

# BREAKING BREAD

## JEWISH FOOD STORIES AND RECIPES

FROM THE JBFC COMMUNITY



JACOB BURNS FILM CENTER  
**JEWISH**  
FILM FESTIVAL  
2001-2021  
SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 14

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# INTRODUCTION

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## BRIAN ACKERMAN

*founding director of film programming,  
Jacob Burns Film Center*

We started this year's Jewish Film Festival, our 20th, with a thought to make it interactive, around something that binds the whole JBFC Jewish community together, particularly in a year where we've all spent a lot of time at home, isolated—but still cooking, as though secretly hoping for the guests to arrive. So we thought: Let's ask people to contribute a recipe and we'll create a Breaking Bread book, echoing the film of that name that Bruni, the festival programmer, selected for this year's festival. (It's one of her favorites.) Nothing quite expresses Jewish culture—indeed, any culture—as much as its food and the experience of eating it with others.

As we moved forward, we also thought: Let's ask people for a story about their food, and their recipes. Well, it shouldn't have surprised us, because as a film center we're in the business of storytelling, but it turned out that the stories were

often where the gold was. So many people managed to convey, even in the smallest slices, something big about food, something precious about their memories. And what really jumped out is how fabulously different all these entries are. I bet the recipes are great too, but you'll have the adventure of finding that out for yourselves—especially, as you'll see, with the entries that aren't quite what you'd expect a recipe to be.

## A NOTE

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## BRUNI BURRES

*festival programmer, Jewish Film Festival*

When we began to plan this book, I knew that it would be a joyous outpouring of JBFC voices—but I didn't anticipate this vibrant and diverse celebration of Jewish film, food, and community. Thank you to all our wonderful contributors!

I'm delighted to start things off with my own story about and recipe for one of my favorite ways to prepare salmon for guests.



# HOLIDAY FEASTS

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# PACO'S DREAMY SALMON

**BRUNI BURRES**

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A few years back, in hopes of seeing my adored first cousins and their extraordinary grown-up kids from my father's side of the family before the next Rosh Hashanah, I decided to host Bruni's Alternative Shabbat Dinner at my house.

Alternative? Well, the truth was that I'd never actually hosted any kind of Shabbat dinner in my life. I did everything I could think of to allay my fear of messing up and entice the 20-year-olds to spend a Friday night in NYC with their first cousin once removed. My cousins Nancy and Kenny drove in from New Jersey carrying scrumptious homemade cakes; velvety, oak-tinted French wine; Shabbat candles and candlesticks; and challah from their favorite bakery. Cousin Dave drove in from Boston, gifting us a bottle of Pinhook Bourbon. He swore by it. (He had to leave at around midnight, so it was saved for another occasion.) My first cousins once removed, now living in New York, brought their boyfriends and more wine.

We laughed, ate, drank, laughed some more, told silly stories about our parents, and made a group blessing for the candles, challah, and wine. It was the best Shabbat dinner of all time.

Oh, and for dinner, I made a creamy, gingery baked salmon, the recipe courtesy of my dear friend and restaurateur-turned-film-producer Paco de Onís.



*Serves 4*

**2 pounds salmon fillet, skin on**

**Olive oil**

**Herbes de Provence, enough to cover flesh side of the salmon**

**Salt and pepper, to taste**

**1 tablespoon butter**

**4 teaspoons sliced/shaved ginger root, peeled**

**½–¾ cup heavy cream**

**4 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped**

**1 lemon, juiced**

- 1** Rub salmon with olive oil, herbes de Provence, and a pinch of salt and pepper.
- 2** Broil or bake the salmon at 400°F, skin side down, for 14 minutes or according to preference.
- 3** For the sauce, melt butter in a small pot on the stove.
- 4** Add ginger and cook over medium heat until the ginger is lightly browned.
- 5** Add heavy cream, dill, and lemon juice, and stir till mixed.
- 6** Pour sauce over cooked salmon and enjoy!



# MRS. ROGOVIN'S HOT! HOT! HOT! HORSERADISH

PETER H. ROGOVIN

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Although I do not like spicy food in general, I've always loved horseradish—though I eat it only once a year, on Passover. As a child at the seder, I would challenge my cousin, four weeks my senior, to a contest where the winner was the one who ate the most horseradish without coughing, drinking water, or gagging. It was a real challenge because we made horseradish fresh, never jarred, and my father always declared the current year's batch to be the strongest ever, requiring aggressive venting of the kitchen.

When my wife and I bought our first house in Pleasantville, we planted horseradish root on the sunny south side of our home, where it thrived and spread. I used it to make my own horseradish each year. Several times, I've had enough to make extra using my mother's recipe and I've offered it in the farmers market as "Mrs. Rogovin's Hot! Hot! Hot! Horseradish" to encourage more people to make their own. It is such a simple recipe; I am always amazed that people buy the jarred kind, which is weak and tasteless.

In 2017, my family sold our home to move across town, and I insisted that we would be allowed to dig up and take our horseradish root with us. The lawyers and realtors said they'd never seen a sales contract with such a clause in it, but I told them I wasn't going to leave my crop behind!

**12 ounces fresh horseradish root, peeled**

**1 (8.25-ounce can) beets (reserve all beet juice, about ½ cup)**

**⅔ cup red wine vinegar**

**2 tablespoons sugar, or more to taste**

**1 teaspoon kosher salt**

- 1** Peel and then cut horseradish into ¼- to ½-inch cubes.
- 2** Place in food processor with chopping blade.
- 3** Add beets and vinegar and some beet juice.
- 4** Chop to the consistency of coarse sand and move to mixing bowl, being careful not to inhale the gas that is released when you open the processor.
- 5** Add sugar and salt to taste, again being careful not to breathe fumes.

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The horseradish will be very hot for a couple days and then the flavor will mellow as gases dissipate.

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# SEPHARDIC-STYLE CHAROSES

MARY HERRNSTADT

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I grew up in Cornwall, New York, in the shadow of Storm King Mountain, where a bucolic bend in the Hudson River provided a northern vista as yet unspoiled by the dreary span of the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge. Instead, a mile-long ferry ride across the river brought us to the train ride to the top of Mt. Beacon, where family and friends enjoyed picnics and short hikes on lazy summer days.

There were only a handful of Jewish families in Cornwall. New York Military Academy, however, was in its heyday, evidenced by groups of little boys decked out in military regalia, strolling into town on weekends in search of candy and other forbidden treats. Somehow my parents wound up hosting their Jewish students for an annual Passover seder in our home. My father kept the service mercifully short, and my mother kept the food coming. My mother, honest to a fault (except once confessing to putting the punches back in the railroad tickets when commuting from Woodmere to Barnard College during the Depression) refused to arrange for me to find the afikoman, so I had to grudgingly feign joy watching my father hand a prize to the lucky cadet who discovered the broken matzo between the couch cushions, year after year.

Both my parents were German Jews. My mother's family had been here for generations. As a young man, my father had courageously shepherded his mother and sister out of Berlin in 1938, coming to America and joining the OSS, and then returned to carry out missions behind enemy lines in his former homeland.

I have no memories of Jewish food, as neither of my parents were raised within the traditions of Eastern Europe or Russia, the source of so many of those dishes. Instead, I offer a charoses recipe from Great Aunt Irene, a Sephardic Jew raised in Panama who married into my father's family. My mother wrote it on a little notecard for me 40 years ago, adding that she left out the banana, most certainly a Panamanian addition, because she never liked bananas.

**½ pound dates**

**½ pound figs**

**½ pound each almonds and walnuts**

**½ pound brown sugar**

**½ apple**

**¼ cup peanuts**

**1 banana**

**Juice of 1 orange**

**Cinnamon**

**1** Chop fruit and nuts.

**2** Mix all ingredients

**3** Sprinkle cinnamon on top.

Vary ingredients and proportions to taste.



# ZSA ZSA'S NOODLE PUDDING

ELISABETH SCHONFELD

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I first tasted this unusual noodle pudding at the home of my mother-in-law at her Yom Kippur break fast meal. It is beautiful as well as delicious since it is cooked in a Bundt pan and then turned upside down with a coffee-cake type topping. I served it once at Thanksgiving with extended family and it was such a hit that it became an annual tradition. In fact, I make two because so many people look forward to it each Thanksgiving. We named it Zsa Zsa's Noodle Pudding since my boys called their grandmother Zsa Zsa.

This past year when we could not be together in person, I sent the ingredients and a Bundt pan to my two sons who don't live nearby. I cooked and delivered one to my other son who lives closer. While we were only together on Zoom, we were all eating the same Zsa Zsa's Noodle Pudding that we eat every year on Thanksgiving. It was a wonderful connection through food.

## TOPPING

**¼ cup melted butter**

**¾ cup brown sugar**

**½ cup chopped walnuts**

## PUDDING

**½ cup dried apricots**

**¼–½ cup white raisins**

**1 pound wide egg noodles**

**6 eggs**

**1 drop heavy cream or half-and-half**

**Cinnamon**

**¼–½ stick butter**

**½ cup sugar**

**1 teaspoon vanilla**

**1 teaspoon salt**



- 1 Grease the Bundt pan very well with butter.
- 2 Mix topping ingredients and put in refrigerator until gummy.
- 3 Soak apricots and raisins in water. When apricots are soft (approx. 20 minutes), cut them into pieces with scissors.
- 4 Squeeze water out of raisins and apricots.
- 5 Boil noodles as directed on box, then drain, mix with some of the butter while they are warm to prevent sticking together, and cool.
- 6 Beat eggs well and mix with noodles. Stir in cream and cinnamon.
- 7 Add remaining butter, sugar, vanilla, salt, apricots, and raisins.
- 8 Press the topping into bottom of Bundt pan. Pour noodle mixture on top.
- 9 Place Bundt pan into another, wider pan that contains 1 or 2 inches of water. This will prevent the topping from burning.
- 10 Cook 1 hour at 350°F, let cool, and then turn over onto a serving plate. If any topping stays in the pan, just remove it and press on top of noodle pudding.



# KARELIAN PIES FROM FINLAND

**TAPANI TALO**

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When I married my late wife, Judith Feder, in 1982, I promised that our children would be brought up Jewish. I grew up in Finland as Lutheran. Our value systems are pretty much identical, unlike those of the more southern European Lutherans.

In 2001 I converted to Judaism in order to really understand and become more active in our synagogue, Bet Am in White Plains. I had fallen in love with their services in 1982 during my first High Holy Days.

But about food:

Judith's family were real foodies who loved global flavors, and they enjoyed my offerings. Karelian pies are a traditional Finnish dish, made in large farmhouses once a week to be eaten in the fields, as they stay very good for a week without refrigeration. Having the filler makes them tastier than plain bread.

Making and eating them together became an annual Hanukkah event in our family. The pies disappear fast, so we make a lot, and everyone takes a pile home for their freezer. They are the MOST cherished food items every year.

The crust is simple—equal amounts of rye and wheat flour, with a tiny bit of salt. The filling can be mashed potatoes, turnips, or my favorite: rice pudding.

I learned this recipe as a boy. I was enamored by the making of these pies, and my aunt, my mother's sister, was a terrific explainer. We would visit her every year, and I would sit there patiently at the table's edge, using my nose and making mental notes while she was making the pies and describing the nuances that went into making the process easier and the pies tastier.

## RICE PUDDING FILLING

**2 cups sushi rice (I use Tamaki Gold)**

**Water**

**Milk**

**Cream**

**Butter**

**Salt**

*The proportions are very individual. Just keep in mind that the final pudding should be soft enough to spread, but not too runny. The slow process of making the rice pudding is easier if one starts it a day before. A three-stage rice pudding method works best. The microwave is good as it avoids burning the rice at bottom.*

- 1 Cook the rice in a large pot with water, like normal rice.
- 2 Cook it again with milk.
- 3 The third time add cream and butter and salt.
- 4 Salt gradually to find the JUST RIGHT flavor.
- 5 Refrigerate overnight.
- 6 The following day, heat the pudding a bit and add milk so that the pudding becomes easy to spread.

*> continued on next page*



## CRUST

**2½ cups rye flour, preferably Farmer Ground brand (which is coarser and much easier to work with than others)**

**2½ cups whole wheat flour, preferably stone ground (I like the Isis brand)**

**2 cups water**

**1 teaspoon salt**

- 1** First mix the rye and wheat flour in a large bowl. Mix in water and salt. Let it sit couple of hours covered, at room temperature, then shape the dough into cubes about an inch on each side, and flatten them so they are about 3 inches across. Using a cookie cutter or a drinking glass, cut them into disks.
- 2** Lay the disks on a plate dusted with a little rye flour so that they don't stick.
- 3** Then start the last stage by rolling the disks of dough with French rolling pins (curved) till they are about 6 to 7 inches across and very thin, round like a small plate. Dust with plenty of rye flour so they don't stick.

## FORM THE PIES

- 1** Spread rice pudding evenly (about ¼ or ⅜ inch thick) on each piece of dough, leaving about an inch of dough uncovered around the edges.
- 2** Lift and pinch the edges, working your way all around the dough, so the edges form a kind of jagged, rustic wall supporting the rice filling, which will be exposed on top. The pies will be boat shaped.

- 3** Preheat the oven to 425°F, put the pies on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, and bake 20 minutes.

- 4** Cool for 5 minutes before eating.

The traditional way to serve Karelian pies is to top them with a mixture of chopped hard-boiled eggs and butter, warm or at room temperature. We enjoy them like a special sandwich, with a meal or as a snack.

They freeze amazingly well, and after just a few seconds of microwave or toaster heat, they are ready. That's why when we do these, we make extra and have a supply for weeks.

[Check my photographs for a clearer explanation of the process.](#)

# HONEY-CUMIN ROASTED CARROTS WITH TAHINI DRESSING

SHANA AVRUTICK WALLACE

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Though I grew up in New York, I've spent the majority of the last decade in Maine. Many of the folks I'm closest to there are not Jewish but are always excited to celebrate Jewish holidays with me, especially the ones that involve me cooking large quantities of food. I find myself happy to oblige. It fulfills something in me that I didn't know I desired.

After a few years, I got into the habit of taking the days off and staying by myself at home. At that point, the public school system I worked for did not build Jewish holidays into the schedule—although I just found out that they now observe all major Jewish and Muslim holidays(!).

So, my new tradition emerged: I got to spend the day by myself, focus on whatever life was in the moment and doing what I really wanted to be doing: Cooking all day and then feeding people at night. It's been a helpful and meaningful way of celebrating my own relationship to religion, and to Judaism, and I really—I mean, really—love to feed the people I love. Here's something I've made for partners, best friends, colleagues: It's simple, easy, and I hope you make it, too.



## CARROTS

**1 pound (or however many you have, honestly) full-size, big carrots**

**2–3 tablespoons olive oil**

**2–3 tablespoons honey**

**3ish teaspoons ground cumin**

**1½ teaspoon salt (plus more for seasoning!)**

**1½ teaspoon pepper (plus more for seasoning!)**

- 1 Preheat oven to 400°F.
- 2 Wash the dirt off your carrots and trim the greens off as well—save those for a pesto another time.
- 3 Cut the carrots so that they are all about the same length and width. Toss them in a big bowl.
- 4 Whisk oil, honey, cumin, salt, and pepper together in a small bowl. Add to carrots, making sure they are all well coated.
- 5 Pour carrots onto foil-lined sheet tray in a single layer.
- 6 Bake for 15 minutes, flip the carrots, and then bake for 15 more. Carrots are done when lightly caramelized and when they smell GOOD. Season with more salt and pepper to taste.

## DRESSING

**½ cup tahini**

**¼ cup water (plus however much more you need)**

**2 tablespoons olive oil**

**2 large lemons, juiced**

**1 teaspoon salt**

**1 teaspoon maple syrup**

**3 garlic cloves, finely minced**

**Parsley for garnish**

**Paprika for garnish**

- 1 Put tahini and water in a bowl or liquid measuring cup. Whisk together till smooth—it might get weird and chunky but keep mixing and adding little splashes of water to loosen it up. Don't add too much at a time; you can always add more but you can't take it out.
- 2 Whisk in olive oil, and then add lemon juice, salt, syrup, and garlic, continuing to whisk till they're well combined.
- 3 When it is the consistency you like (I prefer mine between a dressing and a dip), drizzle some over the carrots and put the rest in a small bowl for dipping. Garnish with parsley and paprika.



# A SWEET NEW YEAR—MY FAMILY'S TRADITION

BARBARA AVRICK HOROWITZ

Yom Kippur, the most solemn day of the Jewish calendar, is marked by fasting, prayer, and contemplation. At the end of the long day, during which observant Jews neither eat nor drink, my family has always gathered together for a raucous, fun-filled, celebratory meal, which is just about how we mark every occasion. Lots of noise, good food, and laughter. In addition to the traditional bagels and the variety of fish that is served, my family has always requested this sweet noodle pudding. This is a tradition that has now been passed down from myself to our children and now wonderfully down to our grandchildren.

## PUDDING

**¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, melted**

**6 ounces cream cheese**

**1 cup granulated sugar**

**6 eggs**

**2 cups milk**

**2 cups apricot nectar**

**1 pound wide noodles**

## TOPPING

**3 cups (or more if you like) crushed corn flakes**

**1 to 2 teaspoons cinnamon, to taste**

**1 cup granulated sugar, to taste (or ½ cup granulated sugar, ½ cup brown sugar)**

**1 cup (2 sticks) melted butter**

- 1** Place rack in center of oven and preheat oven to 350°F.
- 2** Pour melted butter into blender.
- 3** Add remaining pudding ingredients, except noodles, to blender. (They will fill the blender twice.) Blend well.
- 4** Pour liquid mixture into lasagna-size baking pan.
- 5** Cook noodles according to package directions.
- 6** Add noodles to liquid and stir.
- 7** Combine all topping ingredients; spoon over pudding.
- 8** Bake for 1 hour, or until pudding is firm to the touch.

*Store pudding, covered in plastic wrap or aluminum foil, in the refrigerator for up to 3 days, or freeze it, wrapped in foil, for up to 2 months. The pudding can be served cold or warm: Reheat covered, at 300°F, until warm.*



# SUFGANIYOT

YVONNE VAN CORT SOLOMON

Pleasantville, which has never been home to a large population of Jews in all my decades here, is an interesting school district in which to have children who have a “Jewish” last name while your own is not. Because of my husband’s background, I became the designated Jewish mother when it came time to celebrate the holidays in the classroom. For Hanukkah one year I decided against latkes; mine were simply not traditional enough and I did not want to schlep all the essentials into the elementary school to cook. I decided to make sufganiyot, jelly doughnuts. That was a challenge which I opted to face at home since there was a question about whether the outlets in the classroom would support an electric frying pan, and the doughnuts would have to cool before the children could eat them, anyway. Plus, the whole process seemed simply too messy for the classroom.

Well, I rose to the occasion, but I confess, I was really glad that there were not a lot of sufganiyot connoisseurs in that classroom. The results were not really ready for prime time, in my view, but the kids loved them.

**2 cups all-purpose flour**

**¼ cup white sugar**

**2½ teaspoons dry yeast**

**¼ teaspoon salt**

**2 egg yolks**

**¾ cup milk (warm)**

**¼ stick butter (softened)**

**1½ quarts vegetable oil (for frying and several tablespoons for coating bowl)**

**1 jar raspberry jelly or whatever you have on hand**

**powdered sugar (for dusting)**



- 1** Combine dry ingredients with a whisk in the bowl of a stand mixer.
- 2** Using the hook attachment to mix, gradually add egg yolks, milk, and butter on low speed until the dough is smooth and elastic.
- 3** Place dough in a well-greased bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to rise for about an hour.
- 4** Once dough has risen, use a rolling pin to roll dough out on lightly floured surface until ¼ inch thick.
- 5** Use a 2-inch cookie cutter to form rounds.
- 6** Place on a parchment-covered baking sheet and cover with plastic wrap for one hour until doubled in size.
- 7** Once rounds have risen, heat oil in Dutch oven to 350°F and add the rounds to the oil about an inch apart, frying for two minutes on each side.
- 8** When golden brown on both sides, remove doughnuts from oil.
- 9** Once they are cool, poke a hole on the side of each doughnut (I believe I used a baster) and pipe about 1 tablespoon of jelly into each doughnut with a pastry bag.
- 10** Dust with powdered sugar and enjoy.

# LIFE-SAVING FARFEL

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Passover at my grandparents' house was daunting for a young child. I had to wear an itchy dress and sit without complaining for hours as my grandfather droned his way through the Haggadah exclusively in Hebrew, with only my rendition of the Four Questions and a rousing chorus of "Dayenu" to break up the monotony. Needless to say, I'd get restless—and very hungry, especially when the delicious aromas from my Baba's kitchen would drift into the dining room. Seeing my discomfort, she would send me sympathetic smiles and then, under the table, surreptitious handfuls of matzoh farfel, which I'd eat in silent gratitude, one piece at a time. It was delicious!

**4 eggs**

**¼ cup water**

**Salt and white pepper, to taste**

**1 box (16 ounces) matzoh farfel**

- 1** Preheat the oven to 400°F.
- 2** Beat the eggs with the water, salt, and pepper in a large bowl.
- 3** Mix in the farfel with a fork until all pieces are covered with the egg mixture.
- 4** Place on a large cookie sheet.
- 5** Bake, stirring and shaking occasionally, till the pieces are brown on all sides, 15–30 minutes
- 6** Cool and store in a jar. It lasts forever.

*A version of this recipe appears in The Complete Passover Cookbook (1980) by my great-aunt Frances AvRutick.*





# MOUTH/EYE WATERING HORSERADISH

GARIN HOROWITZ

I don't remember very much from my childhood, but certain traditions continue to be vivid in my mind. Preparation for the second night of Passover in the Horowitz family basement is one of those memories. Each year, my mother would whisk my sister and me out of the house for the day while my father made horseradish. This was an effort to spare us from the strong fumes.

It wasn't until I reached adulthood that I understood the significance of my father spending hours hand-grating horseradish, in tears the whole time from the harsh smell. Passover in my father's family is steeped in tradition. Everyone in this rather large family had their part in the annual event. As I would eventually learn, the making of the horseradish for Passover was the job of my grandfather, then my father, and as of several years ago, it's now my role.

I make it outside on the patio to spare my dogs from those harsh smells. Modern kitchen tools have made the process less time consuming, although many tears are still shed over the fumes coming out of the food processor—but they are proud tears!

Like many recipes passed down through generations, much is left to taste and feel, rather than to specific measurements. You will need:

## **Fresh horseradish root**

*Look for roots that are firm. If rubbery, they are not as fresh.  
About 4–5 small/medium or 2–3 large roots*

## **Red beets**

*About 3 small or 2 large beets*

## **Apple cider vinegar**

*Small bottle*

## **Lemons**

*About 2 lemons, juiced*

- 1** To prepare the roots, peel off the outer skin and cut off the root ends. Clean any remaining dirt from the roots. Cut them into pieces small enough to be broken down in your food processor. If you plan to hand-grate, leave roots large. Set aside.
- 2** Peel the raw beets and cut into small pieces, again, small enough for your food processor to break down. Have your juiced lemons and apple cider vinegar nearby. You will also need a container with a good lid.
- 3** Begin to process the horseradish root in small batches. Empty grated roots into the container. Sprinkle about a tablespoon of lemon juice onto the grated roots and mix as you go. You want it moist but not wet enough to release liquid if squeezed. After adding the lemon juice and mixing, quickly close the lid to contain the fumes.
- 4** Next, process one beet and add to the horseradish. This will add sweetness, color, and moisture.
- 5** Add more beets as needed. You are looking for the horseradish to become a dark fuchsia color. Once you like the color, add some apple cider vinegar and mix well. Start with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup and see how wet your mix is. You want it moist, but not so wet that liquid pools at the bottom.
- 6** Cover and refrigerate for 2 days. Taste test at this point. If it needs more sweetness, process another beet and add. If it needs more moisture or is too strong for you, add more apple cider vinegar.

*The horseradish will last several weeks.*

# ACROSS GENERATIONS



# OLD WORLD CHOLENT

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My mother, who came to America as a baby, grew up completely Americanized. My father, on the other hand, left Russia as a 14-year-old and still had one foot in the old country. With the riveting stories he told us, he illuminated life in the shtetl. One of his favorite memories was eating cholent (a beef and bean stew) on Shabbat.

Throughout Eastern Europe, before the massive migration of Jews to America, cholent was prepared in a sturdy pot by observant Jews on Friday afternoon and then placed in a community oven where it baked overnight to be consumed as a Shabbat lunch. Because of its association with shtetls and a largely impoverished population, and though cholent for Shabbat is still a tradition in some Jewish homes, many American Jews regard it disparagingly, knowing that it was more often a bean stew than a beef stew. My father longed for the taste of cholent, and periodically asked my mother, who was a fine cook, to make it, but she always declined, saying, "That's peasant food."

One day after my mother left for her annual month in Florida, my father arrived home with a large can of cholent which he had purchased from a Chasidic grocery store in Brooklyn. "Now," my father said to my sister and me, "you are in for the treat of your life." He was beaming with pleasure as he set the unopened can into a pot of boiling water and turned on the burner. A little later there was a horrendous explosion. My sister and I ran into the kitchen and surveyed the scene; the can had exploded, and cholent was dripping from the ceiling, the kitchen cabinets, the stove, the table, and the chairs. As we stood transfixed by this sight, my father came into the kitchen. He realized too late that he had not opened the can before immersing it in the boiling water. He sternly decreed, "You are never to tell your mother about this, never, never!"

After two days of cleaning up the mess, my father called the painter.

When my mother returned from Florida, my father, radiating with pride, said, "Look Bess, look what I did for you. I had the kitchen painted!"

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*Cholent is actually a delicious stew if made with lots of beef. Following is the recipe. Use a deep ovenproof casserole with a lid, or cover with aluminum foil.*

**½ cup baby lima beans or great northern beans**

**¼ cup medium-size barley**

**6 small red potatoes, peeled and cut into eighths**

**2 pounds flanken cut into large pieces, or use short ribs**

**6 beef bones, preferably with marrow**

**1 onion, chopped**

**2 cloves garlic, chopped**

**2 teaspoons kosher salt**

**Pepper to taste**

**4 cups beef broth**

- 1** Rinse beans, cover with boiling water, and soak overnight.
- 2** The next day, strain beans and rinse barley.
- 3** Put all ingredients except beef broth in casserole dish. Add 3 cups beef broth, reserving 1 cup.
- 4** Cover casserole and put in 325°F oven for 3 to 4 hours.
- 5** Check cholent as it is cooking. If casserole is dry, add 4th cup of broth. Before serving, test to be sure beans are thoroughly cooked.



# EVERYTHING BAGEL WITH STUFF

**GREG NEMEC**

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My first bagel was in Chicago O'Hare airport on my very first layover as I headed to the East Coast to attend college. In 1984, bagels had not yet reached the gentiles in Des Moines. It was not a good bagel.

My wife's family introduced me to good bagels. While not Jewish, her dad from Queens eased his homesick belly while attending Michigan with bagel breakfasts at a Jewish friend's nearby family home. He would talk about those amazing spreads years later at our holiday breakfasts, where I learned that the key to a good bagel is all the delicious stuff you put on top!

Now that our family has grown to include Jewish members, holiday bagel breakfasts continue to bridge cultures and fill bellies.

## **An everything bagel**

**Cream cheese**

**Lox**

**Tomato slices**

**Capers, optional**

**1** Slice the bagel and pile both sides with all the toppings!

**2** Serve open faced.



# CHALLAH DELIVERY SERVICE

NANCY NAGER

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It was the second week of the pandemic lockdown. After a flurry of activity cancelling a trip and film, concert, and theater tickets, the fear, nothingness, and reality of isolation were sinking in. Suddenly an email from the Jewish Food Society landed in my inbox with a recipe for challah.

I can do this, I thought. I hadn't made challah in at least 20 years, but the recipe and the pandemic required action. "Challah delivery this Friday," I told my sons (one in Brooklyn, one in Washington Heights) and my sister in Brooklyn. I got to work. Finding flour and yeast was not an easy task in those days when the demands of pandemic baking overwhelmed the supply chain. I persisted. My first loaves were not the most beautiful and the drive to Brooklyn through an eerily empty city added an entirely new level of worry and sorrow. Nonetheless, the challah delivery service was established.

Week after week, I produced loaves of challah. I evaluated my proof and my crumb. I worked on my braiding technique. I got better. When my brother-in-law requested raisins, I added them. Raisins it was. What other surprise might await inside? I experimented: golden raisins, dried cranberries, dried cherries, diced dates, cut-up apricots. Candied ginger? Yes. Candied orange peel? Why not?

Along with the challah service, I expanded my repertoire to include a range of additional treats I had long considered too intricate to tackle. But I had time and I had my regular route. Melissa Clark made [chocolate babka](#). I did too. She included [rugelach](#) with

her Christmas cookie recipes. Check. The Jewish Food Society came through again. This time a recipe for [blintzes](#).

The Friday challah service came to resemble a catering delivery. Each week my husband and I loaded the trunk with three bags full of treats, lovingly packed and carefully labeled, and set off on our rounds. One for David. One for Anita and Wally. One for Ben and Larissa. We unloaded and stood on frigid streets, masked and six feet apart. We took walks in the park as the weather improved. We had lunch in my sister and brother-in-law's garden when we all felt it was safe to walk masked through their house to eat in the backyard, separate but together.

For 15 months we made our rounds and stayed connected. Now we are all fully vaccinated and beginning to resume our lives. The challah delivery service is moving to a periodic rather than weekly schedule. I will miss it. I already do.

## DOUGH

**1  $\frac{2}{3}$  cups (400 grams) cool water**

**1 tablespoon plus  $1\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoons (15 grams) active dry yeast or instant dry yeast OR 3 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons (40 grams) fresh yeast**

**2 large eggs**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (100 grams) granulated sugar**

**1 tablespoon (15 grams) fine salt**

**5 tablespoons (75 grams) neutral oil such as canola or sunflower**

**7 cups (1 kilo) all-purpose flour, plus extra for shaping**

**Perhaps 1 cup of raisins or other dried fruit**

## EGG WASH AND TOPPING

**1 large egg**

**1 tablespoon water**

**Pinch of fine salt**

**$\frac{2}{3}$  cup (90 grams) nigella, poppy, or sesame seeds**

- 1 Depending on the kind of yeast you use, your first step will differ. If you are using active dry yeast or fresh yeast, mix the yeast and the water in the bowl of a stand mixer. If you are using instant dry yeast (my preference), mix it with the flour in a separate bowl. Now continue!
- 2 Combine all dough ingredients—eggs, sugar, salt, oil, and flour (with instant yeast if that's what you're using; don't forget water, too)—in the bowl of the stand mixer and use a dough hook to mix on low speed for about 2 minutes. Scrape down the sides and mix 2 minutes more. Increase speed to medium for about 4 more minutes, until you have a smooth dough. If adding raisins or any other yummy add-ins, do that in the final minute of mixing.

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**3** Lightly flour your work surface and push and pull dough to knead it further. Rotate your dough about  $\frac{1}{4}$  turn as you work, and then form it into a ball. Lightly dust a bowl with flour, add the dough, sprinkle a little flour on top and cover with plastic wrap. Set the bowl aside until dough has risen. I think it's enough when it's pushing just past the plastic wrap at the top of the bowl. This can take anywhere from 40 minutes to an hour. (You can easily go down an internet rabbit hole for information on your rise.)

**4** Carefully pour the dough onto a floured board, pull it into a rectangular shape, and divide into 3 equal pieces. I like to use a kitchen scale to weigh each one, but that's me! Again divide each of these into 3 pieces, which you will braid. I weigh those, too. I find it helps shape more even loaves.

**5** Before you begin braiding, dust your work surface with flour and roll each log in the flour. This helps the braids keep their shape. Pinch the ends of 3 ropes together and then lift each piece up and over the others to braid. My early temptation was to stretch the dough to make it longer and I would wind up with a loaf that tapered at the end. Don't do this! You'll have prettier loaves if you end with the same width as you started. Seal the ends together by pinching. Repeat for next 2 loaves.

**6** Place the loaves on two parchment paper-lined sheet pans and cover with a kitchen towel. You can let them rise in your kitchen (about 40 minutes) OR I prefer to let them rise overnight in the refrigerator. I mix my dough on Thursday morning and bake Friday morning after bringing the loaves to room temperature. Place oven racks in upper middle and lower middle positions and preheat oven to 425°F. Use a small pastry brush to brush egg wash on the loaves. Don't let the egg pool in the creases. Wait a bit—about the length of time it takes for your oven to preheat—then do a second wash to achieve a deeper color. Sprinkle seeds all over.

**7** Bake for 15 minutes. Rotate pans from top to bottom shelf and turn each sheet around. Bake 10 minutes longer.

**8** Inhale the lovely aroma which will perfume your kitchen all day. Share and enjoy!

*Adapted from [The Jewish Food Society](#)*

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Loaves freeze well. Once they cool, wrap in plastic wrap and then in aluminum foil.

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# RUTH'S NOODLE KUGEL

SARA L.

My mother had passed away two weeks before, when I woke up with a start! I had never asked her for her noodle kugel recipe. It's not something I would make often but it was so delicious, and it was her. I went into my closet where I had put her index card recipe collection. It was not included—she must have just made it from memory! I sat down and started crying. It was the first real cry I had since she had died. I had never thought to ask for the recipe, and now it was lost forever. It made me really feel the finality of death.

A few months later my cousin invited us to her house for one of the Jewish holidays. When I tasted her noodle kugel, it tasted exactly like my mother's. I told her, and she said, "Yes—this is your mom's recipe. She gave it to me."

Sometimes people can reach you from death.



**1 pound egg noodles**

**6 eggs**

**2½ cups whole milk**

**½ cup corn flake or other cereal crumbs**

**¼ cup melted butter**

**1 (16-ounce) container cottage cheese**

**1 pint sour cream**

**1 teaspoon vanilla**

**1½ cups sugar**

**1½ teaspoon salt**

**1 cup raisins/chopped apples, or more or less to taste**

**1** Precook noodles.

**2** Set aside 2 eggs, 2 cups milk, and cereal crumbs.

**3** Combine remaining ingredients with noodles.

**4** Put into 9 x 13-inch greased pan.

**5** Beat reserved eggs and milk and pour over casserole.

**6** Top with crumbs.

**7** Bake at 350°F for 30–40 minutes, till set.

# CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL

SHIRANI PONNAMBALAM

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Breaking bread—the power of stories and food to connect with loved ones, a shared experience handed down from one generation to the next—is as universal as it is central to being human. In the far-off island of Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon, a minority race, namely the Tamils, were often referred to as the “Jews of the East.” As Tamils, my family often talked about the similarities we shared with the Jews, whose presence in Ceylon dates back to the 9th century. Under British rule, Jews held illustrious positions in the civil service, law, education, and the arts. Two of the island’s chief justices were Jews. Author Leonard Woolf, the husband of Virginia Woolf, was a renowned civil servant in Ceylon, and his book *The Village in the Jungle* was based on his escapades in Ceylon. Above all else, my family inculcated in us the value of education, telling us that it is the one thing that couldn’t be taken away from us. The connection was real.

My grandfather, a self-made man, an indomitable spirit, intrigued and made an indelible impression on me, a shy, awkward girl growing up in a society where girls were seen but not heard. Impeccably dressed in bow tie and white silk jacket, a socialite in postcolonial Sri Lanka, Pappa was a true Anglophile, the life and soul of a party, his fingers flying over the keyboard as his loud baritone voice bellowed Irish songs. A nimble dancer, he took me to the dance floor at a fundraising gala event and opened my downward cast eyes to unimaginable possibilities on the horizon. He was a connoisseur of food, and I have chosen to share his recipe for chicken soup.

This is a recipe Pappa insisted cured all ills and soothed the soul: when sick, to speed recovery, when facing an impending exam, to give stamina, and when celebrating a special occasion, as a treasured family recipe. He would arrive at our home in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with a whole chicken, freshly slaughtered by the butcher, that he’d picked up on his way. He insisted that no one knew which part of the chicken had the magic ingredient to cure, invigorate, and appease, so he played it safe by using the entire bird, including the head, feet, liver, and gizzard. Chicken heads and feet were considered a delicacy and were much sought after by myself and my siblings. He instructed the cook

to simmer the bird in a pot with herbs and spices till the water turned opaque and the flesh fell off the bone. The aroma remains with me, to date. Over the years, our family has modified and tweaked the recipe, but its fundamentals remain the same, as did the lessons learned at the feet of my charismatic Pappa.

**1 small chicken (the entire bird, and extra chicken heads and feet are a plus)**

**Juice and zest of ½ a lemon, add more if required**

**1 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, to start with. Adjust according to taste at end.**

**1 tablespoon cumin powder**

**1 tablespoon coriander powder**

**1 teaspoon fennel powder**

**1 teaspoon turmeric**

**5 pods each of cardamom and cloves, lightly crushed in a mortar and pestle**

**1 stick cinnamon, crushed, or 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**

**A fistful of curry leaves or 3 large bay leaves**

**1 large onion, chopped**

**1 large tomato, chopped**

**1 inch ginger, chopped**

**6 large garlic cloves, chopped**

**1 or more fresh green chili peppers, according to taste**

**¼ cup coconut milk or half-and-half**

**A fistful of chopped cilantro**

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**1** Place chicken in a pot with enough water to barely cover it. Simmer on a low flame. Add lemon juice and freshly grated lemon zest, salt, pepper, and spices (cumin, coriander, fennel, turmeric, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, and curry leaves or bay leaves).

**2** Add onion and tomato, ginger and garlic, and chili pepper.

**3** Continue to simmer on a low flame till chicken is tender and flesh falls off the bone, adding more water, if required. This is the secret to the soup: DO NOT let the water BOIL. The aroma will permeate your home, and will jumpstart the intended result.

**4** When done, strain and add coconut milk or half-and-half and chopped cilantro. Adjust seasoning to taste. It can be served plain or with soft, boiled rice.

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The desired taste: a lemony spicy broth, warm and comforting, invigorating and nutritious.

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# MY MOTHER ROSE'S MATZO BALLS

LISA BILANDER-GRAY

My mother made the best matzo balls...simple, light, and delicious. They were floaters, not sinkers. When it became difficult for her to cook, I took over the matzo ball task. She didn't really want to give it up...so she would stand over me while I made them, and tell me everything I was doing wrong. It was an annual tradition.

After she died, my granddaughters and daughters-in-law helped me make them...and told me everything I did wrong...lovingly...to keep the memory of my mother alive. She would have loved it.

**10 eggs, yolks and whites separated**

**Matzo meal**

**Salt and pepper**

- 1** Separate the eggs into 2 bowls.
- 2** Whip the egg whites with a stand or hand mixer until peaks hold their shape but are not too stiff.
- 3** Add enough matzo meal to create the texture of creamy peanut butter.
- 4** Add salt and pepper, to taste.
- 5** Using a tablespoon, drop the batter, a spoonful at a time, into gently boiling chicken soup.
- 6** Cover and cook until matzo balls are tender and floating.
- 7** Enjoy!





# GRANDPA'S TEA

IRIS TOWERS

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"Turetskys at play" didn't refer to touch football or checkers; we always gathered to eat and talk and laugh. We'd reminisce about the old foods—Grandpa's fried herring with boiled potatoes and onions fried deep brown for Sunday morning breakfast. Grandpa soaked the fish overnight in a pail of water; they were still wonderfully salty. Uncle Milt came bearing fresh jelly donuts and bagels and bialys hot from the bakery. Grandpa drank boiling tea from a glass, filtering it through a cube of sugar held in his front teeth. For Grandpa, liquids had to be served at the boil or risk the dreaded verdict, "It isn't hot enough."

There were no official recipes for any of this. We just watched and learned and enjoyed!

My Russian forebears and their immediate descendants preferred their tea dark and strong. Swee-Touch-Nee tea, "The Aristocrat of Teas," a blend of dark, rich pekoe and orange pekoe, was what our family drank. (I still have one of those red and gold Swee-Touch-Nee metal tins decorated to look like a small trunk.) My grandfather took his tea boiling hot from a glass and filtered through a cube of sugar held in his front teeth. But once I saw him add a good spoonful of strawberry jam instead of the sugar. I must try that!

# TINY CRANBERRY-WALNUT SEEDED ROLLS

JUDY ABELOVE SHEMTOB

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My file box bulges with recipes. Mom's potato starch mandel bread, marble pound cake, carrot cakes, and double batches of chocolate chip cookies—one to display and the other to hide. I've made them all. I've collected recipes from all sorts of sources.

But it wasn't until I toured the historic kosher bakery at the Reher Center for Immigrant Culture and History in Kingston, NY, that I began making my own crusty rolls. Standing there, I imagined I could hear the whirring dough mixer and feel the heat from the coal-fired Bennett ovens, which from the early 1900s to 1980 produced challahs on Fridays for Shabbat and rolls on Sunday for parishioners from three local churches, so they didn't have to bake on their Sabbath, either. Right before my eyes, I could see the renowned baker Frank Reher and his children hard at work filling orders for Irish, Italian, German, Polish, and Jewish customers. It was inspiring.

Without a recipe, I researched, experimented, and consulted with writing friends who baked. As I borrowed from multigrain baguettes coated with seeds made across the river, my teeny rolls evolved.

I inhaled the yeasty aromas, played with amounts of water, and refrigerated ingredients in a loosely covered container. I added cranberries and walnuts to the stretchy dough in the morning and pulled batter by the teaspoonful onto parchment-covered baking trays.

A seed and crust person, I love pushing fingers into empty bakery bags hoping seeds will stick on the way out. When baking my rolls, I adore sprinkling poppy, sesame, sunflower, flax, and chia seeds on top before I close the oven door for 15 minutes to obtain the right browning. At 19 minutes, I shut off the oven and open the door to let the crusts cool. Nothing remains after an hour.

I'd ask, "Anything you would change, Mom?"

"You're too heavy-handed with the seeds," she'd reply. But I know she'd be proud of my creative endeavor.

**1 cup warm water**

**1 package instant yeast**

**2½ cups flour**

**½ teaspoon salt**

**½ cup cranberries**

**½ cup chopped walnuts**

**1 teaspoon of every seed you want to add of the following: poppy, sesame, sunflower, flax, and chia seeds. Combine in small bowl.**

- 1** Mix water and yeast in large bowl. Breathe in yeasty smells and enjoy.
- 2** Add flour and salt a little at a time. Gently stir.
- 3** Mix in cranberries and walnuts.
- 4** Cover loosely. I use a large plastic container and put cover on top but don't fasten.

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- 5 Refrigerate overnight.
- 6 Spoon heaping teaspoons of chilled batter onto tray covered with parchment paper, about 1 inch apart.
- 7 Either sprinkle the mixture of seeds onto the rolls or dip each roll into a small bowl of seed mixture.
- 8 Preheat oven. Bake at 420°F for 15–25 minutes. Watch rolls so they don't get too brown.
- 9 When they are golden brown, shut off oven and open door.
- 10 Let rolls sit inside and cool.
- 11 Take out rolls and put on plate if they're not already eaten.

Sometimes I only bake half the batter at a time. The rolls go so quickly in my house, it's nice to make a fresh batch. I just put the extra dough back in the plastic container and keep it in the fridge.

*This recipe should yield approximately 20–25 tiny, crunchy rolls. Happy eating!*



# SUE & BECKY'S CHALLAH

**SUE LIGHT CARROLL**

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One of my "silver linings" during Covid was when my daughter Becky moved back home from her NYC apartment for a few months. We took on some fun projects such as puzzling, hiking, tie-dye, and best of all, baking challah. Neither of us had baked bread before and the double rise and braiding seemed daunting, but week after week we got better and it ALWAYS tasted GREAT. Becky's challah braids were perfect, and it was a heartwarming way to enter into Shabbat dinner and spend time together.

**4½ cups all-purpose flour**

**1 package yeast (2¼ teaspoons)**

**¼ cup sugar**

**2 teaspoons salt**

**2 eggs**

**¼ cup vegetable oil (canola, safflower, etc.)**

**1 cup water**

**1 tablespoon oil**

**1 egg, whisked, optional**

**Sesame or poppy seeds, optional**



- 1** Combine first 7 ingredients in large mixer with dough hook.
- 2** Mix at Level 4 for 7 minutes
- 3** Remove the dough from the bowl and form into a ball. Put the tablespoon of oil in the bottom of the bowl. Roll the dough in the oil, place it in the bowl, and cover the bowl with a plastic wrap with a couple of holes punched in. Allow to rise at room temperature for 60 to 90 minutes or until it has doubled in size. (It may take a couple of hours.)
- 4** Punch down the dough to remove all air. Cover with the plastic wrap and allow to rise for about 60 minutes or until doubled in size again.
- 5** Punch down the dough and divide into 6 or 8 pieces. Braid to make 2 loaves. Place the loaves on a baking sheet (spray with cooking spray or cover with parchment) and allow to rise about 45 minutes or until doubled in size.
- 6** Heat the oven to 350°F. Brush the loaves with egg if desired, to add a shine. Feel free to sprinkle sesame or poppy seeds on top. Bake for about 30 minutes or until golden brown.

*Adapted from a recipe in The Book of Jewish Food by Claudia Roden.*



# HEAVENLY NOODLE PUDDING

JUDITH A. MARCHESE

My favorite food remains kasha varnishkes as prepared by my father, flavored with onions and mushrooms that he sauteed in chicken fat. My father also prepared matzo brei in chicken fat every Passover.

However, the comfort and preparation of food is really memorialized by the women in my family. My great grandmothers and grandmothers from Hungary and Russia prepared the food for family banquets; and my mother carried over these traditional recipes into our daily lives and holiday dinners.

My mother was accomplished at cooking and baking. As my childhood friend would say, "Hannah's leftovers are better than most people's first overs." His mother must have believed this, as she stole my mother's recipe for noodle pudding and claimed it as her own!

My mother was very proud of her catalogue of foods from other countries, as well as American standards. Her chocolate chip cookies, made directly from the back of the chocolate chip package, were divine. My parents lovingly compiled a cookbook for my sister and me that contains treasured family recipes. I have chosen the famous "Heavenly Noodle Pudding" to include in this collection.



**½ pound medium noodles**

**6 eggs**

**½ cup sugar**

**2 cups whole milk**

**1 teaspoon salt**

**1 pound cottage cheese**

**½ pound farmer cheese**

**¼ pound cream cheese (not whipped)**

**½ pint sour cream**

**1 teaspoon vanilla**

**½ stick (4 tablespoons) melted butter**

**Cinnamon and sugar, to taste**

- 1** Preheat oven to 350°F.
- 2** Cook noodles as instructed on the package and drain.
- 3** Beat eggs with sugar, and add milk, salt, cheeses, sour cream, and vanilla. It's best to mix in one cheese at a time. Mix with noodles.
- 4** Pour into a 9 x 13-inch buttered baking pan.
- 5** Bake for a half hour.
- 6** Pour the melted butter over the top.
- 7** Sprinkle with mixture of sugar and cinnamon to your taste.
- 8** Bake for one more hour or until lightly browned on top.

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You can halve the recipe and bake it in an  
8 x 8-inch square pan.

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# AUNTIE ROSE'S SHMAI DRAI

KAY NEWMAN

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Everyone called her Auntie Rose, whether you were related to her or not. She was my father-in-law's aunt, charming and elegant, and she always had something for you to nosh on when visiting. She was famous for her shmai drai, which my husband loved as a child. I was honored when she shared the recipe with me. I treasure the pink recipe card with her elegant handwriting.

I learned recently that its Yiddish name should probably be transliterated as shmey drey, and the dish, which is a kind of quick version of strudel, is known in English as roly poly. But to me, it will always be shmai drai, the way Auntie Rose wrote it on her recipe card.



## DOUGH

**3 eggs**

**1 cup sugar**

**1 cup oil**

**Juice of ½ lemon**

**3 teaspoons baking powder**

**3½ cups flour, approximately**

## FILLING

**Jam**

**Raisins**

**Crushed nuts**

**Maraschino cherries (halved)**

**Coconut**

**Turkish delight, halved lengthwise**

- 1** Combine all dough ingredients to make a soft dough.
- 2** Divide into 4 equal parts.
- 3** Roll out each separately on a lightly floured board to a ¼-inch thickness. Sprinkle with oil.
- 4** Spread jam to within ½ inch of the edges of each piece of dough.
- 5** Combine remaining filling ingredients except Turkish delight and spread over dough.
- 6** Place Turkish delight at edges.
- 7** Roll dough into logs and turn ends in.
- 8** Bake at 375°F for 30 minutes.
- 9** Cool and cut in slices if desired.

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Wrap in tin foil to store. Keeps well. Enjoy!

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# TRADITIONS!

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# CHIMICHURRI DE “EL VIEJO”

**BILL RAGALS**

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When I was a boy growing up in Argentina, one of the traditional Sunday events was an “asado,” a backyard barbecue of sorts, in the traditional Argentine gaucho way. Meats (always beef, and sometimes other choices) and chorizos were roasted next to pits filled with hot wood coals, and when done, served with an accompanying condiment called chimichurri, a parsley-based green sauce. It’s very simple to make, but for some reason, the hand of the maker is very important. The chimichurri served at our asados was prepared by El Viejo, “The Old Man,” not referring to my father, but to a weather-beaten, wizened old man who lived down the road.

Every Sunday, when the first wisps of smoke from the wood fire for that day’s asado became visible, to the delight of all, El Viejo showed up with his dented and chipped enamel pot filled with the best chimichurri in town! He spoke little, helped tend the fire and turn the beef, and beamed with pleasure when his chimichurri was praised, as it always was. He never would take any money for it, but my father saw to it that he went home with plenty of extra beef and chorizo.

El Viejo never shared his recipe, but he did nod his approval of a chimichurri sauce my mother made after countless attempts to duplicate his. Eventually, I mastered my mother’s recipe and have passed it on to both my sons as it continues to be a family tradition at a barbecue. It is unfortunate that we are unable to replicate a traditional asado here in New York.

**1 cup minced flat-leaf parsley**

**4 large garlic cloves, peeled and minced very fine**

**½ cup olive oil**

**¼ cup red wine vinegar**

**Salt and pepper, to taste**

**1 teaspoon red pepper flakes, optional (El Viejo never added them, but...)**

Combine all ingredients and let sit, unrefrigerated, at least two hours before serving. That’s it—no food processor used here! Leftover sauce may be kept refrigerated for several days.





# THE BEST BAGEL

DAVID AVRUTICK

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My grandparents lived in Montreal, and we visited often. While almost anything you'd ever want to eat would come out of my grandmother's kitchen, my road to culinary bliss was elsewhere, and it was five steps long.

- 1 Go to Montreal.
- 2 Go to St-Viateur Street.
- 3 Go to St-Viateur Bagel.
- 4 Order a dozen white and a dozen black.
- 5 Eat three of each before walking out the door. (White=sesame and black=poppy. There were no other choices, nor should there have been.)



# MOM'S INCREDIBLE MANDEL BROT

**JANET GARBER**

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I remember visiting my folks in Florida the first year they were down there. I'd opposed their move—it felt like desertion. I was only 43 and my son, 14. I had even threatened that we would not visit often. But there we were in the land of early bird specials, \$2.50 movie tickets, pool and shuffleboard tournaments. Florida failed to capture my imagination.

Mom and Dad looked well. He played pool every morning with an old buddy and attended a sculpting class; she took a writing class and joined the all-women's Brandeis Club. Both wound up writing for the co-op's newspaper. Nights, they attended musical shows and dances or met their friends to play cards. Alone, they played endless games of Scrabble. It was a good life, they insisted.

I, however, was not won over. Dad would not lend me his car and I, stupidly, had not rented one so I felt trapped and resorted to walking the "perimeter" of the complex for exercise and to get some space.

And then I discovered Mom had been baking. And she'd made my all-time favorite: Mandel brot! From then on, any visit to Florida was sweetened by the fact that I'd be free to raid the freezer and sit down with my mother to dunk these delicious cookies into our coffees.



**3 eggs**

**1 cup sugar**

**Juice of ½ orange**

**1 teaspoon vanilla**

**¾ cup oil**

**4 cups flour**

**1 heaping teaspoon baking powder**

**1 cup chopped walnuts**

**1 cup chocolate chips**

**Margarine**

**Cinnamon and sugar**

- 1** Mix together eggs, sugar, orange juice, vanilla, and oil.
- 2** Add flour and baking powder.
- 3** Add together walnuts and chocolate chips and mix into dough.
- 4** Refrigerate for 1 hour.
- 5** Grease cookie sheet with margarine and flour lightly.
- 6** Form dough into two loaves and place on cookie sheet.
- 7** Top with cinnamon and sugar.
- 8** Preheat oven at 350°F for 15 minutes.
- 9** Bake for a half hour.
- 10** Slice loaves into 1-inch slices.
- 11** Toast on cookie sheet, on both sides, for six minutes or to your desired level of crunchiness.
- 12** Let it cool then dunk in a hot cup of tea or coffee. Try not to eat them all in one sitting!

# THE BLINTZ QUEEN OF THE BRONX

JUDITH WEINMAN

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My lovely Aunt Guelda's husband, Julian Roffman, was as ebullient as she was gentle and reserved. A brilliant filmmaker, he had a long and varied career, his documentaries coming up for Academy Awards. This slightly odd but devoted couple met at Baron Byng High School in Montreal. She often said the worst day of her life was when he left with his parents for the Bronx. She was 16.

Amazingly, she, who was as good as her Yiddish name, Gitl, ran away to join him not long after. That was 1936. They married in 1940, when he joined the National Film Board of Canada as a war correspondent in the fight against Hitler, well before the US entered the war. His career was recently documented by his son, Peter, in his book, *Dear Guelda*.

Julian filmed the invasion of France in 1944 and was badly injured. So what was the first thing that he wanted to eat when he came home to his wife and mother in the Bronx? Blintzes!

His mother was renowned for her recipe, which, sadly, could not be found. So I offer my favorite and easiest, adapted from Noreen Gilletz's *Pleasures of Your Food Processor*.

## BATTER

**¾ cup all-purpose flour**

**1 teaspoon salt**

**3 eggs**

**¼ cup vegetable oil**

**1 cup water (Some use milk, but water produces a blintz that is less heavy.)**

**1 teaspoon sugar**

## CHEESE FILLING

**1 pound dry cottage (farmer) cheese. You can substitute cream cheese for part of the cottage cheese.**

**1 egg**

**2 to 3 tablespoons sugar**

**1 tablespoon lemon juice**

**2 tablespoons sour cream, optional**

- 1 Process all batter ingredients for 10 to 15 seconds.
- 2 Refrigerate for one hour.
- 3 Process all cheese filling ingredients until smooth, about 10 seconds.
- 4 Lightly grease a 6-inch pan, heat until hot, and add ¼ cup batter to cover pan thinly. Pour off excess.
- 5 Fry 30 to 40 seconds on one side only. Remove from pan and place on waxed paper.
- 6 Place 1½ tablespoons of filling on the browned side of each pancake, along the center.
- 7 Fold the bottom edge of pancake to the center. Fold each of the sides toward the center, and then fold the top down to seal like an envelope.
- 8 Place seam side down on skillet first. Brown on both sides in butter until golden.

Freezes nicely.

# AMBROSIA ON RYE

JOE WALLAGE

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Growing up in 1960s Brooklyn, my favorite meal was Sunday lunch from the Jewish deli down Avenue M. There I got to have the best food on earth: a turkey sandwich on rye, slathered in Russian dressing. Our parents would give my big brother and me money and their orders (Dad liked tongue, which horrified and fascinated me), and then we'd set off on the four-block walk to the deli. If we weren't in a hurry, we might stop at Benny's candy store (maybe new baseball cards were in) or Estroff's (home to toys and games—and an owner who watched you like a hawk).

Finally we'd reach the deli, a wonderfully bustling and mysterious place with steamed-up windows, cases full of meat, cheese, and pickles, and rich, peppery, mysterious smells. Having collected our sandwiches (I remember them being so overstuffed that the top slice of bread looked like it was perched on a mountain), we'd head proudly home for the feast.



## SANDWICH

**2 slices Jewish rye bread (with caraway seeds, unless you insist otherwise)**

**2 tablespoons Russian dressing (recipe below)**

**5 ounces sliced freshly roasted turkey (or more!)**

**1 leaf lettuce**

**1 thick slice vine-ripened red tomato (back then I wouldn't go near this, but now—YES!)**

**½ sour pickle, optional (wrapped separately so it didn't leak onto the bread)**

## RUSSIAN DRESSING

Combine:

**1 cup good commercial mayonnaise (Hellman's, of course)**

**½ cup ketchup (Heinz, of course)**

**4 shakes Worcestershire sauce, optional**

**1 teaspoon kosher salt**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**1** Build the sandwich the way you like to build sandwiches.

**2** And then enjoy!



# AUNT FAY'S KUGEL

HELEN ROSENBERG

When I was a child newly living in New York (after spending my first six years in Topeka, Kansas), my parents would occasionally leave me for the weekend with my father's older sister, Aunt Fay, and her husband, Uncle Sam. Aunt Fay lived in an apartment in Queens and loved spoiling me!

The two food-related things I will always remember about those visits were the delivery of crates of seltzer in those big beautiful blue bottles, and Aunt Fay's kugel. She always let me watch her make it, without reference to a recipe of course, and after it came out of the oven and cooled a bit, we ate it on TV tables in the living room, often while watching the "The Lawrence Welk Show."

**8 ounces wide egg noodles**

**2 eggs**

**½ stick butter, melted**

**1 tablespoon maple syrup**

**Handful of raisins or drained fruit cup or cut-up apple pieces**

- 1** Cook noodles in boiling salted water until soft, then drain and (like Aunt Fay) place in greased rectangular foil take-out container.
- 2** Beat eggs, and then add butter and maple syrup.
- 3** Throw in the raisins, stir to distribute, and pour over the noodles.
- 4** Run a blunt knife in a zigzag pattern through the mixture to ensure that the noodles are well coated.
- 5** Bake in a hot oven (350°F) for 45 minutes.



# THE ELUSIVE GLUTEN-FREE CHALLAH

AMANDA MAY DUNDAS

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When we were getting married, the Rabbi suggested my husband-to-be and I start celebrating Shabbat in a way that was special for us. "If you always cook, go out. If you take in, cook," she advised. With our busy early professional lives, take-out was the norm, so we started cooking together every Friday, sharing our days as we tried out new recipes, often with friends we invited over.

Yet despite our enjoyment of learning to cook, there was one thing I wouldn't have thought of baking: the challah. Delicious, fresh-baked challahs were readily available from some of Brooklyn's best bakeries.

Fast-forward through a wedding, a dog, three kids, and a move to the suburbs; Shabbat fell to the wayside as the kids' activities intervened. This lasted until we all just got so busy that something had to change, so we decided, at least, to rekindle our Friday night Shabbat dinners.

Only by now, one of my children had been diagnosed with celiac disease, which means he cannot eat any gluten, including the deliciousness of a challah. I tried buying gluten-free versions, but the rock-hard loaves with grainy aftertastes resembled nothing like a real, light, pull-apart sweet challah.

I decided I would learn to bake a gluten-free challah. Early attempts were disastrous; the gooey batter (dough didn't seem like the right word for this muck) stuck everywhere. Imagine trying to braid mashed potatoes. I finally found a hack; I bought a "braided" loaf pan and found a recipe that stuck together enough to make it into the pan. My family loves it, and that brings me joy.

But I am still on the hunt for a real gluten-free challah that I can braid. I bought one once, from a bakery who said they braided it, and it was delicious but they couldn't share their secret recipe. Maybe one day there will be a cure for celiac disease. Or, a recipe that will teach me how to braid a gluten-free challah. One of those things is bound to happen eventually.

*Makes 1 loaf*

## CHALLAH

**½ cup warm water**

**1 tablespoon active dry yeast**

**1 teaspoon sugar**

**1 cup Bob's Red Mill rice flour**

**¼ cup potato starch**

**¼ cup tapioca flour**

**¼ cup cornstarch**

**¼ cup sorghum flour**

**2 teaspoons baking powder**

**1½ teaspoons xanthan gum**

**¼ teaspoon salt**

**2 tablespoons butter, melted**

**¼ cup honey**

**1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar**

**2 eggs**

## TOPPING

**2 tablespoons butter, melted**

**2 tablespoons honey**

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- 1 Combine warm water, yeast, and sugar in a bowl and allow to proof for 10 minutes.
- 2 In the bowl of your stand mixer, combine the rice flour, potato starch, tapioca flour, cornstarch, sorghum flour, baking powder, xanthan gum, and salt. Mix until blended.
- 3 Next add the yeast mixture, melted butter, honey, apple cider vinegar, and eggs to the dry ingredients.
- 4 With your dough hook, mix until well blended and then knead the dough with your dough hook for 5 minutes.
- 5 Place the dough into a well-oiled bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and allow to rise for 1 hour, or until doubled in size.
- 6 Pour the dough into a braided loaf pan/mold. Cover with a clean dish towel and place in a warm location to allow to rise again about 30–60 minutes, or until doubled in size.
- 7 Preheat your oven to 350°F and bake for 25 minutes or until golden brown.
- 8 Flip out of the bread pan, brush the loaf with melted butter and honey mixture, and put back into the oven on a baking sheet for 1–2 minutes to let the topping bake in.
- 9 Allow to cool slightly before slicing.

*Adapted from Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free "Braided" Bread*



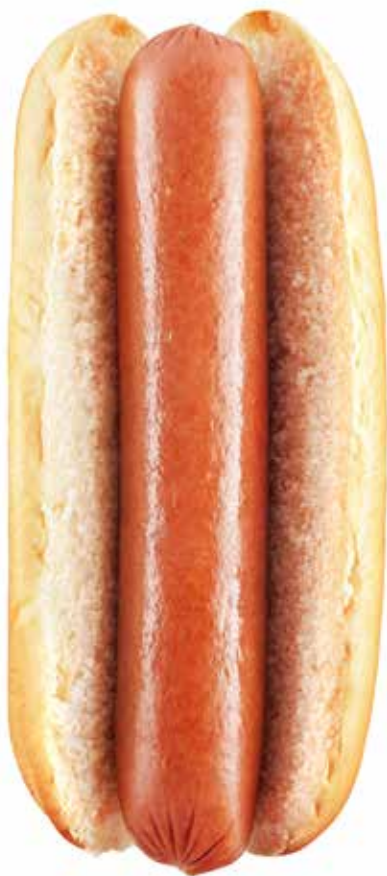
# GRILLED HOT DOGS ON AN AIR FRYER

**JUDITH HOLLANDER**

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As a girl I remember going with my Aunt Ruthie to the kosher deli on Hiram St. in New Brunswick, NJ. I can still taste the steamed hot dogs smothered in warm sauerkraut and mustard, smushed into a soft bun. And I remember the high school football player who waited on us. When I moved to New York I ate too many steamed hot dogs from the food carts, and each one brought back those days and my Aunt Ruthie.

My brother remembers the deli the same way as I, but instead of hot dogs, what stuck in his mind were the baked beans served in little ceramic bean pots. Ah, memory. In any case, he's the one who gave me my air fryer, making this recipe possible.



**1 package of Hebrew National Beef Franks**

**1 package hot dog buns, preferably Martin's Potato Rolls**

- 1** Preheat air fryer to 390°F.
- 2** Place a couple of hot dogs into the air fryer.
- 3** Close the fryer and cook for 5–6 minutes.
- 4** Take the hot dogs out and place them into hot dog buns.
- 5** Cook for another minute to crisp up the bun, optional.

Serve with sauerkraut (my favorite is a plain house brand canned sauerkraut) and Hebrew National (or equivalent) deli mustard.

*The miraculous thing about cooking hot dogs in the air fryer is that you can even use Hebrew National 97% Fat Free Beef Franks and hardly notice the difference. Believe me, it is a miracle.*



# RADISHES WITH DINNER

**RUTH BREIL**

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Israel, circa 1950. Aunt Hinda always served her garden radishes. I loved the tart fresh taste with a broiled chicken/potato dinner. It goes well with bread and butter and any cheese. Remember: JUST FRESH RADISHES, preferably grown in Israel, but they are great from the Union Square Greenmarket on 14th Street all summer. A bunch is seldom more than a couple of bucks! B'teavon!

**1 bunch radishes**

**Olive oil**

**Salt and pepper**

**Wine vinegar**

- 1** Cut a bunch of radishes finely into slices. Keep in tray with ice until done.
- 2** When ready to serve, pour oil on top and add salt and pepper (just a bit) and, finally, a bit of vinegar.
- 3** Mix and serve in a sparkly white dish.



# LATKES OVER TIME

JACOB AVRUTICK WALLACE

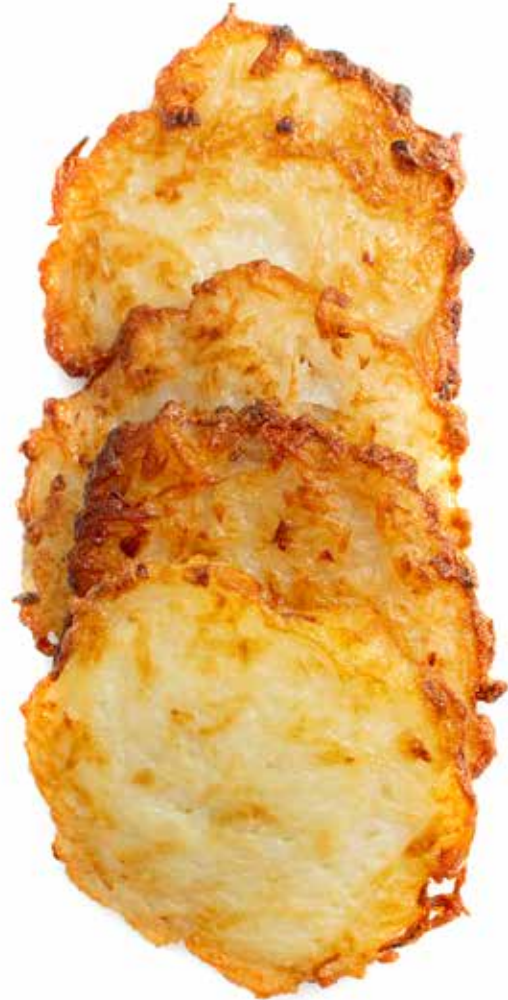
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Some of the lessons, learnings that were imbued in me during years of Hebrew school or days at the synagogue, have persisted; others haven't. But still, while distance and time separate me from those days, I'll never forget sitting around the kitchen table, candles flickering, latkes sizzling in hot oil in three or four pans across the stove. The memory and aroma connect me with and transport me back to that which makes me Jewish.

Food may be—to me—the definitive pillar of culture; a meeting point for all differences, an edible tradition to be passed on, improved, enjoyed. And shredding potatoes and onions, forming them, frying and then enjoying them with family or other loved ones (with both apple sauce and sour cream) aligns me with the past and adheres me to the present. I think of the other households filled with the same smells, the other families enjoying each other's company and good food.

Growing up, my mom cooked the latkes. Then, we did it together, and then, the role was mine. Mine to pass on.

I hope my future holds more of the simple traditions that extend beyond my home, beyond my time. I intend it to.



*This recipe serves 2 people. Adjust according to number of servings desired.*

**2 potatoes**

**1 onion**

**Salt and pepper**

**1 egg**

**1 tablespoon flour or matzoh meal**

**Oil for frying**

- 1** Grate potatoes and onion using a food processor, squeeze to remove some of the liquid, and mix with salt, pepper, egg, and flour/matzoh meal.
- 2** Add a generous amount of oil to pan and heat.
- 3** Drop potato mixture into oil by tablespoonsfuls (roughly). Fry and flip till golden brown on both sides.
- 4** When done, drain on paper towels and serve right away. You can keep them warm in the oven on a cookie sheet, but why wait?

# CHICKEN SOUP, JEWISH STYLE

ILISE HARRIS

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Ties that bind.

One stifling summer day, circa 1979, while I was walking a quiet stretch of the Upper West Side, a sudden heavy rain made a dreamscape of steam off the hot sidewalks.

An old man was lowering something into a corner trash can. I went over out of curiosity. He explained to me in that old Jewish man voice that this was the pot his deceased wife used to make chicken soup in when his children were growing up. He seemed to be crying, but I couldn't tell with the rain. It was a generous, big, round, white enamel pot with black edges and handles, complete with lid. He hopefully asked me if I would like it. I said I would love it and maybe one day I'd make chicken soup for children of my own. The pot and something more was passed on; from young to old, just the two of us, on a deserted city corner, in the warm rain.

When I got home, and took off the lid, I found a large, wooden spool of heavy thread for tying up the soup greens.

I made many batches of chicken soup in that pot, and I always thought of that old man when I did. It was like carrying forward something intangible and sacred, like memory, the smell of steamy parsley and dill. The pot moved with me out of the city; it made soup for my children. When the thread ran out, I cried.



**1 chicken, approx. 5–6 pounds**

**1 large yellow onion**

**1 large or 2 small parsnips**

**2 medium carrots**

**1 turnip**

**2 celery stalks, and maybe the heart**

**Large bunch of parsley and dill (tied together)**

**Salt and pepper, to taste**

**Egg noodles**

- 1** Make sure there is no bag of innards inside your bird.
- 2** Put it a large pot of water to just cover.
- 3** Bring to a boil, then lower flame to a simmer. Simmer for a half hour. Skim off any foam.
- 4** Cut all vegetables into large (maybe  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch) chunks.
- 5** Turn off flame, add your chopped vegetables, and let it sit, covered, for another half hour. The vegetables will stay firm and fresh tasting.
- 6** Put your herbs in at the very last minute.
- 7** Salt and pepper, to taste.
- 8** Put in fridge overnight to skim off the fat.
- 9** Squeeze and remove the herbs before reheating the soup.
- 10** Serve over egg noodles.

*For the adventurous: Remove meat from the bones, then simmer the bones in a separate small pot of water to extract a rich bone broth you can add to fortify and add depth to your stock.*

*This is the classic Jewish soup recipe, kind of nonnegotiable. Grandma may have boiled her vegetables to death, and cooked the dill till it disintegrated, but this recipe keeps it fresh, flavorful, and light. L'chaim.*



# FROM GRANDMA'S KITCHEN





# GEFILTE FOR A CROWD

## RESA MESTEL

I

*If you get the freshest fish, the house won't smell for days.* That's the first rule for making gefilte fish. Five generations of women have shopped, chopped, laughed, and cried over Baba's (my great-grandmother Fanny's) fish pot, of which I am the keeper.

I haul it out of the Passover closet, give it a good scrub, and prepare for what has become a dedicated ritual. While I recall stories of live carp in the bathtub, double-bladed knives in wooden bowls, and metal food grinders, I set out my food processor and unwrap the packages of deboned whitefish and pike.

II

*Cultivate a relationship with your friendly and caring fish professionals* (can we still use the word fishmonger?). Ask them to grind your fish flesh, and save the bones, heads, and skins for your poaching liquid. They work hard so I don't have to. One year I added salmon to the pike and whitefish and cooked it all in a Bundt pan mold. The guests at my holiday table were not pleased with the pink circular presentation. I went back to the traditional oval-shaped patties.

III

*Little bit of this/handful of that.* As a child, I absorbed the lightning pace of preparation and the spontaneous measurements and admired the stamina of hours on their feet. My grandmother Lily had the most toned triceps. My mother Marilyn's tears when peeling onions dripped into the mix. My hands are not the same size.

IV

*Pass the traditions on.* My daughters Leora, Ariel, and Talia attended holiday prep over the years. When their Nana Marilyn was in her final glory, her head covered with a colorful scarf to hide the bald scalp following her chemo and radiation treatments, they got their hands full of kitchen magic and an earful of tales that they can now share with their daughters. Adina and Noa are the sixth generation. We are expecting another granddaughter soon. When I am alone in my kitchen it is so very crowded. They call me Baba.

*Makes about 36 pieces*

## FOR THE STOCK

**4 onions chopped**

**6 cups water**

**2½ teaspoons salt (more or less)**

**¾ teaspoon pepper (more or less)**

**fish heads, bones, skins (wrapped in cheesecloth for easy removal)**

In a large stockpot bring the above ingredients up to a boil (not a hard boil) then simmer, partially covered for 20 minutes. Discard bones, etc., after 20 minutes.

## FOR THE FISH

**10 pounds of pike and/or whitefish (raw weight)**

You will be left with about 5–6 pounds net weight of filets. Ask for the fileted fish to be ground. Ask for the bones, heads, and skins to be saved in a separate package.

In a food processor, blend:

**2 carrots**

**2 onions**

**5 eggs**

**1 teaspoon sugar**

**2½ teaspoon salt (more or less)**

**1 teaspoon pepper (more or less)**

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In a mixing bowl with the ground fish add the above mixture along with:

**5 tablespoons matzoh meal (more or less)**

**$\frac{3}{4}$ –1 cup ice water (more or less) (don't put ice cubes in mixture)**

Use your hands to mix well.

With wet hands, form the fish mixture into plump oval shapes then gently slide them into the simmering stock. It's OK to make a second layer.

Add **4 carrots** to the pot.

Cover loosely over low heat (do not boil) for 1 hour. Remove lid.

Cook a half hour more.

Cool for a while in the pot then remove to a platter.

Slice the carrots on a diagonal and place one or more on top of each fish ball.

Refrigerate (overnight is best).

Serve chilled gefilte fish with horseradish and carrots to an appreciative crowd.

Enjoy!



# BABA IDA'S FAVORITE CHOCOLATE CAKE

SARAH WEINMAN

Though I grew up in Ottawa, Canada, many of my fondest childhood memories took place a couple of hours away in the city of Montreal, where both sets of grandparents lived. Ida, my mother's mother, behaved like many North American grandmothers of her generation: She showed her love through food. What differentiated her from others, I believe, is that her gusto for cooking was matched by the enthusiasm with which she watched her grandchildren eat. And so when I think of this chocolate cake—a recipe, I recently learned, she adapted from the classic Hershey's recipe—its timeless flavor and taste remain with me because of how much she loved seeing me enjoy it. Such love transcends calories, thank goodness!

## CAKE

**½ cup cocoa**

**½ cup hot water**

**½ cup oil**

**1 cup sugar**

**2 eggs**

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

**1½ cup flour**

**1 teaspoon baking soda**

**½ teaspoon baking powder**

**Pinch salt**



## FROSTING

**6 tablespoons margarine, softened**

**2⅔ cups confectioners' sugar**

**½ cup cocoa**

**⅓ cup Coffee mate**

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

- 1** Grease and flour oblong pan. Set oven to 325°F.
- 2** Dissolve cocoa in hot water.
- 3** Combine oil, sugar, eggs, and vanilla in large bowl; beat with mixer on high speed 3 minutes.
- 4** Add cocoa, flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt, beating until blended.
- 5** Pour batter into prepared pan.
- 6** Bake 30 to 35 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean.
- 7** Cool 10 minutes; remove from pan to wire rack.
- 8** Cool completely.
- 9** For the frosting, beat margarine in medium bowl.
- 10** Add confectioners' sugar and cocoa alternately with Coffee mate, beating to spreading consistency (additional liquid may be needed).
- 11** Stir in vanilla.
- 12** Lightly frost cake.
- 13** Serve immediately to hungry young children (and adults)!

# GRANDMA MIN'S MANDELBRODT

SHARLENE ORLOWSKY

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After four sons, my grandmother was thrilled that I, her first grandchild, was a girl. On special weekends, we spent time—just me and her—drinking very sweet and milky coffee, making her well-loved brownies (no one knows this recipe!), apple pie, gefilte fish, and mandelbrodt.

My grandmother's mandelbrodt recipe was handwritten on an index card and taped to the inside of a cookbook published by a Chicago area Jewish women's organization, which she used for all her holiday dishes. Imagine my thrill when she gave me that cookbook, with her mandelbrodt recipe still taped inside. The cookbook is held together with a rubber band and is stained and dated, but treasured.

Each year I make that recipe, looking at her handwriting, thinking about her and the warm and wonderful memories I have of my time in the kitchen with her. She just passed away five years ago, at age 104.

**3 eggs**

**¾ cup oil**

**1 cup sugar**

**1 teaspoon vanilla**

**3 cups flour (sifted) with 1 tablespoon baking powder**

**½ teaspoon salt**

**Optional mix-ins: ½ cup walnuts, chocolate chips, almonds, raisins (I've gotten creative here)**

**Butter (for greasing baking sheet)**

**Cinnamon and sugar**

- 1** Beat first four ingredients, then add the rest. Mix well.
- 2** Grease baking sheet.
- 3** Form dough into 2 or 3 long loaves.
- 4** Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes, till golden brown.
- 5** Slice the loaves in thin (about ¼ inch) slices while still hot.
- 6** Bake the slices, without flipping, for 10 minutes longer at 375°F.
- 7** Sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar.





# POT ROAST AND KASHA

ROY SOLOMON

Aahhh! Such memories!

My great-aunt Tante Anna, known to the family as 'tAna, made the best gefilte fish. Of course, as a little kid, I didn't eat the stuff, so there was always a shrimp cocktail available for me. Our family was not particularly kosher, especially on my father's side. His father, 'tAna's brother-in-law, learned the printing trade as a typesetter. In his early teens, he was setting type for an anarchist broadsheet in a shtetl around Kiev, stealing the type after the shop closed, getting it to the underground print shop, then distributing it back in the shop before dawn and going to work. That was my Popsy Phil.

His wife, my grandmother Bubbie Sirka, was the cook in the family. She made everything, but what I remember most were her chicken soup, her "goyishe" borscht (with beef, cabbage, and tomato, instead of beets), and cholupses—stuffed cabbage. But the problem here is that I learned to cook in college, after Bubbie lost her marbles, so I never cooked with her. And 'tAna was no longer going to the fish markets for the fresh carp and whitefish, so I never learned to make gefilte fish.

On my mother's side, my Bubbie was a fantastic cook also, but she was, as my mother explained to me, from the "schitt arein" school of cooking: a bit of this, a bit of that, nothing measured, nothing written down. And by the time I was learning to cook, she, too, as my mother put it, had long since gone off the deep end, after learning that some of her family, left behind in Lodz, never made it out.

From my mother, though, I did learn to make one of my favorites of the dinners we had regularly: pot roast and kasha. I haven't made it in years, however, as my daughters, as little kids, wouldn't touch it!

Here is the recipe, best I can recall it.

**Beef brisket, about 3 pounds**

**Oil for cooking**

**Salt and pepper, to taste**

**1 or 2 onions, sliced thin**

**A clove or 2 of garlic, minced**

**12 ounces beer**

**Bay leaf**

**Peppercorns**

**Kasha**

**1 egg**

**Water or bouillon**



- 1 Heat a pressure cooker and add oil.
- 2 Rinse and pat dry the brisket; rub it with salt and pepper.
- 3 Brown the meat on all sides, then set it aside.
- 4 Add a bit more oil to the pan, then sauté the onions; when they are brown and wilted, add the garlic. When it's all nice and brown, remove it from the pan.
- 5 Open the beer, take a sip, pour the rest into the pan to deglaze it.
- 6 Insert the slotted tray to keep the food off the bottom of the cooker, put the brisket in with the onions over the top; add the bay leaf and a couple of peppercorns.
- 7 Cook according to the directions for your pressure cooker.

*For the kasha, basically follow the directions on the Wolff's box: Mix the kasha with a beaten egg, brown the mixture in a heated saucepan, add the recommended amount of liquid, and simmer until done.*

# GRANDMA ROSE'S CABBAGE SOUP

JUNE HERSH

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I came from a mixed marriage. My mother's family was Ashkenazi and my father's, Sephardic. Our holiday table and the kitchen had both the usual aromas of matzo balls bathing in rich chicken broth and also the more pungent scents usually associated with Greek cooking like fresh dill, vibrant mint, and mountains of chopped parsley. When I wrote my first cookbook, *Recipes Remembered, a Celebration of Survival*, I included this dish, which represented my family heritage and honored the legacy of the Holocaust survivor community, which was the focus of the book.

My grandmother would prepare a cabbage soup based on very typical Russian ingredients, but somehow lemon, a very Sephardic addition, found its way into the recipe. It was a perfect marriage of our family's culinary heritage. I prepare it today on cold winter nights or over long weekends when a crusty loaf of bread is begging to be dunked. For me, the most important reason is to preserve food memory and bring tradition to the table.

**1 large head of green cabbage, cored and shredded**

**1 (28-ounce) can of whole tomatoes, with their juices**

**3–4 pounds of flanken/short ribs, cut into 2- to 3-inch pieces**

**1 (15-ounce) can sauerkraut, drained**

**2 quarts of good quality or home-made beef stock**

**8 jumbo hot dogs, sliced into bite-sized pieces**

**Juice of 1–2 lemons**

**Kosher salt and pepper**

- 1** Place the shredded cabbage in a large soup pot. Add the tomatoes, crushing them over the pot with your clean hands, or use the back of a spoon to crush them in the pot.
- 2** Season the ribs with salt and pepper and tuck them into the cabbage, then top with the sauerkraut.
- 3** Pour the stock into the pot and bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cover and cook for 1½–2 hours or until the meat is falling off the bones.
- 4** Add the hot dogs and the lemon juice and cook for about 15 minutes.
- 5** Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- 6** If time allows, let the soup rest in the fridge overnight, skimming off the fat the next day. Reheat and serve.

To serve, you can cut the beef into bite-sized pieces or leave it whole, and be sure to provide a knife with your soup spoon and extra lemon wedges for a more tart taste!



# NETTIE'S STUFFED CABBAGE

NANCY AVRIN

Born in Poland, my mother-in-law immigrated to the US in the 1920s and grew up in NYC. She and my father-in-law moved to NJ, where they raised their family. Family holidays were celebrated at their home, and always included Nettie's culinary specialties: cole slaw, noodle kugel, sugar cookies, and best of all—stuffed cabbage. Though it's a traditional Eastern European dish, Nettie's recipe incorporated some of the shortcuts popular in 1960s suburbs. My husband and I continue the tradition and make stuffed cabbage every year for Rosh Hashanah and Passover, using this recipe. Our family loves it.

*Feeds 8*

**2 large heads of cabbage**

**3 pounds ground beef**

**1 handful corn flakes, crushed**

**2 tablespoons instant rice**

**2 tablespoons ketchup**

**2 large onions**

**Oil**

**1 (12-ounce) bottle chili sauce (Nettie used Heinz, but any brand is fine)**

**Water to fill empty chili sauce bottle  
⅓ of the way**

**Juice of 1½ lemons**

**3 tablespoons brown sugar**

**½–⅔ cup white raisins**

**Generous amounts of salt, pepper,  
paprika, garlic powder, onion powder,  
to taste**

- 1** Remove cores from the cabbage. Place cabbage in large pot with water, and boil, covered, for 20 minutes. Separate leaves of cabbage and set aside.
- 2** Season ground beef with salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Mix in corn flakes, rice, and ketchup. Set aside.
- 3** Make sauce: Brown onions in oil in a large pot. Add to the pot and mix together: Chili sauce, water from chili sauce bottle, lemon juice, brown sugar, raisins, all seasonings.
- 4** Make rolls: Cut off very thick parts of the parboiled cabbage leaves, and discard. Place a handful of meat at one end of a leaf, flatten it a little into an oblong shape. The amount of meat depends on the size of the leaf. Roll toward the other end of the leaf, then fold in the sides of the leaf, so the meat won't leak out. (This isn't always easy to do, due to the shape of the leaf, or its thickness.) Continue rolling the cabbage to the end of the leaf. Handle the cabbage rolls gently. Any leftover meat can be made into small meatballs and cooked with the stuffed cabbage.
- 5** Put stuffed cabbage leaves into the large pot that contains sauce, raisins, seasonings, etc. Bring to a high boil, then lower to a simmer. Cook, covered, for 1 hour.
- 6** Transfer everything to a baking pan. Bake, covered, at 350°F for 1.5 hours.
- 7** Enjoy!



# GRANDMA ESTHER'S FRUITCAKE

JUDITH SOFFER

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Fruit pies, apple strudel, kichlech, rugalach, and fruitcake were some of the treasures that you might find in Grandma Esther's kitchen. When you visited her in her second-floor apartment in the Bronx, she would send you home with a package of these delicious treats. As a teenager, I especially loved to help her prepare the fruitcake.

First we put on babushkas, a triangle of scarf, to cover our hair. (Perish the thought that a stray hair should contaminate the batter.) Her scarf, a pale blue, caught the hue of her blue eyes. Then, along with my grandfather, who participated in this ritual of creation, we would scrub our hands. Grandpa and I would sit at the cloth-covered table placed in front of a window that looked out onto the bustling street below. "Max, you shell the walnuts but be careful not to get any skins in the bowl," she commanded. And "Judalah" (her nickname for me), "don't miss any pits in those dates," she cautioned as she bustled about the kitchen. Grandpa would make jokes, whistle—he made it sound like an instrument—and wink at me when he teased my grandmother as she meticulously washed and cracked each egg into a separate bowl first. (God forbid it should have a blood spot!)

I liked beating the eggs in her brown earthenware bowl, watching them metamorphose from two disparate elements into a single entity of fluffy yellow foam. Grandma would sniff and then tilt her head from side to side with her eyes closed, exclaiming, "Mm, smell that vanilla! Smell that cinnamon!"

Finally, everything was transformed into a creamy, aromatic mass, studded with morsels of nuts and fruit, and poured into a pan.

My grandmother always seemed to know when the cake was ready without looking at the clock. And so the three of us would admire its rich mahogany color and its rotund, wholesome appearance. I knew that when the cake cooled, we three would have tea, partake of our "creation," and pronounce it to be delicious.

Grandma Esther came to this country by herself from Poland when she was 15 and slept on a bench in Ellis Island for two days until an uncle from Brooklyn rescued her. I sometimes wonder who taught her to make fruitcake.

**3 cups flour**

**1 teaspoon cinnamon**

**3 teaspoons baking powder**

**4 eggs**

**1 cup brown sugar**

**1 teaspoon baking soda**

**1 cup warm water**

**1 cup vegetable or canola oil**

**2 teaspoons vanilla**

**½ cup chopped pitted dates**

**1 cup raisins**

**½ cup chopped walnuts**

- 1** Preheat oven to 325°F.
- 2** Sift the flour with the cinnamon and the baking powder.
- 3** Beat the eggs until frothy, and mix in the brown sugar.
- 4** Dissolve the baking soda in the water and gradually add it and the oil and the vanilla to the egg mixture.
- 5** Fold the flour mixture into the eggs.
- 6** Stir in the remaining ingredients.
- 7** Turn into a greased tube pan. I use a 9-inch tube pan.
- 8** Bake 60 minutes. You can check doneness with a cake tester or toothpick.
- 9** Let cool in the pan 20 minutes or so, and then run a knife around the perimeter before lifting from the center tube to remove the outer ring.



# GRANDMA LIL'S VEGGIE CHOPPED LIVER

LISA HERTZ APKON

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My Grandma Lil was large and soft in ways that made me feel cozy and warm. Her parents were born in Poland, and the family spoke a lot of Yiddish at home, especially when they didn't want others to understand! I didn't really know my great-grandparents, as they died when I was young, and Yiddish was not something I understood. Still, the essence of my grandmother's Jewish Polish upbringing was definitely something my siblings and I experienced through taste and smell.

Grandma Lil was often in the kitchen making something delicious when she came to visit. Kreplach was one of my family's favorites. It was salty and oily, and we waited patiently (or as patiently as we could) for each batch to be brought out from the kitchen.

She also made our favorite chopped liver. But as was her generous style, when several of us in the family stopped eating meat, she created a vegetarian version that has become the dish I now make every holiday (Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Hanukah). It is a taste and smell that brings me right back to the cozy warmth of Grandma Lil, who I loved and miss very much.

The recipe from my grandmother only had a list of ingredients with no quantity or procedure. If you asked Grandma Lil about a recipe for something she made, she would say you have to "feel and taste" it to know. It was all "in her hands." However, it is amazingly simple and easy to make, so I will do my best to write it out for you. Once you make it, I am sure you will learn how to tweak it to your individual liking. I am honored to share Grandma Lil's Veggie Chopped Liver recipe with you.

**2 tablespoons olive oil**

**3–4 onions, sliced**

**2 pounds white mushrooms, cleaned and sliced**

**Salt and pepper, to taste**

**5 hard-boiled eggs**

**½ cup walnuts, to taste**

- 1** Heat oil in a frying pan, add onions, and sauté on medium heat until translucent.
- 2** Add mushrooms and cook down until onions are very soft, mushrooms have released their juices, and flavors have combined.
- 3** Add salt and pepper to taste.
- 4** Place cooked onions and mushrooms into a food processor. Pulse to begin combining ingredients.
- 5** Add eggs and nuts while pulsing until the mixture has a "chopped liver" texture.
- 6** Taste. It may need more salt and pepper.



# TRIANGULATED KASHA VARNISHKAS

BRIAN ACKERMAN

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My Lena was a very unusual Jewish grandmother—she was a tiny woman who lived alone on the Upper West Side of Manhattan in a two-bedroom apartment with her pictures and tchotchkes and furniture that never moved an inch in the 45 years I knew her. Oh, OK, so she wasn't all that unusual.

Well, just the same, she was a better cook than your bubbe! No, really. Being a fabulous cook was an essential part of her being, a source of immense pride, and the entire family sang harmonies to her great culinary creations. Partly that was also because she was otherwise a very difficult person, but that's a different story for a different book. But her meals were truly wonderful. Had there been an Olympics of Jewish Cooking, she would have made the team.

Everything arrived on the table fully formed, hot, aromatic, and delicious. I think the only dish I ever saw her make from start to finish was scrambled eggs. And yes, they were excellent. So as she became frail we feared her recipes would be gone forever, and some of us prodded her to reveal how it was all done. We knew she didn't want to give them, and at first she resisted, but over time she became more pliant.

One of my personal favorites was kasha varnishkas, that classic dish of golden buckwheat kernels from the old country, laced with fried onions and bowtie pasta. It felt like a relatively easy recipe, unlike many of the others. Not like her gefilte fish, only for major holidays, which she claimed was a Cecil B. DeMille production, beginning with standing in line at Citarella's for pike (*not carp, No!*) and somehow involving a bathtub. I was so happy when she finally gave me the kasha recipe, after many requests. But whenever I followed it, the dish turned out flat, dull, unspecial. Not like hers. Not even close.

One day, my mother, sister, and I were sitting around chatting about cooking and came to Bubbe's kasha and her recipe. We all agreed that ours were pale versions of the original. It was family lore that she withheld some piece of her recipes on purpose. We compared those she'd given each of us. Hmmm, something odd: They weren't the same. Similar but not the same. In fact, as we circled around, it became clear she'd omitted a different ingredient or direction in each one. Perhaps,



if we put them together, we could recreate the original. And thus, after some triangulation, we did! We had cracked the code. We were happy to have the recipe, and remained mystified by her peculiar resistance.

Epilogue: My grandmother and mother have passed, and it's been years since either my sister or I have made the dish. We can't recall the recipe. I was recently sitting with my wife—who also happens to be a sensational cook and not Jewish—and bemoaning the forgotten recipe for this book, and she said: Ah, the recipe I really wanted was the gefilte fish; now *that* was quite something. I would have been happy to sit and spend the time to learn it. I said: You knew her, she would never have given it to anyone. She said: I don't know, I don't think anyone ever asked her in the right way. *I think you had to ask to make it with her, to really spend the time, to share the experience.*

It instantly hit me with the ring of truth. It had all become entangled in the struggle of our relations. I just wanted the recipe, like it was a thing, a little thing, a taking and having, as though my simply wanting it should have been compliment enough. But it was really something completely different. It was really a moment of sharing, a ritual passing on of something prized.

Recipe for any dish from a grandmother:

- 1 Ask nicely.
- 2 Spend time.
- 3 Be excited. It's not small.

# THANKS TO ALL OUR WONDERFUL CONTRIBUTORS!

**BREAKING BREAD: JEWISH FOOD STORIES AND RECIPES FROM THE JBFC COMMUNITY  
WAS MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM  
ELISABETH AND GARY SCHONFELD**

Editor: Sharon AvRutick  
Designer: Stuart Vance Designs  
Cover illustration: Greiss Design  
Photography: Adobe Stock

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