2" shape towards the top of the blintz. Roll the top of the blintz over the mixture and fold it towards the middle of the blintz. Fold the sides of the blintz over the filled, rolled section. Continue folding down and over until you have a sealed blintz. Serve with fresh or preserved fruit. Garnish with confectioners' sugar and whipped cream.



CHICKEN LIVER

IN MUSHROOM SAUCE

2 lb chicken liver
1/2 c flour
2 Tbsp vegetable oil
4 c mushrooms
1 onion
1 red pepper
2 garlic cloves
1 Tbsp soup mix, chicken or mushroom
1/2 tsp sweet paprika
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
1/2 c water

Mince the garlic. Sauté the mushrooms, onion, pepper and garlic in 2 Tbsp oil in another pan on medium high heat for 5 minutes. Add the soup mix, paprika, salt and pepper and sauté for another 5 minutes. Add the water to the vegetables and stir. Gently stir in the liver. Cover the pot and simmer gently on medium heat for 15 minutes. Add more water if the sauce is too thick. This will be even more flavorful the next day.



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LILLY / Hungary



LILLY / Hungary



5

A HOMECOMING

NAFTALI

Ethiopia



He calls it “The Queen of the Ethiopian kitchen.” To the untrained eye, injera, the sourdough pancake which seems neither baked nor raw and serves as both plate and cutlery, appears anything but regal. However, as health benefits go, it happens to be in a league of its own. Teff, man’s oldest cultivated plant, gives quinoa and goji berries a run for their money. This slow-burning complete protein, the ‘new’ go-to fuel for Olympic athletes, has been the staple of the Ethiopian diet for centuries. The Beta Israel — the Jews of Ethiopia — make their injera with it to this day. This remarkable community and their gluten-free grain might just be two of history’s best kept secrets.

When and how did these Jews arrive in Ethiopia? Historians and rabbis quibble: was it during the Exodus from Egypt, or might they be descendants of the “Lost Tribe” of Dan? Some believe their lineage traces back to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. One way or another, for thousands of years Jewish Ethiopians were under the impression that they were the last of the Jews, the sole protectors of their beloved heritage.

Completely isolated, they were unaware of the Rabbinic codification of the Oral Law. In other words, theirs was a strictly Biblical practice based solely on the written word. “Modern” holidays such as Purim and Hanukkah were not part of their repertoire. Rather, they demonstrated their steadfast devotion during Sigd, a somber day of introspection and yearning for Zion, a time of fasting and judgment of the community at large. Theirs was an unadulterated reverence of core Jewish values.

Families still gather for meals around circular lidded baskets called mesobs. These colorful, portable tables typically seat three or four people at most. Why not make bigger ones that seat the whole family? Because mealtime wasn’t just about food, it was a hierarchal ritual that was the cornerstone of every home. Elders would eat and talk while the rest would watch, learn and listen. The best dishes and the tastiest meats were reserved for the wisest of the tribe in a daily show of respect. This is where family values were passed on.

I met Natfali Aklum around such a table at Tzlal, his cousin Shoshana's restaurant in Beersheba. After an incredible meal, I invited myself into the kitchen where I thought I'd pick up a trick or two — like how to whip up Shoshana's singular spice mix. After hearing how onions, garlic and paprika are dried on the roof and a dozen spices toasted to perfection, we came up with Plan B: I was gifted a six-month supply, and a pinch of humility. I was also given an easy upgrade on a family favorite: I now add Berbere, Shoshana's spice magic, and a dash of honey to my tahini. The play of sweet and hot in this creamy classic has taken my tahini to a whole new level – an addictive one.

The youngest of twelve children, Naftali was a one-year-old when his family made the journey to Israel on "Operation Solomon." Thirty years later he returned to Ethiopia for the first time. Naftali confesses that he only fully appreciated his culture after his "roots trip" at age 31. In fact, it changed the course and purpose of his life. Many Israeli Ethiopians don't see themselves as culturally Israeli, "even those who were born here and speak Hebrew as their mother tongue," Naftali reveals. There are plenty of reasons why.

The agrarian immigrants of "Operation Solomon" encountered 20th-century Israel right when this "Start Up Nation" was busting its way out of dot.com incubators. This was not the Zion they had prayed towards in their mud hut synagogues dotted across the Tigray, Welkait, and Gondar regions. Once in Israel, elders often struggled to adjust to the culture while school and the army exposed their youth to all things Western. As a result, the family hierarchy was often inverted, much like it was for earlier waves of immigrants. Old world traditions represented a hindrance and embarrassment to youth who were eager to fit in, "so they deleted them," as Naftali puts it.

Efforts were made to help the immigrants adjust, but with their elders disenfranchised, the old ways were cast aside. Naftali grew up in a part of town that was 90% Ethiopian until his father sent him to boarding school mostly to “get him out,” he tells me. Low-income neighborhoods like his were breeding grounds for crime as parents working multiple jobs lost touch with their children. Naftali tells me the facts but he doesn’t harp on them, instead, he’s leading the way towards a brighter tomorrow. He’s reconnecting Israel’s Ethiopian youth with their past while encouraging hard work and higher learning. Naftali believes it’s a simple fix. Like his father before him, he believes in the power of education.

Naftali’s father, Yazezew, lost his parents when he was just seven. Shortly thereafter he finagled a job as a messenger for Italian soldiers posted in Ethiopia at the time. At some point the industrious, uneducated orphan messed up a job. The Italians promptly gave him a beating, essentially, for being unable to read. The price of ignorance made its mark on the boy who would make sacrifices throughout his life to ensure the best education for himself and his children. “My father believed that education was the key to change,” Naftali tells me, “and what came out of it?” he asks rhetorically, “A hero.”

In the 1980s, Naftali’s oldest brother, Ferede Yazezew, was instrumental in orchestrating the rescue of hundreds of Ethiopian Jews, and paved the way for thousands more. For years he risked his life in war-torn Ethiopia and Sudan to bring fellow Jews to Israel. In fact, the movie *The Red Sea Diving Resort*, is loosely based on his story. Ferede was known to ask family members to test out dangerous escape routes rather than risking the lives of strangers, and they invariably obliged.

Theirs was an altruistic breed, who after centuries of yearning, arrived in Zion on operations with Biblical names like “Moses” and “Joshua” — lofty notions with brutal particulars: hunger, exhaustion, disease and violence. Thousands of men, women and children died along the way. The “Yerusalem” they eventually encountered barely resembled that of their dreams, but they were safe and they were, at long last, in Zion.

A generation or two later, citizens of Ethiopian descent, though under-represented, are excelling in every aspect of Israeli life. Naftali served as a firefighter in the Air Force, which now boasts Ethiopian pilots. One of Naftali’s brothers was the first Ethiopian officer in the Israeli paratroopers – but there’s a long way to go. Naftali shares his dream for the future with me, and it’s not complicated: a peaceful Israel for his daughter to grow up in.

But Israel has long been more than a dream. Within this very real country, you’ll find good and bad. You’ll find abundant ingenuity, generosity, and an opinion or two. However, “The most beautiful thing we Israelis have is diversity,” Naftali assures me. Today, Naftali hops from continent to continent sharing his story and spreading Jewish National Fund’s “Positively Israel” message. “JNF is more than an organization,” he tells me. “It’s really a family.” Jewish and non-Jewish students are surprised to meet an Israeli like Naftali, and to hear another side of the Israel story.

On his trip to Ethiopia, Naftali discovered that “black is beautiful.” He’s no longer conflicted about who he is: Naftali is Black, he is Jewish — he is Israel. “I’m the whole package,” he grins. More than anything, he wants Israel’s youth to understand that, “you can’t be proud until you accept yourself.” Naftali has made peace with himself and wants to pass it forward. “People all over the world are eager to learn about my culture,” he assures me, and he can’t wait to teach them.

SIGA TIBS

MEAT STEW



- 3 lbs beef
- 2 Tbsp infused Ethiopian oil, recipe below
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 2 onions
- 3 Tbsp tomato paste
- 1 c water
- 2 bell peppers
- 1 c fresh cilantro
- 2 Tbsp honey
- 1-2 Tbsp Berbere, recipe below

Cube the meat into bite-sized pieces. Sauté the meat in infused oil on high heat in a heavy or ceramic pan. Add the rosemary to the pan so that the meat absorbs its flavor. Turn the meat so all sides get crispy, about 5 minutes. Remove the meat and rosemary, leaving the oil in the pan. Slice the onions. Sauté the onions in the remaining oil on medium heat until translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the tomato paste and stir it for a few minutes. Stir in the water. Chop the bell peppers and add to the pan. Rinse and chop the cilantro, saving some for garnish, adding the remainder to the pan. Stir in the meat, honey and berbere. Simmer for 20 minutes or until meat is soft. Add extra water as needed. Garnish with cilantro and serve with injera.

MISIR WAT

LENTIL STEW

- 1/2 c ghee or olive oil
- 2 onions
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 Tbsp fresh ginger
- 1 Tbsp berbere spice mix
- 1 Tbsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp cardamom
- 1/2 tsp coriander
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 c lentils, preferably red
- 2 c water

Heat the ghee or olive oil in a ceramic or very thick pot on medium high heat. Chop up the onions and fry in the ghee or oil until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Mince the garlic and stir it in for 1 minute. Peel and grate the fresh ginger and stir it in. Add the other spices and salt and stir. Wash the lentils and add them to the pot. Add the water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and cover pot. Simmer for 20 minutes or until desired texture. Add extra water as needed.



BERBERE

SPICE MAGIC

- 4-6 onions
- 8 garlic cloves
- 4 Tbsp cardamom, Ethiopian if possible
- 4 Tbsp English pepper
- 4 Tbsp black pepper
- 4 Tbsp sweet mustard
- 8 Tbsp cilantro seeds
- 8 Tbsp cumin
- 4 Tbsp salt
- 5 Tbsp tumeric
- 3 Tbsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp cloves
- 1 tsp nutmeg, optional

Dry the garlic and onion in the sun for a minimum of two weeks or until completely dry. Purée the garlic and onion, individually. Ideally, the next 6 ingredients should be bought whole. Each of the 6 spices/seeds should be lightly toasted individually. After each ingredient is cooled, it can be puréed. The last 4 ingredients may be bought as powder. Mix all the puréed ingredients together and store in a cool, dark place.



NAFTALI / Ethiopia





INFUSED OIL

MAKE
EVERY
DISH
YOUR
FAVORITE

1 c olive oil
2 cinnamon sticks
3 cadamom pods
2 bay leaves
2 garlic cloves
1/2 tsp cloves
1/2 tsp black pepper

Add all the ingredients in a thick bottomed pan. Simmer on low heat for 20 minutes or until fragrant. Store in a cool dark place, ideally in a dark glass bottle. This oil will add depth of flavor to any dish. Lasts a week or more.

NAFTALI / Ethiopia



6

UNSTOPPABLE

SHOSHANA

Yemen



"They were neither rich nor poor," Shoshana says of her family in Yemen. "Some Arabs were good, some were bad," she states a little later, "just like here." There's a level headedness to this woman who has weathered more ups and downs than most. Orphaned at a young age and whisked away to a sea of unknowns, Shoshana and her ilk built the Jewish state from the ground up, yet she delivers the breathtaking saga like it's no biggie.

Shoshana is a proud product of Israel's melting pot of cultures, as is her kitchen. I press her for her favorite dish from the old country, but she resists. She loves food from everywhere, she repeats every time I prod her, and enjoys whatever dishes her neighbors, Romanians, Bulgarians and Iranians, drop off. She tells me that she makes a stellar Hungarian goulash, but will not name a Yemenite favorite. She does however, insist that I taste her Hilbe, the oddest of condiments, on hand at all times. Shoshana grows fenugreek seeds for this strange brew which is added to soup and other dishes. Yemenite Jews arrived in Israel free of diabetes, high blood pressure, and the like, and they credit Hilbe for this.

That said, Yemenite cuisine is by and large not known for its Hilbe, but for its less healthy multi-layered doughs. Variations like Malawach, Jachnun, Kubaneh and Lachuch are becoming kitchen staples in Israel and beyond. Shoshana bakes a mean Sabaya, a puffy bread sprinkled with black sesame seeds, when her grandchildren come over. It's best dipped in honey, hot out of the oven. The Sabaya "bakes well enough in the electric oven," Shoshana tells me, but nothing compares to a taboon, a mud and brick outdoor oven. She doesn't have one of those anymore, but you'll find them in trendy restaurants here and there.

SHOSHANA / Yemen

During the War of Independence, Shoshana watched Arab merchants slip through the night, their donkeys loaded with pita for their journey from Gaza to Hebron. From her watchtower perch at Kibbutz Sa'ad, she deemed them innocuous and let them pass. Four years prior, Shoshana and her siblings had begun their own circuitous journey, three to a camel, in the dead of night. The Arab men who delivered the four siblings to their uncle in the British colony of Aden had been fond of Shoshana's father, their former employer. The children were tied in between the camels' humps to keep them from falling, as they rode in silence.

They were allowed to take nothing and tell no one. Shoshana missed her dolls desperately, but she did as she was told. During the day they kept a low profile under fruit trees on the outskirts of villages. An aunt had prepared cookies which lasted for the entire trip. "They were delicious," Shoshana recalls, "they were made with butter."

Their uncle met them at an unpatrolled spot between British Aden and Yemen proper. Shoshana and her sisters slipped out of their traditional Yemenite dress into less conspicuous modern attire before sneaking across the border. They had never before seen a body of water that large, and were terrified as they stumbled along the gulf in the moonlight.

Shortly after arriving in Aden, Shoshana noticed a man following her in the street and rushed home to tell her aunt. In 1922, the Yemini government brought back the ancient "Orphan's Decree," according to which non-Muslim orphans under the age of twelve were subject to conversion. The decree was based on a law that named the Prophet Muhammad "the father of all children." Kidnappings and forced conversions were not uncommon. Going forward, the girls only went out chaperoned when their uncle and brother returned from work. They spent months at home while their uncle arranged for passage on a boat headed for Palestine.

The appointed day finally arrived but not without a snag. A few short miles from where biblical Judah had offered himself as collateral to spare his young brother Benjamin from the vizier of Egypt (their estranged brother Joseph), Shoshana's brother would find himself in a similar predicament. At the last minute, the British authorities decided that the youngest sister was unfit for travel so her brother forfeited his passage to safety and stayed in Aden with her. At 15, he had promised his dying parents that he would always look after his sisters. The siblings would be reunited in Israel a year or so later. As it happens, Yemenite Jews are said to be the descendants of Judah and Benjamin.

After the United Nations declared their support for the Partition Plan of Palestine, the Jews of Yemen were in grave danger; angry mobs were rioting, looting and murdering Jews. Agencies like Jewish National Fund sprung into action and airlifted nearly 50,000 people to Israel in "Operation Magic Carpet." It was an ambitious undertaking with a heavy price; thousands of people died along the way. The operation, which involved some 380 flights to the burgeoning state, was delayed and derailed at every turn. Planes were shot at, the Tel Aviv tarmac was bombed and no Arab country would allow planes to refuel. All the while, tens of thousands of faithful Zionists poured into Aden to fly to the Holy Land, "On the wings of eagles."

Shoshana was the third of five children, four of whom would survive until adulthood. She had been named Ora – Light – after her sister who had died in infancy. However, shortly after her arrival in Israel, her Russian headmaster changed her name to Shoshana, Hebrew for Rose. In fact, many people Hebraized their names as the young state resuscitated its ancient language. Former Russian, Polish, German, Bulgarian and Yemenite Israelis were shaping a common identity — a Babel 2.0. Today, a name change is a complicated legal affair, but back then, one didn't make waves. Besides, there were no parents to consult at the orphans' home in Rehovot.

The powers that be had decided that the Yemenite Jews would become farmers in Israel, even though most had been merchants and artisans back home — not without reason. Hundreds of thousands of Jews, as many as 800,000, were escaping hostile Arab regimes. Most went to the burgeoning Jewish state, where newcomers would need to feed themselves. So Shoshana's schooling included agricultural training, which was more or less the norm.

Shoshana's niece, Gila, told me about a protest that the Yemenite girls staged when European newcomers were allotted superior housing. Apparently, the new arrivals were put in a dormitory while the Yemenite girls were still in tents. The situation, which Shoshana never mentioned, was soon rectified. In fact, she told me more than once that the headmaster and his wife were very kind to her and her sister, and looked after them "like they were their children." Shoshana is not hard to like.

Despite all the hardship and loss, there is a lightness to her. Shoshana tells her story in the plural without a whiff of self-pity. It's not all about her, but part of a larger narrative: "Many people died of Typhus," she recalls, "my parents among them." So with an eighth grade education and farming basics under their belts, Shoshana and her sister moved to Kibbutz Sa'ad where they had "the happiest time of their lives," she tells me. They cherished the communal lifestyle, the sense of brotherhood and family. She was proposed to more than once at Sa'ad, the 89-year-old giggles, but told one boy after the other that they were like brothers, and "you don't marry your brothers." In the end, she did marry one of the boys from kibbutz, who happened to have left Aden on the same rickety ship.

Unfortunately, their kibbutz stint was short-lived. The young women would soon leave the idealistic cocoon to help a relative in need. They spent two years in a cramped apartment in Ein Karem, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, working odd jobs to make ends meet. It was a disheartening chapter compared to kibbutz living. Shoshana and her husband eventually moved to Moshav Ora — the Settlement of Light — where they raised their family. That is where we sipped tea together, not far from where her chickens roam.

An injury forced Shoshana to move into the ground floor of her home three years ago, but she doesn't complain about it, at least not to me. "I have everything I need," she assures me, "and the garden is right here," she adds, indicating the backdrop that she herself planted. It wasn't quite so rosy when they first arrived. Shoshana and her husband were "dropped off," with little more than a carton of food, utensils and bedding. Today, Moshav Ora is as trendy as it gets, and is a hop-skip from anywhere. Back then, it was isolated, unprotected and sparse. "It wasn't easy," she tells me more than once. But they worked with the hand they were dealt and put their agricultural chops to work.

Three quarters of a century later, I have to duck my way through the oasis that engulfs her home. Shoshana is pointing out lemons for me to pick, lest I leave empty-handed. And then I see them, two real estate goons eyeing her from the street. They don't notice me bringing up the rear. All they see is a frail old woman on a walker. They have come to sweet talk her into selling her home for nothing. They must have missed her fly past me and sail through the screen door. They didn't see her tiptoe out of Yemen, dodge typhus and stick it to adversity. They don't stand a chance.

SABAYA

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED
...SABAYA AGAIN

1/4 tsp dry yeast
1/2 c of warm water
4 c of flour
1 tsp salt
3/4 c melted butter
1/4 c samneh or ghee a.k.a. clarified butter
1/4-1/2 c additional melted butter &/or samneh
2 eggs
1 Tbsp black sesame seeds

Dissolve the yeast in 1/4 c warm water. Mix flour, salt, melted butter and and samneh/ghee with the yeast & water mixture. Knead for 10-15 minutes by hand or using a mixer adding the rest of the water slowly until the dough is soft and smooth but does not stick your hands. You may need more or less water depending on your climate. Cover with a clean dish cloth and let dough relax for 10 minutes. Divide the dough into 10 equal pieces. Form each piece into a smooth ball. Place the balls on a flat surface a few inches apart. Coat lightly with melted butter and cover with a clean dish towel. Let the dough rise for 30 minutes. Take one ball of dough and toss it like pizza dough, or roll it out on a clean flat surface until it is very thin. Fold dough in half, then fold that in half. Repeat this two more times. Do the same with all the balls of dough and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Repeat the whole process of tossing/rolling and folding the dough one more time. Roll out each piece one last time until it is very thin.



Grease a round 10 inch baking pan. Place a layer of dough into the pan and drizzle with melted butter &/or samneh mixture. Gentle spread the melted butter with your hand or a brush. Repeat this process for the other 9 layers, brushing melted butter on top of each layer. Place in preheated oven at 300 degrees for 10 minutes. Beat the eggs and pour on the top of the dough. Sprinkle the seeds on top. Increase the heat to 350 degrees for one hour or until golden brown. Remove from oven and drizzle with remaining melted butter/samneh mixture. Enjoy it hot, dipped in honey.

HILBE

FENUGREEK FOAM



1/2 c fenugreek seeds
4 c water
1-2 lemons
1/4 tsp salt
1 c fresh parsley, optional
1 tomato, optional

Soak the fenugreek seeds in 2 c water overnight. In the morning, pour the mixture through a strainer. The water will be quite bitter but is very healthy to drink. Mix the strained seeds with 2c water for another hour. Strain the seeds again, pouring out or drinking the water. Put the seeds in a bowl and squeeze 1-2 lemons on top. Add salt to taste. Wash and chop the parsley into tiny pieces and add to the mixture. Whip with a whisk or fork until the mixture is 2 to 3 times its original volume. The foam that will result will be lighter in color. Mix a few tablespoons of the hilbe foam into chicken or meat soup and/or grate the tomato and enjoy it with tomato and bread.

GOULASH

FROM HUNGARY
VIA YEMEN
WITH LOVE

3 lb of meat
1 lg onion
2-3 Tbsp olive oil
5 c boiling water
1 tsp turmeric
3-4 bay leaves
1 head of garlic
2 potatoes
1-2 tomatoes
½ c fresh coriander
¼ c fresh parsley
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper

Cut the meat into 2-inch cubes. Boil the meat in a pot of water on high heat. Scoop out and throw out the white foam that floats to the top. Remove the meat and place it in a dish. Chop the onion and fry it in oil until it becomes golden, about 10 minutes. Mix the meat into the onion. Add 5 cups of boiling water & lower the heat. Mix in the turmeric and bay leaves. Mince the garlic and add it to the pot. Peel and cut the potatoes into bite-sized pieces and add to pot. Peel and smash the tomatoes and add to pot. Chop the coriander and parsley. Save some for garnish and add the rest to the pot. Stir in the salt and pepper. Cook on low heat until the meat is soft, or at least an hour. Garnish with coriander and parsley leaves.



SHOSHANA / Yemen



SHOSHANA / Yemen



SHOSHANA / Yemen



Everyone raved about the Brazilian wonder who not only makes wine, but — “Wait ‘til you taste his food,” they swooned. I was off to cook up a storm with two parts Ricky Martin, one part Emeril Lagasse, not bad for a Wednesday afternoon. So I was surprised when greeted by a red-headed, blue-eyed jovial giant. After a quick hello, my Caucasian-featured South American host handed me an apron and put me to work. Johnny had said that we would “spend the afternoon cooking together.” I had hoped that was a euphemism for: he’ll slice and dice while I take notes and nibble on bonbons — maybe next time.

Johnny wanted me to experience “a full authentic Brazilian meal,” so we started off with two fish dishes: salmon ceviche, and cod cooked in creamy coconut sauce with a hint of cilantro. They were equally exquisite. Next we prepared a meat dish called Feijoada, that was “of course,” served on an irresistible crunchy creation called Parofa. In Johnny’s take on this classic dish, parofa — a hard to find, harder to chew, bitter root — is replaced with bread crumbs fried to perfection. These heavy hitters were balanced off with a simple Mediterranean salad, and a refreshing, healthy-ish dessert. The ingredients were laid out, hand-written recipes were taped to the wall, and his sous chef was at the ready. The man was in his element.

But Johnny’s professional life didn’t start in the kitchen. After the army, Johnny studied and worked in hotel management then sales. In 2001, after a stint in miluim, reserve army duty, he noticed his buddies loading up their trucks with large cartons. They were purchasing grapes for wine-making and Johnny was intrigued. A year later he was producing “two to three hundred bottles a year for family and friends,” he says. It wasn’t his best, he now knows, “but it was free,” he smiles, so there were always takers. Johnny assures me that he “made all the mistakes a novice could make.”

He mostly taught himself, then took a course at a local college to make sure he was on the right track. The last day of class was a party, and students were encouraged to bring in their home brews. The teacher opened up the bottles one by one. "He took one short whiff of my wine," Johnny recalls, "but he didn't taste it." So Johnny asked him why. "I'm too old to drink bad wine," his teacher explained – loud enough for all to hear. It was humiliating, but the truth spurred Johnny into action; he would "stop making lousy wine," he vowed, and prove his teacher wrong.

Three years later, Johnny won first prize at a national competition. His was deemed the best bottle out of 1,200. But it gets better: the head judge was none other than Johnny's former teacher and nemesis. Not only was he the one to anoint Johnny the winner, but he's been taking credit for Johnny's successes ever since.

So how did this head-strong sommelier land in the northwestern Galilee? Johnny's people hail from the East, Eastern Europe that is. Johnny's story begins with his maternal grandmother. Selina, his mother's mother was something of a daddy's girl. In 1931, when she was just 16, her father sent her to Versailles to study French. It was a costly, unusual escapade that would serve her well after the war. When she returned to Warsaw, Poland two years later, she met and fell in love with Jan Zorgenstein. They were soon married and had a beautiful baby girl, Denota, Johnny's mother.

About the time Denota turned three, the Jews of Warsaw were removed from their homes and squeezed into the now infamous Warsaw Ghetto. The family of three spent the next two years in one tiny room. Jan and Selina worked in forced labor camps most days and took Denota with them when there was no other option. On one such outing, five-year-old Denota was smuggled to an elderly Christian couple outside the ghetto. The ruse: that she was their orphaned granddaughter. Little Denota would spend the war years under the pseudonym Theresa Mezor and moved from family to family whenever neighbors raised suspicions. In the end, she was placed in a convent, "where she was well taken care of," she always told her son.

Denota's parents escaped soon after, but they sought refuge separately. Selina, blonde and fair like her daughter, obtained a counterfeit passport. She worked as a housekeeper, under a Christian alias, for her former doctor. When people started asking questions, she slipped off to Austria, where she taught herself to speak German. She spent the rest of the war working in a factory, living in the shadows.

Dark-haired Semitic-featured Jan had gone into hiding with three other men, including a brother-in-law. They spent three long months in a dank windowless room. One night they let their guard down and got drunk and loud. Hearing male voices from that apartment for the first time, neighbors realized they were in hiding and reported them to the Gestapo. None of the men would be seen again, nor would the Christian woman who had risked it all to hide them.

After the war, Selina's only goal was to earn enough money to find her daughter. She had learned about Jan's tragic fate, but had received no information regarding Denota. So she put her language skills to work, became a translator for the French embassy in Vienna, and started saving.

When she had the funds to return to Warsaw, the Polish government refused her an exit visa. That is, Selina would be granted entrance to look for her daughter, but wouldn't be allowed to leave the communist state. Ever resourceful, Selina threatened to tell the international press that "a young Jewish survivor and her widowed mother were being denied their freedom." Soon after, Selina was given both entrance and exit visas.

Her first day in Warsaw, Selina learned of a group of nuns who were reuniting hidden war children with their families. She was directed to the monastery where Denota had been hidden, and the two were reunited that very day. Fortunately, Denota had been old enough at the start of the war to recognize her mother five years later.

They spent nine months in Austria while Selina looked for a way out. They had no surviving family in Europe, but an uncle in Rio de Janeiro reached out and encouraged Selina to join him. Incredibly, in 1945, the Brazilian government was refusing Jewish immigration, so Selina underwent a pro forma baptism to obtain a visa – Denota had already been converted at the monastery. They would drop the pretense upon landing.

Selina settled in Rio with a group of friends from the ghetto. "None of them were willing to bring children into this world," Johnny tells me. "I only played with my siblings," he recalls, "there was no one else." Maybe that's why Johnny loves entertaining so much. In the early 70s, his family moved to Israel where there were lots of kids to play with, and he's been making friends ever since. From the hopeless confines of the ghetto, his family now lives and works in the glorious expanse of the Galilee. Stern wines are gaining recognition in Israel and abroad, but a trip to Stern Winery in Kibbutz Tuval isn't just about wine. It's about the Jewish story, and is a one-of-a-kind an experience. Sure, there's wine-tasting paired with artisanal local cheeses, but if Johnny isn't off winning awards somewhere, you're in for a whole lot more.

MOQUECA DE PEIXE

FISH WITH COCONUT & CILANTRO

- 1 onion
- 1 lg tomato
- 1 lg red pepper
- 1 hot green pepper
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 Tbsp salt
- 1 Tbsp turmeric
- 2 c coconut milk
- 2 threads of saffron
- 2 lb fresh fish – cod, snapper & salmon all work well



Chop the onion, tomato and peppers. Mince the garlic. Sauté the onion, tomato, peppers and garlic in the oil on medium heat until translucent. Add the salt and turmeric and stir. Add the coconut milk and stir. Puree with an immersion blender. If you don't have one, you should really get one. In the meantime, blend in a food processor. Add the saffron & stir. Rinse & cut fish into bite-sized pieces. Add the fish to the sauce and cover it. Simmer for 7-8 minutes. Serve on a bed of white rice.

Preferred Pairings:

Stern Winery's Savignon Blanc or Cabernet France
Stern wines are available at jnf.org/mitzvahmall



CEVICE

FISH TARTARE / CARPACCIO



- 1 Tbsp kosher salt
- 2-3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 hot red pepper
- 3 lb fresh salmon and/or white fish
- 1 purple onion
- 2 bay leaves
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp black pepper
- 2 lemons
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 red bell pepper
- 2 Tbsp balsamic reduction

Spread the kosher salt on a large serving platter. Add 1 Tbsp of oil. Thinly slice the hot red pepper and spread it over the oil & salt on the platter. Cut the fish into 2-inch cubes or into very thin strips. Spread the fish on the plate leaving 4 inches in the center of the plate empty. It is okay to have more than one layer of fish. Cut the purple onion as thinly as possible. Combine the purple onion and bay leaves with the salt, black pepper & 1 Tbsp oil. Place the onion mixture in the center of the platter. Half an hour before eating, squeeze the lemon. Combine the lemon juice with remaining 1 Tbsp of oil and 2 Tbsp vinegar. Pour lemon/vinegar over the fish. The fish will start to marinate and become opaque. Thinly slice the red bell pepper. Garnish with red pepper, then drizzle with the balsamic reduction.

Preferred Pairings:

Stern Winery's Savignon Blanc or Rose

Stern wines are available at jnf.org/mitzvahmall

FEIJOADA

MEAT STEW

2 c of red wheat (In Brazil they use black wheat.)
4 lb pastrami or roast beef
1 lb smoked goose breast or turkey
2 hot sausages
2 lg onions
1 carrot
2 sticks celery
1 head of garlic
2 Tbsp olive oil
6-7 bay leaves
1 tsp salt
1 tsp black pepper
water

1 night prior to preparation & 2 nights prior to eating, soak the wheat overnight in water. Take ½ pound of each type of meat and cut it into tiny pieces & save for later. Chop the remaining meat into 2-inch cubes. Chop up the onion, carrots, and celery into small pieces. Mince the garlic. Sauté the onion, carrots, celery and garlic in 2 Tablespoons oil on medium heat. Add the bay leaves and stir. Add the chopped sausage when the onions become translucent. Add salt and pepper and allow the sausage to brown, stirring occasionally. Rinse the wheat and add it to the pot. Add water until it's 1 inch above the ingredients. Bring to a boil then lower to medium heat. Cook partially covered for a minimum of 3 hours or until the wheat and meat are soft. Cover pot completely and turn off heat. Scoop out 3 cups of the cooked wheat, without meat, and blend with a immersion blender or in food processor until it's a smooth consistency. Mix blended wheat back into the pot and cover. Serve with Parofa (below) or Persian rice.



Preferred Pairings:

Stern Winery's Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve

Stern wines are available at jnf.org/mitzvahmall

PAROFA

BREADCRUMBS & (KOSHER) SAUSAGE



- 2 onions
- ½ c oil
- ½ c butter flavored margarine
- 2 thin hot sausages
- 6 c bread crumbs or panko
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 pinch pepper

Cut up the onion. Sauté the onion in the oil and margarine. Chop up the sausage into tiny pieces. Add the sausage to the pan and stir. Heat until the sausage starts to crisp up. Add the breadcrumbs and stir. Add salt & pepper to taste. Add more oil & margarine at will.

Traditionally, parofa is made from grated bitter manioc root. Johnny uses breadcrumbs instead as they're easier to work with and easier to chew. And they taste even better.

Preferred Pairings:

Stern Winery's Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve

Stern wines are available at jnf.org/mitzvahmall

TOMATO SALAD

MEDITERRANEAN STYLE

30-40 cherry tomatoes
2 red onions
1 scallion
½ lemon
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp vinegar
1 pinch salt
1 pinch pepper

Cut up the cherry tomatoes into tiny pieces. Cut up the onions and scallion into tiny pieces. Mix the tomatoes, onions and scallion. Squeeze the lemon on top. Drizzle on the olive oil and vinegar. Add salt and pepper, and toss.

Preferred Pairings:

Stern Winery's Syrah

Stern wines are available at jnf.org/mitzvahmall



AVOCADO MOUSSE

SMOOTH & SWEET

1 lg lemon or lime
2 lg avocados
3 Tbsp of sugar (or less)

Squeeze the lemon or lime and remove the pits. Puree the ingredients in a blender until smooth. Serve in a martini glass with a slice of citrus. Enjoy it guilt free.

Preferred Pairings:

Stern Winery's Petit Verdot

Stern wines are available at jnf.org/mitzvahmall



JOHNNY / Brazil



JOHNNY / Brazil



JOHNNY / Brazil



JOHNNY / Brazil



They offer me coffee and pastries, and a room anytime I need it — but what they're really itching to share is their treasure trove of documents and artifacts, including a 19th-century prayer book with the names of deceased relatives scribbled in the margins. A self-described secularist, Ruti adds names to the pages she clings to every Yom Kippur. Mothers and grandmothers schlepped candelabras, silverware and dishes through unfathomable circumstances for their daughters and granddaughters. "We have more," they assure me, "we love old things," but it's clearly not the things they love, rather who and what they represent.

The dates and facts have been corroborated by Yad Vashem and others, but it's hardly necessary. Ruti and Peretz have encyclopedic knowledge of every awful detail of the generally unknown Romanian Holocaust, and the disappearance of approximately 400,000 Jews. The Romanian government only officially recognized what took place on its soil in 2004, when newly exposed documents forced its hand .

In 1941, with neither training nor counsel, Ruti's father, nineteen-year-old Moshe, became the local treasurer of Dror Habonim, an international organization of "Freedom Builders." They smuggled maps and money to the underground, and produced counterfeit passports. They trained paratroopers, fighters and farmers for a dream-in-the-making a thousand miles away. In 1943, Moshe was caught and imprisoned. After the war he received a certificate of gratitude and appreciation for his contribution to the resistance from the Supreme Allied Commander. Ruti's father and his generation were the stuff of heroes.

"Our parents and grandparents were part of a lost generation," Ruti tells me. "No one was interested in their psychological well-being." Today it's different. Nowadays, the government is addressing the psychological needs of its people. Together with Jewish National Fund, it's built trauma centers for border communities under attack. For farmers, teachers, and children whose lives are interrupted, sometimes daily, by arson and rockets. And still, their strawberries and tomatoes are the sweetest known to man.

Inevitably, the kitchen brought the women together. Ruti's mother Drora learned to make Libyan "Mafrun," a hearty meat dish, from her Greek neighbor, who had been taught by the lady next door. Ruti is a fan of the dish, if not all the work involved. Still, she is fascinated by the cross-pollination of cultures that took place from the very beginning.

Food helped keep memories and traditions alive from one generation to the next. Ruti still makes spicy eggplant salad with a wooden tool direct from the old country, just like her grandmother. Sometimes, mothers facing this new world, with its old-new tongue, poured their energy and creativity into their dishes, if nowhere else.

As a psychology student, Ruti wrote a thesis called "Inscribed in the Body," where she tried to make sense of the Jewish obsession with food. Ruti believes that "our bodies carry an archive of experiences," which is why later generations resonate with the needs of their predecessors. Perhaps that explains how a handful of decades after pioneers worked this stubborn land with shovels, donkeys and sweat, innovative Israeli farming technologies are exported around the world.

Ruti's parents were married the day after Yom Kippur, then boarded a ship headed for Palestine. Even with their fake certificates in hand, they knew the odds. By 1947, some 1,600 refugees had drowned on their way to Palestine. Many of those who made it to the shores of Palestine were interned by the British in Cypress or Atlit, a detention camp south of Haifa. A small number of people slipped into Palestine unnoticed, Ruti's parents among them. She shows me a tiny photograph taken their first day on the kibbutz. Their faces glow, even in black and white. They had trained and dreamed of this for years, but the joy was short lived. The resistance fighter and his wife didn't fit in. A myriad of cultures would meet for the first time in the Promised Land, some meshing, others less so.

Besides, Ruti's mother, who had changed her name to Drora — Freedom — hadn't come this far to have someone else raise her children, as was the norm on communal farms. So they moved from the kibbutz into a small apartment in Haifa.

"We were the lucky generation, we were between wars," says Ruti, who has lived through more than a few. But none of them compare to the Second World War or the War of Independence, when a Jew had no place to call home. Seventy plus years after its founding, eighteen-year-olds are still called up for military duty, as there are still those who reject Israel's right to exist. But Israel does exist, it thrives — if filled with conflicts and dilemmas, — "but these are our dilemmas, on our land," Ruti continues, "It is a truly glorious time in the history of the Jewish people."

At Ruti's place, like Jewish homes around the globe, "The first thing my kids, nieces and nephews ask is: 'What's there to eat?'" Her mother used to say that she put all of her love into her food, but Ruti assures me there was more where that came from. Every holiday, Ruti and her sister Zvia would make the rounds, by bus, delivering their mother's famous cookies to family and friends. And so it goes: Ruti now drops off weekly packages to her own daughter, Sharon. The whole dorm knows when Ruti's been there, it smells like eggplant, onion and garlic — like home.

Ruti is less competitive in the kitchen than her mother was, or so she claims. She does, however, brag about her Vereneke (dumpling) upgrade: a touch of orange rind and Grand Marnier. As a child, Ruti couldn't stand them, but that was before she had tasted her mother-in-law's recipe, and added the booze. Today she gets in trouble if she makes them without inviting the family over to help. Ruti hosts a yearly Shavuot celebration, where cherished flavors bring memories to life. Her great-grandmother's 19th-century candlesticks are the finishing touch on her exquisite table. Aesthetics matter not so much for their own sake, but to say: we have survived, in style.

SALATA DE VINETE

ROASTED EGGPLANT SALAD

2 lg eggplants, seedless if possible
4 red peppers
2 garlic cloves
1 tsp salt
1/4 c apple cider vinegar - optional
3 Tbsp oil - optional
1/4 tsp sugar - optional
1/4 c chopped onion, parsley or cilantro for garnish

Roast the eggplants and peppers until the peels begins to blacken. This can be done on a BBQ, over a flame or in the oven. Peel the eggplant. Seed and slice the peppers. Finely chop the garlic cloves. Mix or purée all the ingredients except the peppers & herbs. Garnish with the sliced pepper & herbs.



FASOLE BATUTA

WHITE BEAN SPREAD

2 c white beans
6 garlic cloves
1 pinch salt
2 onions
2 Tbsp oil
1 red pepper

Purée the beans, garlic & a pinch of salt. Slice and fry the onions in the oil until golden brown. Add a pinch of salt. Grill the red pepper until the skin blackens. Peel, seed and slice the pepper. Serve the bean purée on a plate or on toast. Garnish with the onions and pepper.

CHOCOLATE FUDGE CAKE

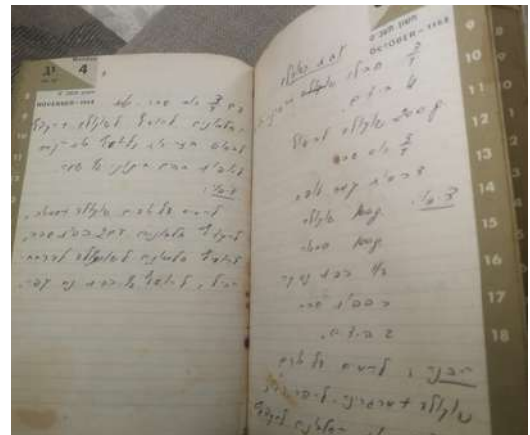
RICH & DECADENT

- 2 c bitter chocolate
- 1 c butter
- 8 eggs, separated
- 1 c sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 Tbsp cocoa
- 4 Tbsp flour

Chop the chocolate into small pieces, or use chocolate chips. Melt the chocolate over a double boiler or in a microwave for 30-second increments. Cut up the butter and mix it into the hot chocolate until it melts, then let it cool. Add the yolks to the cooled chocolate one at a time. Mix the vanilla, cocoa, flour and half of the sugar into the chocolate. Beat the egg whites. Slowly add half of the sugar to the egg whites. Fold the chocolate into the whipped egg whites. Bake at 350 for 40 minutes in a Bain Marie.

Bain Marie:

Place the cake pan with batter in a larger baking pan. Pour water into the larger pan so that your cake pan is sitting in an inch of water. Make sure no water can go into your cake, by choice of pan, or with the help of foil.



RUTI / Romania



RUTI / Romania





This certificate is awarded to
Moshe Spivack
as a token of gratitude for and
appreciation of their help given to the
Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen of the
British Commonwealth of Nations,
which enabled them to escape from, or
evade capture by the enemy.

H.R. Alexander

Field Marshal
Supreme Allied Commander,
Mediterranean Theater

1939-1945

9

CENTENNIAL CHILD

PERETZ

Romania



How did this Jew celebrate his “special birthday”? His significant other took him back to a home that no longer exists in a town once sacked, now renewed and renamed. The region previously known as Bessarabia, has become the Independent Republic of Moldova. Its political bent morphed from this to that, everything has, with the exception of one constant: it’s still not overly fond of its Jews. Even so, the townsfolk took an interest in the curious redhead on his birthday pilgrimage. After sizing him up, they led him to a 19th-century hut and a woman of a similar vintage. It didn’t look promising at first, but the thick glasses and blaring TV belied the truth. “I didn’t lead the witness,” Peretz insists, still pinching himself, “we have it all on film,” he repeats.

It began with one simple question: “Do you speak Yiddish?” Peretz had expected a simple “yes,” or more likely, a confused expression that would have meant “no,” but her answer brought him to tears, even as he retold it. “Avode, Ich bin a yiddishe kind,” the near centenarian told him. Not “Sure, I was a Jewish child,” but “Sure, I am a Jewish child.” Her world went mad then vanished, yet here she was. She had known Peretz’s father, uncles and grandfather — she recalled their names and nicknames. They had been her friends and neighbors before they were taken.

His illiterate maternal grandparents had the foresight to scrimp and save for higher education for all of their children, the boys as well as the girls. The eldest studied law in Prague, another engineering in Cannes. Peretz’s mother, Ita, was sent to Bucharest, the capital city. Incredibly, all of her siblings and cousins were academics. They were set for life, it seemed, and then the war broke out. Anti-Semitism had already been on the rise in academia and the professions — pogroms and ethnic cleansing came next. Jews were rounded up in the countryside and annexed lands at first, far from the eyes and conscience of Romania proper. In Bucharest at the time, Ita was the only member of her family to survive.

The Russians swept through the region in 1940 after Russia and Germany carved up the countries between them, in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Jewish community leaders were immediately sent to labor camps to stave off dissent. Peretz's grandfather, Michael, was among the first to go. As a result, he had the "good fortune" to be in Siberia for Operation Barbarossa – put into effect to liquidate the Jews. Hundreds of thousands were marched across the freezing Dniester river to Transnistria, now Ukraine, in the coldest winter on record. Most people froze or starved to death, as planned, others were shot.

Oddly enough, just as Michael escaped from Siberia, his son Samuel was drafted into the Red Army. Ita, Sam's future wife, was the first to return to their village after the war. An emaciated ghost of herself, the Ukrainian women crossed themselves at the sight of her, the walking dead. But Ita had a secret weapon, bullet-proof psychological armor that enabled her to carry on.

"What would you bring?" they urge me to guess: "A wedding certificate?" I try, but no. "A family photograph?" — again, no. It was something less personal, something that allowed his mother to maintain her dignity in the worst of times. It reminded her of who she had been, and who she still might be one day. The tattered document says that "In 1937, Ita Frenchel was certified as a licensed pharmacist at The University of Bucharest, Romania in the name of His Majesty King Carol II." It was signed and it was stamped. In another time and place, she was officially somebody.

After the war, Ita sometimes spoke a mishmash of languages, deciphered best by her husband and sons. Friends would joke with the brothers about their decoding skills, but they weren't laughing at her — Ita's inner world was palpable and fragile. Ita didn't work in pharmacy when she first arrived in Israel, she no longer needed to prove anything to anyone. She was happy at home where she raised her two sons, and fed them well.

Her verenkes, cheese dumplings, are a legend — even her daughter-in-law says so. The family makes them together every Shavuot, but Ita's signature dish was Jarkoia, or meat stew. After yearning for this hearty dish in the punishing Ukranian cold, the traditional Bessarabian meal took on mythical status. Her honey cake was another popular favorite and heralded in Rosh Hashana, the New Year. The kitchen was where traditions were passed down – her recipes, legends – but what mattered above all was education.

One of Ita's boys became a world-renowned expert in Neuropediatrics, the other is a mechanical engineer and CEO — not too shabby. And so it goes: Peretz's daughter Sharon studies at a university in Haifa less than a mile from where the SS Transylvania delivered Ita and her professional bona fides in the early 1950s. The British were long gone by then so she was free to enter. Her ancient land was newly reborn, its old name restored, its scattered people returning.

VERENEKES

CHEESE DUMPLINGS

DOUGH

- 1 potato
- 2.5 c flour
- 1/2 c water
- 1 Tbsp oil
- 1 pinch kosher salt

Boil potato with skin until very soft. Remove skin and puree with a fork. Combine ingredients by hand or in food processor, adding flour gradually. Let dough rest in fridge for 2 hours. Roll out the dough until it's very thin, about 1/8 inch. Cut circles by using the top of a glass dipped in flour. Place a spoonful of filling in the center of each circle, filling recipe below.



CHEESE FILLING

- 1 orange
- 2 c ricotta or farmers cheese
- 4 Tbsp sour cream, optional
- 1 egg
- 1/4 c sugar, to taste
- 1-2 Tbsp Grand Marnier

Finely grate the orange peel, then combine all of the ingredients together.

SHAPING DUMPLINGS

Dip your fingers in water and dampen the outer ridge of each circle. Fold dough in half to make half circles & gently press edges together. Place verenekes in salted boiling water for 2-4 minutes or until they float. Remove verenekes from water and place in a bowl of cold water for 5 -10 seconds. This step is optional, but will help keep verenekes firm. You can sauté the verenekes in butter after, or instead of, boiling. Serve with butter &/or sour cream &/or your favorite jam, marmalade or compote.





JARKOIA

MEAT STEW

- 2 lg onions
- 2 Tbsp oil
- 6 c water
- 3 lb meat beef chuck
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- 5 potatoes
- 1 Tbsp chicken soup mix
- 2 garlic cloves

Chop the onion into small pieces. Heat oil in a heavy pot on high heat. Sauté onions until golden brown. Stir 1 c water into the onions. Cut the meat into cubes and add to the pot. Bring the pot to a simmer. Add the salt, pepper and 5 c water. Simmer for an hour or more until the meat softens. Peel and cut the potatoes into cubes and leave them in a bowl of water. 10 minutes before meal add soup mix & potatoes. Cover the pot. Mince the garlic. When potatoes are soft, stir in the garlic. Wait 1-2 minutes before eating.

HONEY CAKE

FOR A SWEET NEW YEAR

5 eggs
1 c honey
1 c sugar
1 c water, room temperature
1 c vegetable oil
1 lemon
1 tsp rum
4 c flour
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 c nuts, your choice

Separate the eggs. Mix together the yolks, honey and sugar. Mix in the water and oil. Grate the lemon peel. Add the lemon peel and rum and stir. Combine the flour with the baking powder. Slowly add the flour to the batter. Mix in the nuts. Beat the egg whites until they are stiff. Fold the egg whites into the batter and pour into a greased pan. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes at 350.



PERETZ / Romania



Ita's and her husband



10

BREADS, BRAIDS & BROTHERHOOD

GALI & JULIE

Azerbaijan



The term “M’Dor L’Dor”, "From Generation to Generation", refers to the continuum of Jewish values through the ages. It's an apt name for a program that implements age-old wisdom and principles to ensure a brighter tomorrow for Israel's underserved youth. Caring for those in need, a core Jewish value, lies at the heart of M'dor L'Dor, an afternoon program that brings promise to Israel's challenged communities, including the Mountain Jews of Azerbaijan, and Jewish National Fund is proud to support it.

Kafkazim, Jews from the Caucasus mountains, are said to have left ancient Israel for Persia as early as the 8th century BCE. Three centuries later, members of the community sought refuge further east — in the remote rugged region between the Caspian and Black Seas. For centuries, Jews and Muslims lived in harmony, even celebrating religious holidays with one another. During the Second World War, local Muslims protected their Jewish neighbors from the Nazis at their own peril. With its 96% majority of Muslims and almost no anti-Semitism to speak of, Azerbaijan serves as a beacon of hope for the Middle East and the world at large.

So definitive is their culture, that even those who leave the craggy landscape are referred to as "Mountain Jews". The Kafkazim began returning to their Promised Land as early as 1840. Their Zionist resolve and distinctive ways captured the imagination of Theodore Herzl, no less. However, most Kafkazim immigrated to Israel in the early 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union – Julie and Gali among them. Julie was a young mother of three at the time, little Gali just five years old.

Prior immigrants from urban centers in the former USSR were charged with helping the new arrivals assimilate into Israeli society. While it made sense on paper, the two communities had very little in common. Life in Soviet-run cities, where the government ruled with an iron fist, was nothing like the unconstrained, self-sufficient lifestyle of the Mountain Jews. The latter were considered backward by their cosmopolitan cousins, but from their own perspective, the Kafkazim lacked nothing.

Each multi-generational family was a self-sustaining microcosm. There were no bread lines in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital and largest city. Rather, bread was made from locally-grown wheat and baked in tandoors, sunken ovens, in one's own backyard — and something to behold. Their trademark breads are stuffed with anything from meat to cheese and nuts, and are adorned with the so-called Kafkazi braid.

Sons worked with their fathers, while daughters learned how to run a home from their mothers, grandmothers and aunts. This included raising small animals as well as growing fruits and vegetables. It's no wonder then, that stuffed vegetables are a mainstay, or that fruit and chicken can be found in many, if not most, dishes. The crowning jewel of Kafkazi cuisine: the Kurze, or meat dumplings, are finished off with their signature braid — a pinching technique that can takes years to master.

Unfortunately, their beautiful way of life didn't lend itself to urban Israeli realities. The culture that had defined the Kafkazim for centuries was, for the most part, deemed backward in modern Israel. As a result, the approach to their integration, as it was with other immigrants, was: out with old, in with the new. This created a dangerous vacuum. With their deeply ingrained identity considered obsolete, many of the Kafkazi youth lost their way.

In 2000, a double homicide forced the community to deal with a dangerous trend. With a mere 2% of the local population identifying as Kafkazi, nearly 40% of criminal cases in the Beersheba police department involved their youth. As the press covered the story, the community was shocked to see how negatively they were portrayed in the media. But the hard facts couldn't be denied, they were in crisis. Programs like M'Dor L'Dor were established to help the community help itself. Two decades later, the appalling 40% statistic has been reduced to a mere 1% of criminal cases.

M'Dor L'Dor helps even the playing field, not just for Kafkazi youth, but for any child in need. It's a place where children from lower socioeconomic families get help with their homework, learn about the world and just play. They are exposed to the arts, and they dance and sing. Holocaust survivors and Israeli war vets teach them about Jewish and Israeli history and values. Many of the program's graduates have become M'Dor L'Dor volunteers. Some, like Gali and Julie, have made it their calling.

Gali, the petite pistol who runs the southern region of M'Dor L'Dor, is particularly proud to tell me that the focus of the program is no longer on preventing criminality. Today, Gali and her team are "educating Israel's future leaders," she tells me with conviction. Gali knows precisely what these kids need: "everything my own childhood was missing," she explains. Gali had immigrated as a young girl. Once in Israel, her mother and father held three jobs each, and barely made ends meet. That left Gali and her four siblings to essentially raise themselves, which was more or less the norm in their community.

Gali recalls acting as interpreter at parent-teacher meetings as early as second grade. It still irks her that she was addressed as the adult in the room, as if the language barrier deemed her parents inept. Then there was the time Gali's teacher gave her a new her name without warning or permission. Whether it was school policy or the teacher's attempt to help the newcomer fit in, the gall of it pains Gali to this day. One hears different versions of this story and its range of effect on people. Israel's founders Hebraized their own names as the Biblical tongue was being revived. People all over the world change their names to fit in, but that's their choice. For Gali, it was symptomatic of a society that wanted to erase who she was, and she got the message.

As a teen, Gali would repress and hide her heritage. Being different wasn't cool, not to mention the Kafkazi stigma. Today she is "100% Israeli" as well as extremely proud of where she comes from. Indeed, she is devoted to restoring her heritage and passing on its traditional values. In Azerbaijan, Gali tells me, respect and pride were of the utmost importance. Elders were honored and admired. "You didn't dare look directly into your parents' eyes," she tells me as she lowers her gaze. Children would stand when elders entered the room. Parents ate the first foods and had the final word, no matter the subject. Curse words were not tolerated.

Gali is especially proud that "In Azerbaijan, no one went hungry and no one lived alone. The community cared about and looked after everyone." In that vein, M'Dor L'Dor participants visit, cook and clean for the neighborhood's elderly on a weekly basis.

"My family came with nothing," Gali reminds me, so I'll have context for a sensitive piece of family history. Her wedding had to be on the smaller size, as far as Kafkazi celebrations go: only 900 or so people attended. Under the circumstances, she explains, "It was the best they could do." Amazed, I asked her if she knew all the guests. "Of course!" she exclaimed, surprised that I would ask — in Azerbaijan, every celebration was a block party. Holidays were anticipated for months and celebrated with the entire community.

Up in the mountains, they made more of an effort to connect to their roots and to one another. "The Jews kept Shabbat," as they say, "and Shabbat kept the Jews". M'Dor L'Dor recreates the tight-knit, mountain atmosphere every afternoon as the staff and volunteers weave the beauty of the past into the promise of tomorrow — and the children are treated to traditional, home-cooked meals.

Lunch was being prepared alongside us as I spoke with Gali, who couldn't help but pitch in. She was shocked to learn that I would be leaving before the meal. The look on her face told me that I would need to change my plans: hearing stories was one thing, tasting centuries-old recipes was something else. Later that afternoon, I returned to pay homage to Julie, the cook. It was a good move.

Like Gali, Julie moved to Israel from the Caucasus Mountains in the 1990s during the civil unrest that followed the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. She too, "came with nothing." Two decades later, she works at a chapter of M'Dor L'Dor that her daughter helped establish. "Many of the children have siblings who participated in the program and don't want to miss out," she explains. Julie served as a volunteer before she was hired to cook for the children.

Julie's father was seventeenth in a line of respected rabbis — this is the very first thing she wants me to know. Next, she informs me that all of her children are educated and have professions. No matter where they come from, no matter the circumstance, Jews the world over focus on education — for themselves and their children. Julie was pregnant when she, her husband and three small children moved to Israel. Her husband was taught Hebrew and went to work. Julie taught herself to read, write and speak Hebrew using her husband's old workbooks, while raising the kids. Today M'Dor L'Dor helps adults earn their high school diplomas and work on their language skills, game changers both.

Julie settled in Beersheba near the one relative who had arrived before her. She was the first of six siblings to make aliyah. They all joined her in Israel soon enough, but settled in Netanya. Julie didn't complain about it, as one might expect, "It's a special event every time we get together," she smiles. For a woman who literally grew lemons for lemonade, it's effortless.

At seventeen, Julie was told to go to her neighbor's house to try on a pair of boots — someone had brought in a shipment from Moscow. Unbeknownst to her, she was actually there to check out her future husband. None of the boots fit, but she went, she saw and she liked him — which is a good thing, since her parents had already agreed to the match. Two months later they were married. After the wedding, Julie's father escorted her to her in-laws' home. He blessed her with all good things, then made clear that hers was "a one-way ticket," in other words, make it work. Four decades, four kids and five grandchildren later, Julie counts her blessings.

"Don't wait around to receive," Julie's parents would say. "God will give what and when He decides." Julie and her siblings were empowered by the message that, "Not everyone has the ability to give, rather, giving is a gift." That message has shaped their lives more than any other. Julie considers it a blessing to cook for the underserved youth of Beersheba. The hours of work she invests each day are "nothing compared to what I get from these kids," she says, while giving and getting a hug. Then she tells me how each of her siblings has dedicated their lives to others.

Her eldest sister cares for at-risk children, including two wheelchair-bound sisters, every afternoon. I am told that "she is honored to do it." Another sister works with the elderly. A third escorts children home from school for parents who can't leave work. Still another "has given of herself" to a school for 20 years. "She cleans it with pride," Julie wants me to know. They are willing to do whatever it takes to help those in need and pave the way for a brighter future. Not just for their own children and grandchildren, but for the community at large, M'Dor L'Dor, From Generation to Generation.

“We never threw anything out,” Julie told me. Her mother would sew tattered scraps together to create “new” clothing, which was “worn with pride.” Even then, they would look after those less fortunate. “It’s in our blood,” she shrugs. “We open our eyes each day and thank Hashem, God,” says Julie, who reconnected with tradition a few years back.

She’s chopping a small mountain of onions, wiping her eyes now and then. Back in Azerbaijan, onions, peppers and zucchini would be picked fresh from the garden. They would be grilled or filled with meat, chicken, and/or rice. Rice is “very, very important,” Julie stresses, and I’m reminded of her predecessors’ sojourn through Persia and perhaps Spain. Her family has travelled far and wide, but her values haven’t budged. And nothing brings her more joy than sharing those values with future generations, with these lucky kids. “I love this place,” Julie blurts out as I’m leaving, as if I couldn’t tell.





- 1 c sugar
- 1/2 c water
- 1 Tbsp honey
- 1 Tbsp dry yeast
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 c warm water
- 3 c flour
- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- 2-3 c vegetable oil

[illegible]



DIPPING SAUCE

- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 c red wine vinegar

Mince the garlic. Mix the garlic with the vinegar. Dip the dumplings into the sauce or scoop the sauce into the dumplings.

KURZE

BRAIDED MEAT DUMPLINGS

MEAT FILLING

- 1 lbs ground beef or lamb
- 2 onions
- 2 Tbsp oil, if frying the onions
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp table salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp black pepper
- 3 Tbsp tomato paste
- 3 Tbsp water
- 1 sm bunch cilantro

Chop the onion into tiny pieces. If you don't have much time, use raw onion. For a more delicate flavor, sauté the onion in oil for 5 minutes. Add the tomato paste and water to onion pan and stir for 2 minutes. Wash and finely chop the cilantro. Combine all of the ingredients. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for an hour.

DOUGH

2.5-3.5 c flour
1 tsp salt
¼ tsp black pepper
1 egg
1 c water
1/4 c olive oil

Combine 2.5 c flour with the salt and pepper. Make a hole in the middle of the flour. Add the egg, water & oil in the hole & mix together. Add water if it's too hard, or flour if it's too sticky. Knead the dough for five minutes & cover with plastic wrap. Let dough rest for 10-20 minutes at room temperature.



PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Roll out the dough on a floured surface. Dip the top of a small bowl in flour. Use the bowl to cut large circles in the dough. Put 2-3 Tbsp of meat in the center of each circle. Pinch the edges together with a bit of water. The Kafkazi braid is made by alternating little pinches on the dumpling's edge. Gently put the dumplings in salted boiling water. Optional: Fry the kurze in oil after boiling. Dip in sauce or take a bite and drizzle the sauce inside.



II

CHILD'S PLAY

CARMIT

Bulgaria



The ma'abarot, the tent camps set up in the 1940s to house Jewish refugees, hundreds of thousands of them fleeing hostile Arab lands, were harsh by any standard. They were meant to be a temporary fix, but many people languished in them for decades. Much has been written on how they came to be and their long term effect on Israeli society.

How does one prepare for the incoming of the exiles – all at the same time? There was no model to follow, and no resource to spare. Hunger and unemployment begat despair, crime and corruption. The ma'abara was a best last resort, a still open wound, which is why the Rappaports' move to the one in Ramle was so odd. These Bulgarians weren't escaping pogroms or dictators — they moved there directly from a kibbutz. Now, it's been said that kibbutz food is bland and lacking in nutrition, but that's hardly a reason to leave an idealistic utopia for a refugee camp with neither running water nor electricity.

Carmit Rappaport's parents had immigrated from Bulgaria to work the land in 1945 at the tender ages of 16 and 17. They lived and worked on different kibbutzim, looking for a community and a way of life that suited them best. Ultimately they co-created their own at Kibbutz Ayal. Carmit's mother worked different jobs, while her father manned the dairy where he tended cows and guarded a weapons' stash for the Haganah, the underground pre-state army. On what is referred to as "Black Sabbath," the British rounded up and imprisoned hundreds of men suspected of blowing up bridges and other subterfuge. The gun stash at the dairy was discovered and Carmit's father was jailed. She credits American Jews for his release. Two years later Carmit was born, as was the State of Israel.

They were living the dream. Then in 1951, Carmit's grandparents showed up. After the chaos of the war and separation from their family, they weren't interested in the socialist experiment where workers and their children lived separate lives. Also, they needed a pair of hands to help them work farmland they had leased from a nearby church. So at age 5, Carmit and her family left the relative comfort of kibbutz life for the squalor of the ma'abara. As such, when Carmit had to go on dreaded outhouse runs in the middle of the night — with howling jackals skulking about — antisemites weren't to blame, it was her grandparents.

While it must have been rough for her parents, Carmit remembers this period fondly. She played with Tunisian girls from the tent next door and tasted foods that dazzled her dainty Balkan tastebuds. Her parents spoke Hebrew by then, and had connections outside the ma'abara, so unlike most of their neighbors, they weren't overly concerned with their exit plan. That said, it was no party.

One particular memory takes her back. They were playing in her family's makeshift kitchen, when her brother kicked a ball intended for Carmit, but missed. The ball bounced off a table and sent a bottle flying – the Rappaports' monthly ration of cooking oil with it. Instantly, her mother and grandmother were on their knees mopping up every salvageable drop. Carmit doesn't mention the crash of the glass. What she does recall is the speed and skill with which four frantic hands wrung oil out of worn kitchen towels. No one was punished, there was no need. The Benitcha, Carmit's favorite dish of cheese stuffed filo dough might be a little dry that month, her favorite cookies on hiatus, but this too would pass. Besides, their Tunisian neighbors would have shared their ration if only asked.

Seventy years later, Kibbutz Ayal produces semiconductors and the ma'abara is long gone. Carmit now serves as director of the Minkov Orange Grove Heritage Site, not far from where her parents and grandparents worked the land. This first of Rehovot's orchards relied solely on Jewish labor and was an unofficial rite of passage for many a prominent Zionist.

Back in the day, Jewish National Fund helped the government bring Jews from Yemen to work at this flagship project. JNF continues to support this little-known gem which teaches Israeli youth about their agricultural history. Groups of school children visited the site as I sat with Carmit in the restored courtyard. A range of citrus fruit including kumquat, grapefruit, pomelit – an Israeli invention – and lemons have been planted alongside the orange trees of yesteryear. Carmit served orange cake with tangy kumquat marmalade as we sat in the sun. Both were homemade and well worth a try.

Carmit / Bulgaria



BENITCHA

FETA IN FILO DOUGH



- 1/2 pack of filo dough
- 1/2 c vegetable oil
- 1.5 c yogurt
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 c vegetable oil
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 2 c feta cheese
- 1 c fresh herbs, spinach or onions, optional

Defrost the filo dough 45 minutes prior. Grease a baking pan with 1-2 tsp of oil. Combine the yogurt, eggs, oil and baking soda. If adding herbs, spinach or onions, finely chop them, then add to the yogurt mixture. Spread 2 Tbsp of the yogurt mixture over the top layer of the filo dough. Sprinkle 4 Tbsp of feta cheese on top of the yogurt mixture. Carefully roll up the top 1 or 2 sheets of dough and place along one side of the pan. Repeat until you fill up the pan or run out of the filling. Pour any remaining yogurt mixture on top of the rolls. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until golden brown.

ORANGE POUND CAKE

FRESHLY SQUEEZED

2.5 c flour
2.5 tsp baking powder
4 oranges
4 eggs
1/4 tsp salt
1 c sugar
1 c oil
1 tsp vanilla

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Sift the flour together with the baking powder. Zest then squeeze the oranges. Whisk the eggs on low speed for 30 seconds. Raise the speed to medium and add the salt. Whisk for another 30 seconds. Raise speed to high and slowly add the sugar. Whisk for 3-4 minutes, until the eggs look pale. Lower the speed to low and slowly add the oil, orange juice, vanilla and zest. Whisk in the flour mixture 1/2 cup at a time until blended. Pour into 2 greased loaf pans and bake for 1 hour. If cake is getting darker than you like, cover it with foil. Cool completely then wrap in plastic wrap and store at room temperature. Try not to eat it all right away. It gets better every day.



Carmit / Bulgaria



KUMQUAT MARMALADE

TANGY & TART

2 c kumquats
1 lemon
1 c sugar
1 c water
1 stick cinnamon
2 star anise
1 pinch cayenne pepper
1 pinch salt

Rinse the kumquats. Cut them into very thin slices. Rinse, zest and squeeze the lemon. Combine all the ingredients in a glass bowl. Cover and let it sit for 3 or more hours to allow the fruit to soften. Pour mixture into a pot. Bring to a boil on high heat, stirring occasionally. Lower the temperature to medium low and simmer for up to an hour. Stir occasionally. Store in glass jars in the fridge up to a few weeks.

Carmit / Bulgaria



On the 11th floor of a gleaming apartment tower in Holon, I am schooled in the awesomeness of "poor man's food." The servings are small but satisfying, the recipes minimalistic: legumes and spices, rice with legumes and spices, and even flour and water with nothing but spices. It's a something-out-of-nothing way of eating. Meat would have been unaffordable back in the day, while legumes would have filled the belly for a fraction of the cost. "It's very simple," Gali tells me, over and over, and it's the only food she eats.

Gali's grandparents moved from Turkey to Egypt where both of her parents were born. The food she grew up on, the food she serves her own children, is 100% Egyptian. This despite the fact that her family was sent packing when Gali's mother was all of six. As the dust began to settle after the Second World War, Arabs and Jews doubled down on their turf war in so-called British Palestine. As tensions mounted, nearly 800,000 Jews in Arab lands became personae non gratae in communities they had called home for centuries. This, in addition to the millions of people displaced by the war. The uprooted were at the mercy of foreign governments and charitable organizations. Many were left to fend for themselves.

Gali's family traversed five or six countries on their way from Egypt to adjacent Israel, as the two countries were now at war. They went from one displaced persons' camp to the next in the hopes of making it to the Promised Land. Refugees from every nation were crammed together in giant impromptu hangars all across Europe. They were no match for the winters or the unbearable summer heat, "but my mother never once complained about it," Gali recalls. As a matter of fact, she painted a peaceful, almost surreal picture of her time there. Every day, she told Gali, she would meet a young boy on a hilltop somewhere near their tents, "just to watch the world go by." A sweet escape from a world in chaos.

GALI

Once in Israel, Gali's mother would grow up fast. As the oldest sibling, she would be tasked with supporting the family when her father fell ill. Five days a week this eleven-year-old played live-in nanny and housekeeper to an established family in Tel Aviv. Gali spent the weekends with her family in a ma'abara, a tent city set up for new immigrants, where food and supplies were rationed. Her modest income would supplement the rations and help buy medicine for her father. Gali says that her mother was always proud to work with her hands, whether she was cooking, cleaning, or raising children — who were more or less her peers.

Though deprived of a formal education, Gali describes her mother as highly intelligent and extremely capable. She taught herself to speak excellent Hebrew, French and Spanish according to Gali, an English teacher. The family's tailoring business was left in Cairo, but the know-how stuck with them. At one point her mother earned a living sewing leather shoes, without the aid of a pattern.

Gali's father died suddenly when she and her siblings were young. From then on, they were all very close, even living across the street from one another. They raised their families as one, "like we would have in Egypt," Gali tells me. They eat the same beans and make the same little cookies their mother baked each holiday. Serving sizes were small, but celebrations were anything but. On holidays they were surrounded by family and friends, as they would have been in Cairo.

"My new neighbors barely say hello in the elevator," Gali laments. That said, she exudes a sense of relaxed joy and contentment which, I'm guessing, she inherited from her mother. "A woman from humble beginnings," Gali says, "she was always happy with her lot." Gali apologizes repeatedly for the simplicity of the food, and the small portions. Eventually, I get a taste of Doah, an Egyptian classic made of three ingredients — and by ingredients, I mean seeds. And yet, when you buy them fresh and toast them separately, they make an extremely flavorful, satiating snack — especially when sprinkled over bread slathered with butter or margarine.

I met Gali in the middle of her sabbatical year. "There's so much to discover and do," she tells me with a school-girl's enthusiasm. She's creating a memoir of her mother's life to share with her siblings. She's learning to paint and sings in a choir. Gali is turning her year "off" into a year of everything, something-out-of-nothing. She's about as busy as her decor is not. Her sparse living room has two main attractions: the view and her mother's sewing machine. The setting sun soothes the room. The country below faces an endless stream of crises, but Gali, like her mother, has found her peaceful perch. As I'm leaving Gali says, "Every once in a while, I'll toy with it," referring to her mother's sewing machine. I don't believe it has much to do with fashion.



DOAH

A FAREWELL TO PB&J

- 1.5 c full sesame seeds
- 1.5 c coriander seeds
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp salt

Toast sesame seeds on low heat, in an ungreased pan, until their scent is released. Be careful not to burn the seeds. Allow the seeds to cool. Purée in a coffee blender or food processor until smooth. Repeat the process for the coriander seeds. Mix the seeds together with the cumin and salt. Spread butter or margarine on a piece of bread. Spread or sprinkle the seed paste on top.

BASSARA

FAVA BEAN PASTE

- 1.5 c split fava beans
- ½ head of garlic (6 or 7 cloves)
- 1 Tbsp dry whole coriander
- 1-2 Tbsp oil
- 1 Tbsp dry mint
- 1 tsp salt

Soak the fava beans overnight. Rinse the beans in cold water. Boil the beans in 2 cups of water uncovered until the water is reduced by half. Blend with an immersion blender or by hand until smooth. Mince the garlic. In a separate pan, sauté the garlic and coriander in oil until golden. Add the fava bean paste. Add the mint and salt, and simmer on medium low heat. Remove from heat when the consistency is slightly lighter than hummus. Serve hot.





Add the eggs one at a time. Add the pepper and cumin. Add the breadcrumbs until the mixture sticks together. Add more breadcrumbs if needed. Wet hands and form patties. Fry on in oil on medium-high heat. The oil should be halfway up the patties. Flip the patties when they start to brown.

FISH PATTIES

IN TOMATO SAUCE

3 lb frozen cod
2 lemons
1 Tbsp kosher salt
½ head garlic
2 eggs
1/8 tsp chili pepper
1/8 tsp cumin
2-3 Tbsp breadcrumbs, matzo meal or panko
1 c vegetable

Remove frozen fish from package. Place it in a bowl and squeeze the lemons over it. Sprinkle the fish with the salt, turning it until it's covered in salt & lemon juice. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let it defrost overnight in the fridge. Alternatively, you can defrost the fish at room temperature for an hour or two. Rinse the defrosted fish and squeeze out the excess water. Purée the garlic and fish in a food processor.

TOMATO SAUCE

FOR FISH PATTIES

2 garlic cloves
2 Tbsp oil, olive or vegetable
1/8 tsp tumeric
1/8 tsp sweet paprika
1 tsp cumin powder
2 Tbsp tomato paste
2 c water
1 chili pepper

Mince the garlic cloves. Sauté the garlic in the oil on medium high heat. Stir in the tumeric, sweet paprika and cumin. Add the tomato paste and stir it for a few minutes. Cut the chili pepper in half. Add the water & chili pepper. Bring to a boil then simmer on low heat for 20 minutes. Add fried fish patties to the pan of tomato sauce. Bring sauce to a boil then simmer for 10 to 15 minutes.



ROZ BIL LABAN

SMOOTH RICE PUDDING

1/2 c white jasmine rice

2 c water

2 c milk

1/4 c raisins

1 tsp cinnamon

3 Tbsp sugar

Optional: coconut milk, shredded coconut & vanilla bean

Cook the rice in 2 cups of water until soft like porridge. Purée with an immersion blender. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil then simmer until it thickens to a paste. Serve hot.







13

SPICE GIRL

REBECA

Lebanon & Spain



Her family migrated from Turkey to Syria and finally Lebanon, where Rebeca's parents met. Lebanon would serve as a way-station for Jews fleeing unfriendly Arab lands in the 20th century. Some only stayed until they could move elsewhere, while others established themselves in cosmopolitan Beirut. However, following Israel's surprise prowess on the battlefield in '48, and again in '67, Lebanon became less hospitable to its resident Jews. People like Rebeca's parents understood it was time to move on.

Business opportunities took them to Barcelona, where her family had likely lived prior to expulsion, and that's where she was born and bred. Yet if you ask her where she's from, she'll say Lebanon — a country she has yet to step foot in. In fact, she couldn't visit even if she wanted to, at least not with her Israeli passport. Rebeca spent a few years in the United States before moving to Israel where she has lived longer than anywhere else. "But I grew up on Lebanese food," she made clear, as if that explained everything.

"Food makes people happy," Rebeca declared. Her favorites, by far, are her mother's Lebanese dishes – nothing even comes close. So I was jazzed for the big reveal: the psychedelic intermingling of gastronomical rarities from Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Spain. Surprisingly, the esoteric wizardry that creates so distinctive a flavor calls for: cinnamon, oil, salt and pepper. All that mingling of cultures and that's all she's got?

Yes, and no, for the plot thickens. For one thing, Rebeca's husband is Moroccan. Shabbat and holidays are spent with his family eating spicy fish, couscous, and the like. So you'll find cumin, paprika, turmeric and chili, in other words, a respectable dose of fire in Rebeca's pantry. Additionally, Jewish Spanish cooking was influenced by Moroccan rather than Spanish flavors. There are at least two good reasons for this: 1. The influx of Moroccan Jews to Spain, and 2. The kosher factor. Pork and seafood dominate Spanish cooking whereas Moroccan dishes are all about meat, lamb or chicken. Simply put, Moroccan cuisine lends itself to the kosher kitchen, seafood paellas and pork tapas, not so much. So Rebeca's food had a Moroccan flair to it long before she met Mr. Right.

"During the week," Rebeca says guiltily, "it's anything from schnitzel to sushi, but special meals are Lebanese or Moroccan." She appreciates the way that "food gathers people." While she's not religious in the classic sense, Rebeca describes holiday and Shabbat meals as ethereal and sacred. She feels a deep sense of connection making and serving traditional recipes, like her mother's lamb seasoned with Baharat.

Baharat refers to a mix of spices used in certain parts of the Middle East. Like garam masala and curry, there is no one recipe, though it usually starts with cinnamon and English pepper. It may or may not include cloves, cumin, coriander, cardamom, star anise, nutmeg, chili pepper, turmeric and/or allspice. Different regions are known for different combinations, and Rebeca's mother used it in all her meat dishes. Perhaps her Baharat was mostly made of cinnamon and pepper when other ingredients were scarce, or maybe that's just how she liked it. And of course her mother and grandmother would have toasted and ground their own spices — nothing compares to that.

On this side of the pond, cinnamon conjures up a certain sweetness — like gingerbread cookies and pumpkin pie. That said, even with a generous dose of cinnamon-rich Baharat, Lebanese and Syrian main dishes are strictly savory. Lebanese lamb spiced with Baharat is cooked with potatoes, mushrooms or white truffles, which are there "to soak up the flavor of the meat," not compete with it. Moroccan lamb, on the other hand, balances its savory ingredients such as olives, onions, and garlic with sweet ones like apricots and prunes. That said, Rebeca assures me that there are no hard rules in her kitchen — with her uber-cultural background, where would she begin?

Even, or especially, with all those countries in her psyche, Rebeca always wanted to live in Israel. The first thing she did when she made Aliyah was a six month Hebrew language course called Ulpan, and then she was on her own. That's how it's done in this country of immigrants — you're taught the basics, and then you sink or swim.

"At 20," Rebeca explained, "you're an adult here. Back home," she continued, "I was living with my parents." Becoming a self-reliant adult with just a rudimentary grasp of the language "wasn't the same as bumming around all summer with my cousins," she says. But Rebeca made it work, as have millions of other immigrants.

Today organizations like Nefesh B'Nefesh, supported by Jewish National Fund, help make the transition a whole lot easier. From getting you on the plane to landing a job, 21st-century immigrants are the beneficiaries of an expansive network of professional, social and financial support. Rebeca's children, on the other hand, are the beneficiaries of traditions that have crisscrossed continents and outlasted time. Their DNA would suggest that they're Syrian, Lebanese, Spanish, and Moroccan, but if you ask them, they're Israeli.



LEMON SOUP

VEGETARIAN

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch of parsley
- 1 celery stalk
- 6 garlic cloves
- 3 lg potatoes
- 1 lg eggplant
- 4 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 4 c boiling water
- 1 c fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp of salt
- 2 c cooked rice

Wash and chop the parsley into tiny pieces. Wash and cut the celery into bite-sized pieces. Peel the garlic cloves and cut them into thin slices. Peel the potatoes and cut them into medium-sized pieces. Peel the eggplant and cut it into big chunks. Heat a non-stick cooking pot on medium-low heat. Add the oil and wait until it heats up, about 30 seconds. Add the garlic and stir for 2 minutes. Add the parsley and the celery and stir for 2 minutes. Add the potatoes, eggplant and 4 cups of boiling water and stir. Cover the pot and let it cook until the potatoes are tender, about one hour. Add the lemon juice and the salt and stir well. Boil soup for 30 seconds longer. Serve the soup on top of cooked rice.

MOROCCAN FISH

SPICY

- 6 Tilapia filets
- 2 sweet red peppers
- 6 garlic cloves
- 8 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tsp of turmeric
- 1 tsp of sweet paprika
- 1 tsp of hot paprika, optional
- ½ tsp of cumin
- ½ tsp of salt
- 1 c boiling water

Wash the tilapia filets, and pat them dry with paper towels. Wash, seed and cut the red peppers into strips. Peel the garlic cloves. Heat up a non-stick large deep skillet at medium-low heat. Add 4 Tbsp of oil and wait until it is hot, about 1 minute. Add the peppers and the garlic and stir for 3 minutes. Add the tilapia filets on top of the peppers and garlic.

Combine the turmeric, paprika, cumin and salt in a medium bowl. Stir 4 Tbsp of oil and 1 cup of boiling water into the spices and mix well. Pour the spice liquid over the tilapia filets and cover the skillet. Bring to a boil on high heat for 1 minute. Reduce the heat to low and let fish cook for 30 minutes. Baste the sauce on top of the fish every 10 minutes. Add water if the sauce is too thick. Serve hot with couscous.



ROSTO

ROAST BEEF

10 Tbsp vegetable oil
3 lb chuck tender
2-4 c water
1 lb fresh white mushrooms
2 tsp cinnamon
2 tsp English pepper
2 tsp salt

Note: Cook the meat a day in advance.

DAY 1

Heat 5 Tbsp oil for 2 minutes on medium high in a non-stick large deep skillet. Add the meat and turn heat to high and cover the pot. After 3 minutes flip the meat, watching out for splashing hot oil. Keep flipping the meat until it is seared on all sides. Prick the meat with a fork in several places. Add 2 cups of water. Cover the pot and cook on low heat. Check the pot every 15 to 20 minutes. Add water when needed so there are always 2 cups of liquid in the pot. An hour or more later, when the meat is soft, remove the pot from the stove. Refrigerate the meat in its juice overnight.



DAY 2

Cut the cold meat into thin slices while trying to keep the shape of the roast. Heat 5 Tbsp of oil in a skillet on medium heat. Put the meat in the hot oil. Rinse the mushrooms and add them to the liquid. Sprinkle the meat and mushrooms with the cinnamon, pepper and salt. Pour in 2 cups of boiling water and allow it to boil for one more minute. Lower heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Add more water if the gravy becomes too thick.

BAHARAT

SPICE MIX



allspice
black pepper
cardamom
chili pepper
cinnamon
cloves
coriander
cumin
English pepper
ginger
hot paprika (optional)
nutmeg
salt
star anise
sweet paprika
turmeric

Anything goes! In other words, mix it up however you like. That said, if you want it to taste great:

1. Buy spices fresh and whole
2. Grate your own spices
3. Toast each spice separately
4. Store in a dark, cool place

There is no shortage of signage at the entrance to the former collective. On the left, "Kibbutz Shomrat" is sprawled across an old cement watchtower in giant yellow letters. The worn metal sign, dated 1948, lies in stark contrast to the sleek modern ones, for dozens of private businesses, on the other side of the gravel. It's a perfect infographic of the Shomrat story, the Mazan family, and Israel in general.

Ariel Mazan was born and raised on this kibbutz. His parents arrived in 1954, a week after they were married in Argentina. Their parents, Ariel's grandparents, had moved to South America at the turn of the 20th century, when antisemitism ran rampant in the Russian Empire. Today, two generations of Mazans work together in their food and hospitality business. Ariel's father represented a third generation before his passing. As it happens, Mazon means food in Hebrew. "Our ancestors traded this and that back in the old country," Yonat, Ariel's wife, tells me. Food may well have been in their blood even longer than they know.

Ironically, after escaping mother Russia, the Mazans embraced Soviet tenants at Shomrat, a socialist commune. Half a century later, that all changed. Ariel had loved the way he was raised and was not among those who voted to disband and privatize the kibbutz, but Israelis roll with the punches. Not that he had a choice. So after the dust settled, the Mazans gave the capitalist thing a go. Yonat is amused when visitors from abroad comment on their industrious capitalist know-how.

For decades, Ariel had worked in the dairy that made milk, yogurt and cheese for the kibbutz's common dining hall. By the time Shomrat was dissolved in 2002, Ariel had acquired much knowledge and experience, but no clientele or capital. Even the cows were gone. For the next four years, Ariel worked in different industries, but nothing felt right. So in 2006, he decided to go back to what he knew best.

Two years before the economic meltdown of 2008, Ariel transformed Shomrat's old dining hall into a boutique goat cheese dairy. Ariel and Yonat took their life savings, not much, and a bunch of loans and "jumped into the water," she recalls. In other words, they were all in. They named the dairy Alto, which means high in Spanish, to represent their commitment to excellence in their products and service.

Their families thought they were crazy, and then things got worse. Right around the time Alto was gaining traction, Israel got entangled in the Second Lebanon War and the first Gaza conflict. Local businesses took a hit as terror waves shocked the country. Dairy distributors resisted driving "all the way [to Shomrat]", Yonat explained, so the Mazans took over distribution as well as the rest.

It was a rough, pricey undertaking. They were an unknown commodity off the beaten path, but they kept at it. In 2012, just after Yonat joined the business, they received a phone call from an organization dedicated to boosting local tourism. Western Galilee Now, sponsored by Jewish National Fund, provides marketing support for over a hundred artisans and small businesses in the region. Alto was one of the first businesses to sign up.

They had no clue what was expected of them, Yonat admits, when their daughter assured the CEO of Western Galilee Now that they would be happy to receive a group of philanthropists from Jewish National Fund. The rest, as they say, is history. Alto has been delighting travelers ever since, and has a following of both locals and out-of-towners.

Their award-winning cheeses are reasonably priced, Yonat tells me, so everyone can afford them. They use only goat milk, which is said to be healthiest for human consumption. In 2016, their daughter Shaked encouraged Ariel and Yonat to take it up a notch and open a café. Not surprisingly, they accepted the challenge. Today, their breezy café serves seasonal dishes showcasing their marvelous cheeses.

In addition to building a business, the Mazans are dedicated to developing Israel's North. They have been from the start. Ariel's father, Amiran, had been a Zionist in his youth. After he made Aliyah, Hashomer Hatzair, the socialist Zionist movement that established Shomrat, sent him to Chile and Argentina to encourage immigration to the newly formed State. They picked the right guy. Apparently, it was not uncommon for café patrons to recognize Amiran, the man who had long ago convinced them to come back home. Their reward was back-breaking work — then as now.

"When things get tough," Yonat explains, "you have to be humble, work harder, put up with it, save." The week I met her, a large part of the Golan Heights was shut down for security reasons. That would be comparable to roping off California and Nevada, suddenly and indefinitely. The ensuing mayhem kept customers away. Distributors, who had hesitated to drive there in the past, were now unable to go home. "Who comes up here?" Yonat asks rhetorically, "Not even Israelis," she answers. But people like Yonat and Ariel, with the help of organizations like Jewish National Fund and Western Galilee Now, are changing that.

The Mazans took on two of the toughest business sectors, food and hospitality, in a particularly tough economy. Despite not making a dime their first year, they were undeterred. "You have to look far into the future," Yonat tells me. With all four children in the business, and two living on the former kibbutz, it appears as if the future has met her half way.

It also feels a lot like the past. The pioneering spirit that brought idealists here in the '40s and '50s is alive and well. Modern day pioneers, like the Mazans, are breathing new life into Israel's north and inspiring others. Yonat says that while they worked around the clock, and faced significant setbacks, they always "hoped and believed that they would succeed." And so they have. One more Zionist dream come true.



BEET TARTS

WITH GOAT CHEESE

1 pie crust or 1/2 pack of puff pastry
3 medium beets
1 pinch sea salt
1 pinch black pepper
2 Tbsp sugar
1 bunch fresh thyme
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 c balsamic vinegar
1 Tbsp goat butter
1 roll of Sainte Mauré cheese
1/4 c Gremolata, recipe below

Defrost the puff pastry or dough 45 minutes before preparation. Heat oven 375 degrees. Slice the beet into 1/4-inch pieces. Toss the beet slices in salt, pepper, 1 Tbsp of sugar, fresh thyme and olive oil. Roast in oven until soft, about 5 minutes. Combine the balsamic vinegar with 1 Tbsp of sugar in a pan and bring to a boil. Simmer until the vinegar volume is reduced by 1/3, approximately 10 minutes. Place 1/4 tsp of goat butter in each section of a muffin tin. Place 2 slices of the roasted beet into each section. Drizzle 1/2 tsp of the reduced balsamic vinegar on top of each section.



Roll out the dough or puff pastry. Cut circles into it using a cookie cutter or glass. Place a piece of dough or pastry over each section of muffin tin. Dip a fork in flour and poke holes in the dough or pastry. Bake until golden brown, approximately 10 minutes, then cool. Place a baking pan on top of the muffin tin, flip it over and lift off muffin tin. Cut the Sainte Mauré cheese into 1/2 inch slices and place one slice over each tart. Drizzle a drop of olive oil on top of each tart. Place the tarts back in the oven for a minute or two until cheese melts slightly. Place a tsp of gremolata on top of each tart and serve.



GREMOLATA

ITALIAN CHIMICHURRI

- 1 bunch parsley
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 lemon (peel)
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 pinch pepper
- 1 c oil

Rinse and dry the parsley. Chop the parsley into tiny pieces. Mince the garlic. Grate the lemon peel. Combine the parsley, garlic, lemon peel, salt and pepper in a glass jar. Pour oil in the jar until it covers the parsley mixture. Let it sit for a few hours. Can be refrigerated for up to a week. Refreshing on salads as well as meat.

FOCACCIA

WITH BLUE CHEESE & WALNUTS

6 c white flour
2 c whole wheat flour
1/2 c sugar
1 Tbsp salt
2 rounded tsp dry yeast
2.5 c water
1/4 c oil

Mix the flour, sugar and salt in a large mixing bowl. Mix in the yeast. Add the water and mix on low speed. Add the oil and raise to medium speed. The dough will form a ball in 5-10 minutes. Place in a bowl sprinkled with flour. Gently flip the dough so it is covered in flour. Cover dough with a clean cotton dish cloth. Let the dough rise for 2 hours. Separate dough into 8 balls. Roll the balls until it's about 1/4 inch thick. Bake dough at 400 degrees for 5 minutes or until golden brown.



TOPPING

2 pears
1/3 c walnuts
1/2 c blue cheese
4 heads radicchio
1 Tbsp olive oil
1 pinch kosher salt
1 pinch black pepper
1 lemon
2 Tbsp honey

Slice the pears and place on the prepared focaccia dough. Break up the walnuts and sprinkle on top of the pears. Crumble the blue cheese over the pears and nuts. Toss the radicchio in the olive oil, salt and pepper. Squeeze the lemon on top of the radicchio and toss. Spread the radicchio on top of the pear, cheese & nuts. Drizzle the honey on top.

FARM SALAD

WITH QUINOA

- 1 large sweet potato
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 pinch sea salt
- 1 pinch black pepper
- 2 radishes
- 1 cucumber
- 20 cherry tomatoes
- 1 c cooked quinoa
- 2 c seasonal lettuce
- 1 c baby spinach leaves
- 2 radicchio heads
- 1/2 c feta cheese
- 1/4 c roasted pumpkin seeds

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Cut the sweet potato into 1-inch cubes. Toss the cubes in 1 Tbsp olive oil, salt and pepper. Roast the potato cubes until slightly brown, 5-8 minutes. Place potato cubes in the fridge. Slice or chop the radishes, cucumbers and tomatoes, and mix into the quinoa. Toss together the lettuce, spinach and radicchio and place on serving plates. Add quinoa mix on top of each place of lettuce. Sprinkle sweet potato, feta and pumpkin seeds on top of the quinoa & lettuce. Drizzle each plate with 1-2 Tablespoons of gremolata, recipe above.



ARIEL & YONAT / Argentina



ARIEL & YONAT / Argentina



Handsome Israeli boy meets beautiful American girl. "He used some silly line about a cousin who said they had to meet," she tells me. All the same, a few months later, girl leaves Manhattan, moves to Israel, and marries persuasive boy... and they lived happily ever after. In the uncut version, well, life happened. Three weeks after Ruth and her husband met under the chupah, sirens wailed across the land. Unbeknownst to her, the eerie sound was alerting the nation that war had erupted, The Yom Kippur War. "I had no idea what was happening," Ruth says.

Raised on the Upper West Side, she had never experienced anything like it. In truth, just about everyone was caught off guard. As the citizen-army scrambled to mobilize, her husband was sent up North where he was injured within a week. He came home for treatment, "but returned to his soldiers as soon as his cast was on," Ruth recalls. Israeli army officers lead by example: "Acharai" or "after me" they are famous for saying. He wasn't going to sit at home while his men were outnumbered on the Syrian border eight to one. So they said a second difficult goodbye, this time, for ten months.

War was not part of her plan. Ruth knew practically no one and had no way of contacting her husband. The Hebrew news on the radio was beyond her comprehension, not that it was reassuring. So she left her newly rented apartment and moved in with her sister-in-law whose husband was fighting in the South. Later they would learn how 500 Israeli soldiers outmaneuvered tens of battalions.

An English-as-a-Second-Language course for teachers "saved me," Ruth confesses. It kept her busy all day, did wonders for her Hebrew and was a place to make friends. Mostly, it was a healthy distraction in a terrifying time. "It was tough," she recalls, but Ruth got through it. "It all starts with the fact that my mother was a sole survivor," Ruth explains. Even though her mother never spoke of her wartime experiences, Ruth figures that's where her determination and resilience come from. That said, Ruth thought the woman had been through enough, so she tried to protect her mother from the facts on the ground. Specifically, Ruth didn't want her mother to know that her injured husband was fighting impossible odds on the front.

Ironically, Ruth's attempts to hide her husband's whereabouts led her mother to think that their marriage was "on the rocks," Ruth laughs. Still, "it was a tense time," she assures me. "I guess the Zionist spirit is stronger than anything," Ruth muses. Ruth and her brother were raised on stories of sacrifice, triumph, and Zionism. Both her parents were survivors, so they understood the importance of Israel and would soon make aliyah. Three of her father's siblings survived World War II. Tragically, one of his brothers would be killed soon after, in Israel's War of Independence.

When Ruth arrived in Israel, she knew how to make an omelet, more or less. Schnitzel, the greasy staple of the Israeli kitchen, was her first foray into things epicurean. Next, Ruth would discover that some things are made from scratch; that cakes aren't all from bakeries, nor are fish hatched in jars. The first time she visited her future mother-in-law's place, Ruth heard a leak in the bathroom and went to see how she could help. There she found a jittery carp darting around the bathtub — killing time, as it were, before becoming Gefilte fish.

Since that time, Ruth has collected hundreds of recipes from around the world. Her "universal kitchen" has been influenced by guests at the many charity events she has hosted over the years. In addition to being a champion for various philanthropic causes, Ruth sees herself as a goodwill ambassador for visitors to the country.

Though her mother didn't share any war stories, she did pass on some delicious recipes. Ruth's palate changed over "the different stages and periods of my life," she explained as she showed me her eclectic collection of cookbooks. These days she's mostly interested in healthy dishes, unless she's catering to the hankerings of her seven grandchildren, all of whom live nearby and have their own favorites. Her daughter marvels at the fact that Ruth left everything behind, but Ruth is hardly an anomaly. Jews have returned here from over 100 countries, throughout the ages, to partake in the re-birth of a nation.

SCHNITZEL

A RITE OF PASSAGE

3 lbs skinless boneless chicken breast
1 c flour
1 tsp each salt & pepper
1/2 tsp paprika
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper, optional
4 eggs
2 c breadcrumbs or panko
1/4 c sesame seeds, optional
1 c vegetable oil
1 lemon



Cut the filets in half so you have 2 thin pieces about 1/2 inch thick. Gently wrap a filet in plastic wrap, or place it in a large unsealed ziplock bag. Gently pound the filets until they are 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick. You can use a mallet, jar or the palm of your hand. The more even they are, the more evenly they will cook. Combine the flour with half of the salt, pepper and other spices of your choice. Dip (a.k.a. dredge) both sides of each filet in flour. Scramble the eggs with the remaining salt, pepper and spices. Dip the filet in the scrambled eggs. Place schnitzel on bread crumbs pressing gently on each side. Dip the schnitzel into scrambled egg one more time. (Some people skip this step.) Fry the schnitzel in preheated 1/4 inch of oil for 2-3 minutes on each side. Place on paper towel to absorb oil. Sprinkle with lemon and salt and serve with ketchup. The sooner you eat it the better! Warning: they go fast.

RUTH / U.S.A.



CHOPPED LIVER

FOIE GRAS, SORT OF

- 1/2 lb chicken liver
- 1 onion
- 1 Tbsp
- 2 eggs
- 2 Tbsp chicken fat
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 1 sprig parsley
- 1 c pomegranate seeds

Rinse the chicken livers. Pat dry with paper towel. Fry onions in oil on medium heat until golden brown. Fry chicken livers in the chicken fat. Remove from heat while still slightly pink. Hard boil 2 eggs for 10 minutes. Place boiled eggs in a bowl of ice water. Allow eggs to cool, then peel them. Mash liver and eggs with a fork. Mix in the onions, chicken fat, salt and pepper. You can purée in a food processor for path. Garnish with parsley and pomegranate seeds. Note: mix with gelatin for foie gras texture.

THAI NOODLE SALAD

FAST & FUN

- 8 oz thin rice noodles
- 2 c spinach leaves
- 1 sweet red bell pepper
- 1/4 c fresh cilantro, optional
- 4 scallions, optional

Cover the noodles with boiling water. Leave in bowl 5 minutes or until soft. Drain noodles and rinse under cold water. Cut the spinach and red pepper into thin strips. Toss noodles with the spinach and red pepper. Mince the cilantro and save for garnish. Chop up the scallions and save for garnish.

DRESSING

- 3 Tbsp ginger root
- 1/4 c unsalted peanuts
- 1/4 c lemon &/or lime juice
- 1/4 c water
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp veg oil
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1/4 tsp hot pepper flakes

Peel the ginger. Purée ginger and peanuts in a food processor. Add remaining ingredients. Purée until combined. Toss dressing into the noodles. Garnish with coriander &/or scallions.



Recipe: Loretta Helman, Canada

BLACKENED RED FISH

WITH BUTTER & SPICES



Recipe: Ruby Stelitz , Port Elizabeth, South Africa

375 gm unsalted butter
1 Tbsp sweet paprika
1 tsp onion powder
1 tsp cayenne pepper
1/2 tsp dried thyme
2.5 tsp salt
1 tsp garlic powder
3/4 tsp white pepper
3/4 tsp black pepper
1/2 tsp dried oregano
6 salmon fillets

Heat a cast-iron skillet over high heat 10 minutes. There should be white ash at bottom of skillet. Melt the butter in a separate pan or in the microwave. Combine the spices and herbs in a small bowl. Rinse each fillet in water and dry. Leave in lemon juice for less "fishy" fish. Dip each fillet in the melted butter. Dip each fillet in the spices and gently press. Place each fillet in the hot skillet. Pour 1 tsp melted butter on top of each fillet. Cook uncovered for about 2 minutes until bottom is charred. Turn each fillet over and drizzle 1 tsp of butter on top. Cook for another 2 minutes. Serve with the remaining melted butter.

RUTH / U.S.A.





RECIPES BY CHAPTER

1

LEMON ICE, VERY VERY SWEET
LYCHEE SORBET, OR OTHER FRUIT
MALABI, ROSE WATER ICE CREAM WITH SYRUP

2

MEAT KEBABS, WITH EGGPLANT
ORANGE BBQ SAUCE BBQ SAUCE, WITH MUSTARD, CHOCOLATE OR FRUIT
MEAT WITH CITRUS FRUIT, TART & TENDER
PICKLED LEMON SPREAD, GREAT WITH EVERYTHING
STRAWBERRY GINGER CHUTNEY, DRESS UP YOUR MEAT

3

FASHEERT, TURKEY PATTIES
CHICKEN PAPRIKASH, WITH MUSHROOM SAUCE
NOKEDLES, DOUGHY DUMPLINGS

4

CHICKEN LIVER, WITH VEGETABLES
BLINTZES, WITH CHEESE
HAMENTASHEN, WITH POPPY SEED

5

MISIR WAT, VEGETARIAN LENTIL STEW
SIGA TIBS, MEAT STEW
BERBERE, SPICE MIX
INFUSED OIL, JUMP START EVERY DISH

6

SABAYA, LAYERED DOUGH WITH BLACK SESAME SEEDS
HILBE, FENUGREEK SEED FOAM
GOULASH, HUNGARIAN

7

CEVICHE, FISH TARTARE/CARPACCIO
MOQUECA DE PEIXE, FISH WITH COCONUT & CILANTRO
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ROASTED EGGPLANT SALAD, WITH FRESH GARLIC
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VERENEKES, CHEESE DUMPLINGS
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HONEY CAKE, A ROSH HASHANAH CLASSIC

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BENITCHA, FETA CHEESE IN FILO DOUGH
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FOCACCIA, WITH BLUE CHEESE AND WALNUTS
FARM SALAD, WITH QUINOA

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SCHNITZEL, GREASY & CRISPY
CHOPPED LIVER, SALTY & SMOOTH
THAI NOODLE SALAD, COLD & CRUNCHY
BLACKENED RED FISH, JUST TRY IT

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ALIYAH

THE COOKBOOK

An ingathering of family histories & recipes



CINDY SILVERT is a food columnist, humorist, and self-taught cook whose inspired culinary creations and commentary have landed her appearances on TV, radio, and in print. She is fascinated by the ALIYAH phenomenon and is mesmerized by Israel's food scene.



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