



Repast

Quarterly Newsletter of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

REFERENCE

FLAVORS OF THE JEW ASPORA

Never before has our group had the chutzpah to tackle a cuisine so complex as "Jewish Foods Around the World." What, so you need a *rabbi*? For the three or four dozen members and guests of CHAA gathered at the Walden Hills Community Room for our holiday participatory dinner on December 3, it was a night not only to learn a great deal but, as they might say in Yiddish, *shepen naches, fressen vi a ferd* (to have a blast and eat like a horse)!

We all studied the situation ahead of time and pored over cookbooks, trying to figure out how to make our biggest *matanah* ("gift" in Hebrew) to the whole effort. In addition to all the potluck dishes contributed, there was Don Fowler who came through with his *matanah* of recorded klezmer music. There was the joint *matanah* of Margot Michael and Jan Longone in compiling a bibliography in advance and suggesting dishes to prepare, and Marion Holt's *matanah* in coordinating the selection of those dishes.

Jewish food is complex and varied exactly because the Jewish people have known years of oppression, exile and global wandering as well as years of jubilation and plenty. The genesis of their distinctive dietary customs occurred thousands of years ago among the Hebrew tribes of the ancient Orient, when the hunting and gathering life was supplanted by herding and tilling and the growth of towns and cities. As a result of conquest and dispersion, mostly still in pre-modern times, Jewish culture underwent two great transformations in separate parts of the western world, the lands of Sepharadh and Ashkenaz. It is convenient to divide our coverage into three segments along those lines.

A Land of Olives and Pomegranates

Aleppo is one of the oriental cities that were home to Jewish people in antiquity. A synagogue is believed to have been founded in Aleppo (modern Halab, Syria) in the days of King David, c. 1000 BCE. From ancient times, all the way until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Jewish merchants in Aleppo thrived on the east-west camel caravan traffic in foodstuffs, silks and jewels.

The stew of *fauleh u-lahmeh*, our *matanah* from Diana Warshay, reflects the sumptuous dishes eaten by wealthy Muslims, Christians and Jews in Aleppo during the Middle Ages. She used a recipe from Lisa Ades ("Aleppo on the Hudson," *Saveur* December 1997). Ades' Syrian Jewish ancestors immigrated a century ago to the Kingshighway section of Brooklyn, where today an estimated 30,000

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A detail from "Jewish Woman of Tangier" (1868) by Charles-Émile Veret-Lecomte, part of the exhibit "Morocco: Jews and Art in a Muslim Land" which closed Feb. 11 at The Jewish Museum in New York.

Syrian Jews reside. The family recipe calls for pieces of veal to be browned in olive oil, then stewed in a tomato sauce with string beans, allspice and other spices. Although New World ingredients like tomatoes, string beans and allspice had become fixtures in Syria centuries prior to 1900, the name *fauleh u-lahmeh* suggests that this was originally a Passover dish of lamb and fresh green fava beans, the latter having symbolic importance as the staple of the Jews once enslaved in Pharaonic Egypt. In the Middle Ages, such ingredients as honey, cinnamon, chick peas, pistachios, rosewater and poached eggs might have been added to the lamb stew.

The Muslim version of this medieval stew differed from the Jewish in one key ingredient: the cooking fat. While for Jews *semen* (Hebrew for "fat") generally meant olive oil, for Muslims *samne* (Arabic for "fat") was clarified sheep's butter or the melted tail fat of sheep. Olive oil had a huge role to play in the Jewish practice not to eat meat and milk products at the same meal, since olives are neither meat (as is tail fat) nor milk (as is butter), hence *pareve* or neutral.

Along with wheat and grapes, olives were one of the three leading crops of the ancient Holy Land. Jews used

most of their olive oil for dipping their daily bread, and a smaller amount for cooking. A few pickled or salted olives were also eaten. The garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem, called Gethsemane ("press of oil" in Hebrew), was likely the site of an ancient olive press, of which every village had at least one.

A pot of *enjadara* was our matanah from Ann and Don Fowler, using a recipe in *The Yemenite Cookbook* by Zion Levy and Hani Agabria. *Enjadara* is a simple but satisfying porridge of lentils and rice, topped with onions that have been caramelized in olive oil. The red lentils look mottled against the rice, giving the dish its current name, from the Arabic *mujaddara*, "pockmarked." Such porridges of dried lentils or fava beans formed the routine evening meal of the lower classes from ancient times through the Roman occupation. Rice didn't appear on the scene until c. 100 CE, so the biblical *nezid adashim* (lentil pottage) would have been made then, as it sometimes still is today, with cracked wheat (*burghul*), or more commonly with the wheat eaten separately as bread. The later preference for rice is preserved in a Syrian proverb: "Good living is with rice, and let the burghul hang itself."

In the book of Genesis that opens the Old Testament, the hunter Esau, famished in the Negev desert, gives away his spiritual rights as the firstborn of Isaac and Rebekah to his twin brother Jacob, a farmer, in exchange for bread and a bowl of "red, red pottage of lentils." Lentils and wheat were two of the first food crops ever cultivated. We can read this tale, with its rival twins the hunter and the farmer, as a parable of the rise of a more secure, domesticated life alongside the older foraging traditions of the Near East.

Whitefish prepared Yemeni style was the matanah from Randy Schwartz, using a recipe from Joan Nathan's *Jewish Cooking in America*. Jews dwelled in Sheba (modern Yemen) since at least 500 BCE, possibly as early as the days of King Solomon in the mid-900s BCE. A Jewish kingdom

actually ruled Sheba once (c. 450-600 CE). Not surprisingly, the Jews of this land beside the sea became skilled at preparing fish, a symbol of abundance and fertility in Jewish folklore. The whitefish is simmered very slowly in a sauce of water, olive oil, red bell peppers, garlic, cumin, and turmeric, and served the next day at room temperature. Whitefish is *kosher* (fit to eat) for Jews, who can in conscience eat swimming things that have scales and fins. That rules out many other aquatic creatures, such as turbot, monkfish, catfish, dogfish, rockfish, swordfish, shark, eel, octopus, shellfish and mollusks.

Our *enjadara* and whitefish were served mild, but the Yemenis are famous for adding spicy sauces and relishes such as *zehoug*, *hilbeh*, *shatta* and *hawaiyyij*. In the Old Testament book of Kings, when the Queen of Sheba treks north by camel caravan to behold King Solomon in Jerusalem, she regales him with spices and jewels before they hop into bed together. The queen returns to her realm on a flying carpet, already with child. Claiming to be the offspring of this affair are the Jews of Ethiopia (biblical Cush), only 30 miles from Yemen across the mouth of the Red Sea. Indeed, the Ethiopian Jews—including the owners of the Blue Nile restaurants in Ann Arbor and Detroit—are famous for their spicy stews of lentils and meat.

Either the *enjadara* or the whitefish makes a nice meatless meal, or a cold meal to honor the Sabbath, the day of rest. Throughout history, Jews living in foreign lands have eaten meatless meals whenever *kashrut* could not be observed. Daniel of the Old Testament, one of many Jewish captives serving in the Babylonian court of Nubuchadnezzar II following his conquest of Jerusalem (586 BCE), refuses meat from the king's table, bidding the guard to "give us nothing but pulse to eat and water to drink." After a 50-year exile, the Jewish captives were freed by king Cyrus II of Persia (who had conquered Babylon) and allowed to return to Jerusalem. But most of them stayed. One of their descendants, the biblical Esther, was queen to the Persian king Xerxes I (400s BCE) when she foiled a plot by the king's advisor Haman to annihilate the Jews of the realm. The spring feast of Purim, in which Jews around the world celebrate Esther's heroism, often features meatless dishes imagined to be typical of her observant palace diet: a fish cooked whole; a stew or pie of chickpeas or other legumes; almond macaroons or other confections rich with milk and eggs.

Two of our meat dishes, incorporating pomegranates and other fruits famous in Persia and Mesopotamia, show that kosher foodways grew more varied and elegant as diaspora communities became more established and acquired rabbinates. Combining meat with fruit, and sweet with sour, both dishes typify the rich cuisine adopted by Jewish nobles in Sassanid Persia (200s – 600s CE) and, later, in medieval Baghdad. Pat Cornett blessed us with the famous Persian *fesenjan*, or stewed chicken with a sauce of ground walnuts, prunes, dates and pomegranate juice, from a recipe in Joan Nathan's *The Jewish Holiday Kitchen*. Sometimes *fesenjan* is made with duck instead of chicken. Beef brisket with pomegranate was a matanah from Sherry Sundling, a caterer for Temple Beth Israel in Ann Arbor. Sherry simmers her brisket in chicken stock and pome-

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Editor.....Randy K. Schwartz

CHAA President.....Margot Michael

CHAA Founder and Honorary President....Jan Longone



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For information about memberships, subscriptions,
or anything in this publication, contact:

Randy K. Schwartz
2222 Fuller Court #1101A
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2316
tel. 734-662-5040
rks1@gateway.net

granate juice, then reduces the cooking liquid to a sauce that is served with the beef on a bed of cooked vegetables, the whole sprinkled festively with pomegranate seeds. (Jewish dishes often use forequarters such as brisket or shoulder, rather than hindquarters, whose veins and arteries are so big that they must be removed to comply with kosher rules against eating any trace of blood. In addition, the book of Genesis calls for avoiding the thigh tendons of cows, sheep and the like.)

The Lost Bounty of Sepharadh

The North African stews— we feasted on four different versions— reflect later developments to the west of the Holy Land.

The western Jewish diaspora actually dates back thousands of years. With each major upheaval, from the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians (6th Century BCE) to the defeat of Jewish revolts against Roman rule in Jerusalem and Alexandria (1st Century CE), many groups of surviving Jews fled westward. They established enclaves around the Mediterranean, such as in Sicily, Carthage (near modern Tunis), Djerba (an island off the Tunisian coast) and Garnatha (early Granada in southern Spain). Often they lived under Phoenician, Greek, Roman or Visigothic rule. A number of Berber tribes in North Africa were converted to Judaism, centuries before the Muslim conquests in the late 600s CE.

The Jewish custom of preparing a family stew before sundown on Friday in order to rest on the Sabbath was codified in a rabbinical document called the Mishnah (300s CE). The Mishnah described a newer kind of Sabbath stew which was called *chamim*, Hebrew for “hot things,” because it was not served at room temperature. Instead, legumes, some greens, onions, a whole egg, a bit of meat— perhaps a calf’s foot, a tongue, a marrow bone or stuffed intestines— were set stewing in a pot of water, its lid sealed with a damp cloth or a flour-and-water crust. The stewpot simmered through the night over dying embers, and its contents were unsealed and eaten hot the next day after temple services. In later times, the stewpots of many families simmered side by side in a neighborhood stone oven, each pot sealed tightly and labeled with a number in chalk, the oven itself sealed with clay or lime by a Jewish guardian. In North Africa, this Sabbath stew is most often called *adafina* or *t’fina*, from the Arabic *al-dafina* (“buried thing”).

Even before the rise of Islam, the Sabbath stew was the one grand meal of the Jewish week. What the Arab conquests added to the stewpots was a stunning array of new ingredients, as North Africa became part of a vast empire stretching from Spain to India.

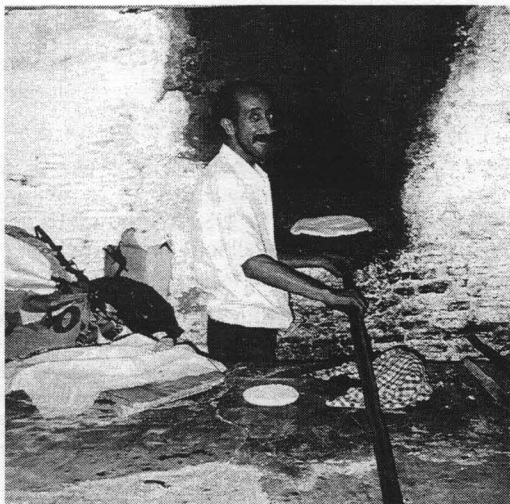
Jews accompanied the conquering Arabs into North Africa, Iberia and Sicily. Their numbers rose, and the two faiths generally lived in harmony under Arab rule. Spanish Jewry numbered an estimated 60,000 in the 11th Century, comprising 1% of the general population but a much higher percent in the cities. Great rabbinical centers were founded in Granada, Cordoba, Fez and Kairouan. The Jews adopted the Arabic language and Arab dress, and made their mark on every aspect of Moorish life. In Iberia (called *Sepharadh* in

Where Did the Kosher Rules Come From?

Along with other aspects of the Hebrew religion, language, and culture, kosher rules have demarcated the Jewish people from others for thousands of years. What is fit or *kosher* for Jews to eat is spelled out at various points in the first five books of the Old Testament. Chapter 14 of Deuteronomy, for instance, declared it abominable for Jews to eat a four-legged beast unless it “parteth the hoof and cheweth the cud,” which allows for ruminants such as sheep, goats and oxen, but not the likes of pigs, camels, asses, horses, lions or hares. The same chapter decreed, “Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother’s milk” which, layered with rabbinical commentary, became a taboo against mixing meat and milk products.

What were the original reasons underlying these rules? That has been a matter of lively debate. Five main theories have emerged:

1. Many Jewish rabbis and theologians have argued that kosher laws were commanded by God for moral or religious reasons. Perhaps forbidding the boiling of a yearling in its mother’s milk was meant to spare animals so young that their mothers would miss them. Others suggest it undermined pagan beliefs that sprinkling such broths on croplands increased their fertility. Drinking blood, and other aspects of ancient pagan sacrifice, were undermined by kosher laws forbidding cruelty in animal slaughter or the consumption of any traces of blood.
2. Other Jewish scholars have interpreted abominations as “unclean” practices harmful to public hygiene. For example, in pre-modern societies there were health benefits in abstaining from eating shellfish, beasts of prey, and animals felled by predation or by natural causes. In the 11th Century, Moses Maimónides argued that swine had been branded as unclean for hygienic reasons, since they eat their own excrement, spread disease, etc. One problem with this theory is that sheep, goats, cattle, chickens and other animals not forbidden as food also share these characteristics.
3. British anthropologists James Frazer and W. Robertson-Smith argued that the biblical concept of “abominable” does not mean literally unclean. “All so-called unclean animals were originally sacred,” Frazer wrote. “The reason for not eating them is that many were originally divine” and therefore reserved for altar sacrifice. Thus, the pig and the ass were worshipped by various polytheistic peoples of the Near East, if not by the ancient Hebrews themselves then perhaps by the Canaanites or other peoples with whom they came in contact. Similarly, the Jewish custom of not eating the thigh tendons of quadrupeds, linked in the Bible (Genesis 32:22-32) to the belief that God touched Jacob near his thigh tendon when wrestling with him, might in fact be an echo of ancient sacrificial offerings of that tendon.
4. British anthropologist Mary Douglas has advanced a theory based on ancient totemic beliefs. She argues that taboos were extended to animals that were anomalous among their kind: e.g., nonhuman beasts that are carnivorous; quadrupeds that have no cloven hooves or do not chew their cud; swimmers that lack fins or scales; etc.
5. Marvin Harris, an American anthropologist of the cultural materialist school of thought, proposes a series of economic explanations. For example, he argues that pigs and other non-ruminants were rejected by Semitic tribes because the economic and ecological cost of maintaining them as livestock was exorbitant, especially for nomads.



A man bakes bread in a community oven in the Mellah, the old Jewish quarter of Fez, Morocco. (Photo: Randy K. Schwartz)

Hebrew and *al-Andalus* in Arabic), over half of the Muslims were descended from Christians whose families had voluntarily converted to Islam. Sometimes relations between Muslims and Jews did become hostile, and there were outbreaks of violence. For protection at various times, the Jews of Fez and other cities would be confined to their own residential district or ghetto, called a *mellah* (from the Arabic *milh*, "salt"). The name recalls the skill of Jewish butchers, who followed kosher practice in using salt to remove every trace of blood from carcasses.

The Arabized Jews were often successful traders, and thus among the first westerners to adopt Asian foods: rice, semolina, eggplant, quince, pomegranate, apricot, citrus, spices, sugar. Much later they led in adopting New World foods: squashes, haricot beans, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, maize, chocolate, chilies, allspice. Many such ingredients found their way into elegant versions of the *adafina* and its counterpart, the *tajine*, which takes its name from the conical stewpot preferred by Arabs. Jews, like their Muslim neighbors, often ate couscous for Friday supper, but they prepared enough of this semolina pasta to eat leftovers with their *adafina* the following afternoon.

Our matanah from Toni Hopping was a pot of *t'fina djerbaliya* served with rice. Following a recipe in Joyce Goldstein's *Back to Square One: Old-World Food in a New-World Kitchen*, Toni browned some cubes of lamb shoulder in olive oil, then stewed them with chickpeas, prunes, dried apricots, herbs and spices. Judging from the name of the dish, the original might have used the figs and dates for which Djerba is famous. Closely related was Eleanor Hoag's lamb *tajine* with prunes, apricots, yellow squash, carrots and sweet potatoes, adapted from recipes in *Gourmet* magazine (Nov. 2000) and Faye Levy's *1000 Jewish Recipes*. Our two other Moroccan stews were meatless: Joanne and Art Cole's *adafina* of potatoes, raisins, pine nuts and almonds, and Sherry Sundling's couscous with a sauce spiced with cumin, cilantro, coriander and turmeric. Meatless dishes were common for impoverished Jews, and for crypto-Jews enduring the Inquisition, especially during Lent.

Our matanah from Andrea Corpolongo was a jewel of Iberian Jewish cookery, the quince paste called *bimbriyo*.

Using a recipe in Gil Marks' *The World of Jewish Cooking*, Andrea chopped up quinces and boiled them in water, then processed the pulp in a food mill before boiling it further with an equal amount of sugar to yield a garnet-red paste. She cooled and dried the paste in a shallow pan for a few days before cutting it into rectangular pieces, rolling these in granular sugar to which she had added some orange zest. The name *bimbriyo*, derived from the Castilian *membrillo* ("quince"), is a word of the Judeo-Spanish language, also called Judezmo or Ladino. After a quince harvest, Jewish women in Spain or Portugal might spend days in each other's kitchens making enough *bimbriyo* to last several rounds of holy days. Hillsides of Iberia were blanketed with fruit, nut, and olive trees. Thanks to ingenious irrigation, some crops were able to be harvested three times a year.

Before clouds of intolerance gathered, few lands could rival Iberia for the sheer brilliance of its culture or its agriculture. But the Christian reconquest of Sepharadh was completed in 1492. Tens of thousands of Jews and Muslims who refused conversion were expelled. Expelled Jews, called Sephardim, resettled all around the Mediterranean: in North Africa, Italy, the Balkans, Turkey, Syria and Palestine. Wherever they went they brought the Ladino names for various foods (such as *hamin* for the Sabbath stew *chamim*), and they pushed local culture and cuisine to new heights. Even minor variations in cooking techniques marked the Sephardim as newcomers. Claudia Roden, in *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand to New York*, notes that the Jews of Aleppo took to calling the Sephardim *medias*, because when they stuffed their vegetables it was their practice to first cut them in half, whereas the established families hollowed them out whole!

From Shtetl to Imperial Palace

Julie and Bob Lewis offered us a matanah of two loaves of *challah*, the braided white Sabbath bread of European Jewry, so different from the flat breads of Oriental and Sephardic Jews. In medieval German-speaking communities, every Thursday the Jewish homemaker mixed her *challah* dough from wheat flour, eggs, yeast, and honey or sugar, kneading it and letting it rise overnight. Early on Friday morning, she tore off a bit of the leavened dough and threw it into the fire or oven, an ancient ritual symbolizing the portion or tithe (in Hebrew, *challah*) once owed to the *cohanim* (priestly class) in the days of the Temple at Jerusalem. Then she made braids of the remaining dough and baked these loaves in time for the Sabbath, which began Friday at sundown.

Although *challah* became special for Jews, surprisingly it was once the Sunday bread of Christians, locally called *berches*. In the early Middle Ages, when Jews arrived in southern Germany (*Ashkenaz* in Hebrew), mostly from what is now Russia and Poland, they chose *berches* as their *challah*, meaning the bread used for the symbolic tithe and the Sabbath ritual. During the week, rye and other dark breads were the common loaf of the Ashkenazi Jews and gentiles alike.

The pot-roasted chicken that Jane Kaufer made using her grandmother's recipe, flavored with onions, garlic,

thyme and paprika, gives us a rough idea of *cholent*, a category of overnight-cooking stew closely analogous to the Sephardic *hamin*. The word *cholent* is believed to be Alsatian, the dish itself brought to Germany by Jews fleeing France in the late 1300s. Traditionally, the broth from the pot would be served with dumplings or noodles as the first or second course of the Sabbath supper. Then the meat, the barley or buckwheat or other grain, and the legumes would be dished from the pot and eaten with pickles, sauerkraut or horseradish.

Kugel or *schalet*, a sweet or savory pudding, is another Sabbath dish originating in Germany and Alsace. It was often cooked in the same oven as *cholent* if kosher rules allowed. We chose from three different noodle-based kugels. Carroll Thomson and Judy Goldwasser each made savory dairy versions with sour cream and cottage cheese, Carroll using a recipe from Susan R. Friedland's *Shabbat Shalom*, and Judy using her grandmother's recipe, as well as her colander. Marjorie Reade made a sweet version with sugar, butter, chopped walnuts, raisins and honey, from Eugeniusz Wirkowski's *Cooking the Polish-Jewish Way* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988).

A *tzimmes* of sliced carrots and dried fruit was our second matanah from Pat Cornett, who used a recipe from *Bon Appétit* (Dec. 2000). *Tzimmes* is the Yiddish (Judeo-German) term for a vegetable or meat dish sweetened with honey or sugar. Carrots symbolized gold coins in Yiddish folklore, so this was a lucky *tzimmes* during celebrations of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Thanks to Leslie Stambaugh and Mary Lou Unterburger, we also tried two wonderfully moist versions of *lekach* (honey cake), another Rosh Hashanah favorite from medieval Germany.

Marjorie Cripps' matanah of cooked red cabbage with wine and chestnuts is a dish of 12th-Century Alsatian Jews. German and Alsatian Jews played a leading role in producing wine, as well as fish and poultry, all critical ingredients for observant Jews. Other world-famous foods making use of the latter ingredients are chopped liver, goose salami, schmaltz (the rendered fat of goose or chicken), chicken soup, gefilte fish, and herring in sour cream.

Over the centuries, especially after 1600, groups of Ashkenazim left Germany seeking new opportunities in what is now Poland, Russia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Many Jewish settlers built small wooden houses huddled together in a *shtetl*, or poor peasant village. They brought their German foods and their Yiddish dialect with them, but these gradually intermixed with other cultural influences. A favorite dish of Polish Jews was cabbage leaves stuffed with rice. Doris Miller's version, based on how her mother made it, included ground beef and some eggs for binding. Also following their moms' recipes were Marion Holt with a salad of sliced cooked beets, raw onions, oil and vinegar, and Marcie Holt with several varieties of *mandelbrot*, the biscotti-like cookie, as well as *rugelach*, the rolled pastry of sour cream. Other favorites from Poland include bagels, bialys, and jellied carp.

From the shtetls of Russia, we tried Doris Berkenfeld's version of *kasha varnishkes*. To make this dish, sliced

In Memory of Jim Goldwasser

We dedicate this issue of *Repast* to writer and longtime CHAA member Jim Goldwasser. We were shocked by the news that Jim died following a stroke last December, only days after he and his wife Judy participated so joyfully in our "Jewish Foods Around the World" potluck. Our heart goes out to Judy (a contributing editor to *Repast* in 1988-91) and to the rest of Jim's family and loved ones. We will all miss Jim dearly.

Cranbrook Writer's Guild has named in Jim's honor a scholarship for a summer writing workshop for talented college writers. Financial contributions are welcome. Make your check out to Cranbrook Writer's Guild, and note on the check or in a note that it's for the James Goldwasser scholarship fund. The check should be mailed to Cranbrook Writer's Guild, c/o Schoen, 1240 Dorchester Rd., Birmingham, MI 48009.

The Center for Creative Studies, where Jim taught for 30 years, has also announced a scholarship endowment named for Jim. Again, contributions are welcome. Make your check out to CCS, and include a note that your contribution is for the James Goldwasser endowment fund. It should be mailed to Joseph Impellizzini, Vice President for External Relations, Center for Creative Studies, 201 E. Kirby, Detroit, MI 48202.

Both organizations have full IRS tax deductible status.

onions and egg-washed buckwheat groats are browned in oil, simmered in water, and tossed with boiled bow-tie noodles (originally flat homemade egg noodles). Another Russian favorite, the *knish*, was our matanah from Fran Lyman. She used her friend Florence Gerber's recipe, in which pastry dough is prepared and rolled flat, then smeared with a filling of cream cheese, farmer cheese, sautéed onions and sugar. The pastry is rolled up and sliced into one-inch sections, which are allowed to rise and then baked on a cookie sheet.

Another eastward exodus of Jews from Germany began in 1867, when the Hapsburg monarchy relaxed barriers to Jewish immigration to Austria-Hungary. These were not mainly peasants but a more urbane class, and many of the immigrants soon made themselves at home in existing gentile circles of financiers and intellectuals. Chicken *paprikas*, our matanah from Stephanie Rosenbaum based on her Hungarian grandmother's recipe, illustrates well the assimilationist cuisine that took shape among this better-off stratum of Jewry. This Hungarian dish was adapted to *kashrut* by using schmaltz or vegetable oil as browning agent instead of the traditional lard, and by leaving out the sour cream altogether. Barbara DeWolfe made us Hungarian Cucumber Salad from a recipe in Joan Nathan's *Jewish Cooking in America*, in which thinly sliced cucumber and onion are seasoned with dilute vinegar, salt, pepper and paprika. Other Hungarian dishes adopted by Jews include *gulyas* (goulash), stuffed peppers and tomatoes, cold sour-cherry soup, *strudel*, and *palacsinta* (the cream-cheese-filled pancakes that evolved into blintzes).

Perhaps the most affluent circles of Austro-Hungarian Jewry lived in Vienna, the imperial capital. Among them were financiers, physicians and intellectuals whose business took them to Hofburg Palace, the royal castle and seat of the empire. Some of the elegant cuisine of these "court Jews" is well known throughout the world today, from *wiener schnitzel* to *streusel*, *tortes* and *ponchkes*. ■

ISRAELI FOOD TODAY

OS

SALAD FOR BREAKFAST

by Marion Holt

An Ann Arbor resident and longtime CHAA member, Marion has just stepped down after four years as our Program Director. We are grateful for all her hard work! A registered dietician, Marion served for 18 years as Washtenaw County's Extension Home Economist in Foods and Nutrition, in the program run by Michigan State University's Cooperative Extension Service.

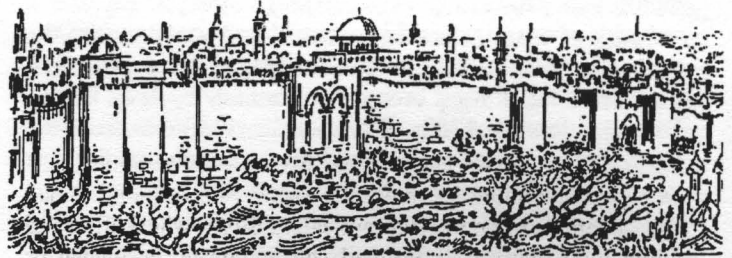
I never expected salad for breakfast in Israel, but I did expect that the kosher menu would be very restricted. I was wrong on both counts.

On an Interfaith Roundtable tour of Israel in Winter 2000, mostly based in Jerusalem, we stayed five nights in a very plush hotel, the Laromme. The number of choices at the breakfast buffet was mind-numbing. Salads included cucumber salad with dressing, cubed tomato and cucumber salad without dressing, eggplant salad, hardcooked egg salad, tuna salad and so on. There was a variety of fish, including something that looked like herring, smoked salmon, and another unidentified fish. There was the chickpea dip *hummus* and there were white cheeses. Yogurt and a thinned yogurt accompanied whatever you cared to put it on. The usual western breakfast offerings such as cold cereal, hot oatmeal, scrambled eggs and a large variety of eggs were also available. The coffee was excellent, as was the morning juice.

Fish is considered *pareve* (neutral) in a kosher regime and so can be served with milk products. Nowhere did we feel deprived because of kosher regulations based on separating meat and milk dishes and abstaining from any fish that does not have scales and fins. In Biblical days, the Holy Land was referred to as a "land of milk and honey." The milk was mostly from goats and sheep, not cows, while the honey was usually treacle made from dates, figs and carob.

Israel is such a blend of cultures that we could not distinguish "Jewish food" from "Arab food." The Sephardic Jews who immigrated from Spain, Italy or Arab nations are likely to have what is called "oriental" cuisine, not meaning Chinese but Middle Eastern. The Ashkenazic Jews have immigrated from Eastern Europe, and their cuisine includes Hungarian and Russian dishes.

While touring the Old City, we had lunch at an Arab snack place where surprisingly good pizza and *kefta* were available. The *kefta* consisted of a cigar-shaped combination of chopped lamb and spices, extremely flavorful. Salad was the ubiquitous cucumber and tomato. Other lunches included *falafel*, or fried chickpea balls in pita bread with a variety of vegetables. The guidebooks call this a *sabra* snack. *Sabra*, the nickname of the early Israeli settlers, is a native cactus fruit that is prickly and rugged on the outside but soft and sweet on the inside.



From Jossi Stern's *Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1980)

The street snack that sustained us until suppertime was often an oval ring of flat bread topped with sesame seeds. The bread was about a foot long and could feed two easily. You were offered a cone of paper filled with crushed dried *za'atar* (wild thyme) to sprinkle. It was delicious.

When our group of 22 visited a household in a small Druze village, we learned about the beliefs of the Druze people. An unexpected delight was watching and then tasting the large flat bread prepared in the courtyard by the mother of the house. She squatted in front of a flat metal surface heated with gas. Taking a ball of dough from a bowl, she twirled it many times to enlarge and thin it. Then she shaped it on a cushion and slapped it on the metal surface. In about two minutes it was done, and we tore pieces off. A nearby tray offered a choice of olive oil, a thinned white cheese and *za'atar*. Very tasty.

The highlight of our gustatory adventures was a Yemeni dinner at Maganda, a restaurant in Tel Aviv, on our last evening in Israel. Appetizers were served at three different times during the meal, and one had to be restrained in order to leave room for the main course. There was the usual *hummus* (with much less garlic than the American variety), *tabbouleh* (the salad of minced parsley, *burghul* and tomatoes), *baba ghannoush* (mashed roasted eggplant dip), grilled eggplant with tomatoes, zucchini with eggs and onions, olives, pickles, and more. Other rounds included Moroccan "cigars," *phyllo* dough wrapped around minced beef, and a spicy chopped tomato dish called *matbuha*, my favorite, which almost cried out for yogurt to cool it. Stuffed onions and zucchini filled with meat and rice were served. Many dishes are seasoned with *tahineh* (sesame paste) and cilantro. The main course at Maganda included excellent lamb and chicken on long metal skewers. The traditional *baklava* and Turkish coffee followed. ■



A woman prepares flat bread in a Druze village in Israel. (Photo: Marion Holt)

SEARCHING FOR THE PRE-EXPULSION FOODS OF SPAIN

by Randy K. Schwartz

I had a surprise last summer from the first dinner that I ate in Granada, Spain. It was a Sunday, and I had chanced upon a restaurant called Sibari whose blue and white logo, with a six-pointed star, suggested a Jewish or Muslim origin. I was happy to eat outside, away from the soccer fans yelling at a televised match, and to watch the flocks of birds flitting about the Plaza Nueva at dusk. But once I'd been seated, my eyes opened wide when I found that the evening's menu featured *jamón con habas*: ham with fava beans!

Although I normally don't eat meat, and my heritage is Jewish, I confess that I couldn't resist trying such a "forbidden" casserole. It was glorious. The baby green *habas* (fava or broad beans), glistening with olive oil in a glazed earthenware stewpot, had the robust spring flavor of Brussels sprouts. They'd been cooked with rich, chewy morsels of cured pork, the famous *dulce* (sweet) ham of the white Trevélez pig. The pig is named for its home, the highest village in Spain (4,842 feet), up in the Alpujarras mountains about 25 miles to the southeast. The pigs are slaughtered in Trevélez in the winter, their hams weakly brined for eight days and then hung outdoors, where months of cool, dry breezes over snow-capped peaks do the brunt of the curing. The hams are then sweated over the summer. Traditionally, Trevélez was the only place in Iberia that could produce such low-salt hams.¹

What a bargain, then. And the same 2100-peseta menu also brought me bread, wine, and another pork-inflected favorite in the form of *tortilla al Sacromonte*, a firm, warm, disk-shaped, 8-inch egg omelette filled with bits of ham, onion, green peas, and the brains and testicles of lamb. I had never before tasted these minced lamb organs traditionally enjoyed by Jews and Arabs in the Middle East; they brought to the omelette a pleasant flavor of oysters. There was no more pork on my menu that night, although ham could easily have garnished my bowl of *gazpacho andaluz* (as I found out later on my trip), or have been wrapped around the sweet slice of melon, served instead as my dessert.

Pork is Never Just Pork

As I drove around the country, passing one smelly hog-hauling truck after another, the tables of Spain would surprise me with many more porcine dishes. I have traveled in other pig-loving areas of Europe as well as our own South, but to be honest the sheer quantity and variety of pork in Spain was bewildering. Then it dawned on me: in Spain, *pork is never just pork*. It is in fact an emblem of Christian faith and power.

To see why, consider the history. When Granada, the last stronghold of Arab rule on the peninsula, fell in 1492, the Catholic monarchs Fernando and Isabel, who had launched the Inquisition twelve years earlier, demanded that Jews either convert or leave the country. Some 400,000 Jews were shipped off in short order. Those swearing instead to a

reversal of their beliefs were called *conversos*. A third group refused both options, and many of these, along with Muslims who could see the handwriting on the wall, went to hide out in the forested slopes and whitewashed villages of the Alpujarras, the Moors' historic production center for raw silk and soon the main base of Muslim and Jewish resistance. Together over the next several years the villagers launched heroic revolts, but these were quelled with the utmost cruelty, leading to new strictures against Muslims, who were given the same choice of conversion or exile as the Jews. The Plaza Nueva where I was dining at Sibari's that evening, built by the Catholic monarchs as the new center of Granada, was the scene of Cardinal Cisneros' 1499 bonfire of 80,000 books from the Muslim university library. In a way that resonates today, *the fates of Muslims and Jews were inextricably linked*.

In the chambers of the Inquisition, the rumored avoidance of pork was a most telling piece of evidence against the *converso* accused of holding fast to the Jewish or Muslim faith. Gitlitz and Davidson recount many heartbreaking cases, including that of a Jewish woman who was burned alive in Catholic-ruled Extremadura in 1485 after her servant told inquisitors that she had to keep salt pork in a separate dish when preparing Sabbath meals, because her mistress would not eat it.²

A decree in Granada in 1526 banned spoken and written Arabic, as well as Muslim dress, adornment, circumcision, *halal* slaughter and other customs. Such measures had already been taken against the Jews. A last desperate uprising in the Alpujarras in 1568 was again violently suppressed, and the mountain villages were soon completely emptied of non-Christians. The silk industry, once Granada's chief source of wealth, withered and died for lack of craftspeople. Where there had once been mulberry trees, the Christians began raising their white pigs of Trevélez.

Constantly under suspicion, most *conversos* had to make sure they ate pork in public frequently, a practice that puts my dining experience at Sibari's in a different light. Sometimes the dish was a Christian staple like ham and eggs, which the converts called *duelos y quebrantos*, "trials and sorrows."³ But pork would also be added to older non-Christian dishes. For centuries, the basic meal of Spain had come from a stewpot set on a low fire, or placed amid dying embers to conserve expensive fuel. For Jews, this had made possible the warm Sabbath casserole, the *adafina* (from the Arabic *al-dafina*, "buried thing"⁴) or *ani*. An Inquisition memorandum outlines the custom:

Ani, which means hot food, was usually made with fat meat, chickpeas, faba beans, green beans, hard-boiled eggs, and any other vegetable. It was cooked all night on Friday, because on Saturday the Jews could not cook food. And that dish was kept hot on its warming oven until mealtime on Saturday. And thus this *ani* was a principal way of keeping the Sabbath.⁵

Jewish converts continued making their stews, but on pain of death they could not openly make them in the old way that honored the Sabbath. It was necessary as well to

toss some loathsome piece of pig into the pot: fresh pork, cured ham, sausages, even ears, feet, or tail. Mingling with ingredients that were suspect as preferred foods of Muslims and Jews (olive oil, Asian grains and fruits and vegetables, eastern spices), the pork afforded a kind of protective stamp, a legal seal of endorsement. Thus branded "Christian," the stews were safe for any Spaniard to eat. Alicia Riós sums up that Spanish *cocidos*, or regional stews, "may be traced back to the ancient Jewish *adafina*, a stew that the Spaniards Christianized by adding pork."⁶

Thus, the tables of Spain were "ethnically cleansed." As a reminder of their humiliation, converted Jews and Muslims living in Christian areas were called *marranos*, Spanish for "swine." The life and death struggles leading to such a turnabout are barely hinted at in the bland tourist brochures:

Besides its Moorish and Jewish influences, Granada's extraordinarily rich cuisine mixes a variety of different cultures. Especially in those previously prohibited foods brought in by new inhabitants. In this way there appeared, for example, the broad beans with ham, whose origin from the east of Trevélez, possesses a delicate and sweet flavour.⁷

I went to Granada last summer to attend a conference that dug up what many Europeans have tried to bury or to claim for others, the mathematical and scientific discoveries of Arabs. As I traveled around eastern and southern Spain and into northern Morocco, I could see that Arabs and Jews had also exerted a huge influence on European cuisine. Not surprisingly, however, few of their dishes themselves have survived in an unadulterated state. Their contributions in cookery, like those in science, must be *dug up and dragged into the light of day*.

What is the Origin of Spanish Tapas?

Over time, the original Moorish character of many *cocidos* and other Spanish dishes became hidden. Converts reconciled themselves to various aspects of Christian life. In a striking case, a Jewish *converso* family was hauled before the inquisitors in Toledo in 1621 after an African servant spied them secretly making their own *morcilla* (pig-blood sausage) and adding it to their stew. Their secrecy and their arrest were necessary because this occurred *during Lent*.⁸

In Granada, I tried pig-blood sausage in a spicy version, *morcilla al infierno*, that is now a very popular *tapa*, or finger food. Turned from its casing, the *morcilla* is a reddish-black pudding, which was served to us smeared inside little buns that had a sweet buttery glaze.

I sampled other *tapas* at Taberna Casa Enrique, a bodega-style Granada tavern established in 1870 by a family whose third generation is now in charge. Pickled artichoke hearts, each draped with a large, filleted anchovy, were my favorite there. The *chorizo ibérico bellota* were thin, deep-red slices of cured pork sausage that covered my plate like coins and were served with a quiver of toothpicks. This hard *chorizo* was spicy and sweet, made of coarsely chopped (not ground) bits of meat and fat from Ibérico pigs of Salamanca.

In contrast to the Trevélez pigs, the thoroughbred Ibérico pigs, raised in a few places on the peninsula, engorge

on the nuts of the *bellota* oak, for which they forage in large herds out in the open. The *bellota* nuts (from Arabic *balloot*, "oak") are more like chestnuts than the acorns we know in North America. The resulting hams have the nuts' sweetness, and are salt-cured for over two years. From ancient times, Iberians themselves ate these nuts fresh, or dried and ground into bread flour. In 12th- and 13th-Century Spain, poor people surviving on them in this way were called *bolótiin* ("oakies"), but there was also a big export trade of the nuts to Italy for use in sweets.⁹

Since *tapa* is Spanish for "lid, cover," people guessed that *tapas* arose in the 1700s, when tavernkeepers might serve a glass of wine covered by a slice of bread adorned with bits of food. Far-fetched, but that's popular wisdom! The *tapas* tradition is actually centuries older than that. As Corriente's dictionary notes, *tapáshúr* was a medieval Andalusian term meaning "tidbit, delicacy," from an Arabic verb meaning "to be prosperous, to live in luxury."¹⁰ A luxurious array of sausages, olives, cheeses and pastries, presented as appetizers on small plates, customarily greeted guests at Moorish homes. Both Jews and Arabs in Spain made sausages out of lamb or other meats, and they pioneered the addition of spices, sugar, raisins and other strong flavors.¹¹ The Christians later substituted pork and various grades of New World paprika, the latter giving both *morcilla* and *chorizo* their redness.

Here, then, is another case of older Andalusian traditions being transformed. Certain types of Moorish *tapáshúr* were transplanted to a wholly new context, that of taverns with their alcoholic drinks. On Sundays, when Catholic women went home to cook after mass, their husbands might tarry in pubs conversing, drinking, and whetting their appetites with *tapas*.¹² One tourist brochure—which lists the best places to taste favorites like eggplants in honey, tripe with chickpeas, or fried anchovies stuffed with spinach, pinenuts and raisins—acknowledges the debt:

The arabic or arabic-andalusian is without doubt the culture which prevails and defines granadan gastronomy. Therefore the sampling of *tapas* can be considered an exquisite and enjoyable journey through history and granadan culture and is, at the same time, the best way to identify and understand the people of Granada.¹³

Breadcrumb Soups and Salt Cod Built Iberia

Another striking inversion of foodways awaited me at a Granada restaurant called Las Almenas, which is Spanish for "the battlements" (from the Arabic *al-man'a*¹⁴). Since they were strong in seafood there, I ordered *sopa de maimones marinero* for starters and was brought a deep bowl of broth made from fish stock and a bit of tomato paste. In the broth were mussels, baby shrimp, and cubes of a pure white fish, spongy and succulent—I believe it was monkfish, *rape mozárabe* in Spanish (more on the Mozarabs below).

Despite the New World tomato and the nonkosher shellfish and monkfish, this soup has telltale signs of a Sephardic past. First there is *maimon* itself, which means "luck, good fortune" in Aramaic and is a popular name in Hebrew. Most famous is Moshe ben Maimon (Maimónides), the rabbi, physician and philosopher born in Moorish

Córdoba. Maimon and other Jewish and Arab physicians touted the healthfulness of hot soups, which were a fixture of the common diet of Spain and had a reputation for bringing good luck. They ranged from crude porridges of wheat or barley meal, to substantial soups of vegetables, fish or lamb. Most were somewhere in between, typically humble meat broths with oil and vinegar, herbs and spices, in which stale bread would be sopped or breadcrumbs sprinkled as the soup was completed. The garlic-rich broths known as *maimones* were of this latter type.¹⁵

Since one good garlicky dish of seafood deserves another, I ordered *supremas bacalao con glase ajo* (codfish fillets glazed with garlic) as my main fare at Las Almenas. Two thick fillets of cod had been placed skin-side down in a ceramic dish, topped with a layer of very lemony, pale yellow garlic "mayonnaise," and baked until the topping glazed over and the skin caramelized. Served in the baking dish, surrounded by a tomato sauce and flanked by stalks of baked young asparagus, it was a robust and satisfying meal.

The Spanish term *bacalao*, like the Portuguese *bacalhau*, can mean either fresh or salted cod. To specify salt cod, Spaniards can ask for *arriero*, a contraction of *bacalao arriero*, "muleteer's cod." Muleteers were medieval Muslim and Jewish merchants who would trek with their wares from the Spanish coast across the rugged interior by pack mule. The salting of cod, an invention of the time, enabled muleteers, shepherds, and other landlocked Iberians to survive on ocean fish. I was fascinated to learn that the word *arriero* derives from the Arabic *Arree! Arree!*, the ubiquitous "giddyap" of the muleteer.¹⁶

In Granada I ate little croquettes of finely pounded salt cod, and another type of croquette made with ham. These were appetizers at a conference dinner at the Carmen de los Chapiteles, a restaurant perched above the river Darro at the edge of the Albaicín, the most recognizably Moorish district of the city. Both types of croquette were oblong and filled with a béchamel-type sauce, and had been rolled in breadcrumbs and gently deep-fried in oil until crispy.

The croquettes were followed by bowls of *ajo blanco* ("white garlic"), a refreshing cold soup of Andalucía. In Granada it is made by soaking bread or crumbs in water and vinegar, then beating this with olive oil, fava bean flour, and garlic pounded with salt. The resulting emulsification is smooth, drinkable, and milky-white. In a renowned version from Málaga, a port city to the southwest, ground blanched almonds replace the bean flour, and a few Muscat grapes that have been peeled, halved, and seeded are floated in the bowl before serving. *Ajo blanco* is one of many uncooked breadcrumb soups eaten in Moorish times by muleteers and peasants as simple midday meals, prepared raw from stale bread with a mortar and pestle. Our meal at Los Chapiteles included two other eminently Moorish dishes: *berenjenas rellenas*, or eggplant halves stuffed with minced vegetables and breadcrumbs and topped with beaten eggs before baking; and *cordero asado*, or roast leg of lamb, glazed with the juice of Seville (sour) oranges sweetened with sugar.

Gazpacho, the Castilian name for cold breadcrumb soups like *ajo blanco*, appears to have been borrowed from

Mozarabic, an extinct Latin-derived language once spoken alongside Arabic by the Mozarabs, the "Arabized" or bilingual Christians of Moorish Spain.¹⁷ Food historian Raymond Sokolov has called *gazpacho* "the soup the tomato overwhelmed," an apt description of the now prevalent post-expulsion version, *gazpacho andaluz*.¹⁸ It is made mostly from tomato and green pepper, both New World plants. Perhaps more important is the absence of almonds or fava beans as found in older *gazpachos* like *ajo blanco*.

By itself, then, *gazpacho andaluz* does not make a satisfactory one-dish repast for a peasant or anyone else. It only "works" as an early course of a larger meal, which is how I always ate it. The *gazpacho andaluz* at Sibari's was deep orange, with a few bits of raw onion, tomato and green pepper afloat as garnish. Over in the Sacromonte district, the version served at a *zambra gitana* (gypsy grotto restaurant) was thinner and yellowish-orange, with more vinegar and less tomato, slurped right from the bowl without a spoon. At a streetcorner restaurant in Málaga, the soup was pinkish-orange, also thin but served with a saucer of chopped onion, green pepper, cucumber, tomato and pimento for sprinkling. At the opposite extreme, at a neighborhood place in Antequera I tried the local version, *porra antequerana*. Intensely deep orange, as stiff as prepared salad dressing from a jar, it was served in an earthenware bowl. Resting on the surface were wedges of tomato, chopped hardcooked egg and yes, salty morsels of *jamón ibérico*.

Paella: the World on a Single Plate

It was late at night in Torredembarra, a fishing town some 10 miles north of Tarragona on the northeast coast of Spain. I hadn't eaten, and drove up to the first place I found open on the sea road, the Bar/Restaurant Tropic. There, surrounded by tables of dingily dressed fishermen while "Gone With the Wind," dubbed in Spanish, played overhead on TV, I feasted on one of the best meals I have ever had, a *paella marinera*.

The *paella* was preceded by a grand *ensalada catalunha* that featured a large flank of tuna, halved hardcooked eggs draped with anchovies, a silky-pink slice of *jamón serrano*, three kinds of olives and nearly a dozen other items.

The chief glory of a properly made *paella* is, ironically, the rice itself. I stared in wonder at the 12-inch pan that was set on a little table beside me as the waiter carefully transferred some of its contents to my plate. The rice was short-grain white rice but it was a deep golden brown, for it had been simmered in a rich fish broth to which saffron and other spices had been added. The broth is typically made from fish bones and skin and mortar-pounded shellfish carapaces, making it taste like the very brine where the seafood once swam. As the broth simmers in the uncovered pan, most of the water vaporizes leaving a thick slurry, golden brown and slightly grainy: yes, like mud. Crowned with mussels, oysters, and a *cabrajo* (langoustine) and *langostino* (jumbo shrimp) with their claws, eyeballs and antennae all intact, the dish resembled the ocean floor itself.

Such a seafood *paella* is kith and kin with the fish and rice casseroles prepared for family and religious occasions in

medieval Spain. The shallow, uncovered *paella* pan was developed from the earlier Roman *patella* to make the best use of heat from scarce firewood, while allowing the evaporation of moisture and the absorption of wood smoke. When the simmering was completed, the Moors would remove the skillet from the fire and sit Bedouin-style around it, eating with boxwood spoons from the common dish.¹⁹ Centuries later, in Christian Spain in the countryside around Valencia, there arose another saffron-rich *paella* preparation made with meats and vegetables instead of seafood, the now classic *paella valenciana*.

Living under Islam, many social classes in Spain—and not just the wealthiest ones—had access to foods once available only in distant lands. It became customary to combine these in a single meal or even, as we see in *paella*, a single dish. This approach to eating was perhaps the Moors' greatest contribution to cuisine. Fleets that operated along the Mediterranean coast netted tuna, sardines, anchovies and other seafood, which was even carried to great inland cities like Córdoba and Seville.²⁰ The Arabs had brought rice from Asia in the 9th Century, creating paddies by draining the marshes around Lake Albufera just south of Valencia; it was a short-grain rice, which would later be transplanted elsewhere in Spain and in northern Italy.²¹ By 960, the Moors were producing saffron from a species of crocus they introduced to the plains of La Mancha.²²

Also symbolic of medieval culinary riches are the tiny Spanish meatballs *albóndigas*, so named because of their size and shape (from the Arabic *al-bunduq*, "hazelnut"²³). Traditionally they were made of finely minced lamb or beef, eggs, herbs and spices. The oily broth in which they were stewed would be acidulated with either lemon juice, pomegranate juice, or vinegar of raisin or tamarind, and thickened with flour. In modern Spain the meatballs are often made with a mixture of pork and beef, and are stewed in a tomato sauce.²⁴ The occasional use of spices like saffron, cumin and cilantro is one of the few overt reminders of their Moorish origin. At a corner pastry shop in Granada I bought a *pastel de carne* (meat pie), a puff pastry having two or three cylindrical levels tapering up from a six-inch base. Stuffed inside were the famous stewed *albóndigas*.

I had the pleasure of tasting these meatballs in their original Moorish form at a bar-restaurant in Chefchaouën, a town in the foothills of the Rif mountains in northern Morocco. Because Chefchaouën was mostly settled in the 1500s by Muslims and Jews expelled from Granada, its architecture, cuisine and music preserve an Andalusian influence. My waiter called the little meatballs of finely minced lamb by their later Ottoman name, *kefta*. No more than half an inch wide, they'd been cooked in their unctuous sauce in a *tagine* (a North African stewpot with a conical lid), having been flavored with a careful mixture of cumin, coriander and other spices. The meatballs were arrayed around a lightly fried egg sprinkled with flat-leaf parsley, giving the dish a charming center of green on white.

Albóndigas meatballs were most closely associated with the Jews of Spain, who fried them in olive oil, or cooked them in broth after stuffing them in mutton tripe tied with string.²⁵ Swiss scholar Lucie Bolens conjures up the sights

and smells of a typical 13th-Century Sephardic home in which "the fine texture and small size of the meatballs, in a deep dish awaiting diners from the brazier, convey a sense of accumulation, a mountain of abundance."²⁶ Such meatballs were also commonly added to the Sabbath stew, or *adafina*, along with chickpeas and other ingredients. In a typical Inquisition case, a Jewish *conversa* was tortured on the rack in Guadalajara in 1520 for what investigators called her "having practiced Jewish rites, preparing *adafina* and *albóndigas* in the Jewish fashion, and keeping the Sabbath."²⁷ The *adafina* version of *albóndigas* is often called *armundigas* in Morocco and *olmendigas* in Mexico.

The Marrano Sweets were Preserved by Nuns

Walking through downtown Tarragona, I saw a whole window display of *turrón de Alicante*, a high-quality, dense almond nougat carrying the name of a coastal town over 200 miles to the south.

Something clicked in my memory. Once, when I was a little boy, my parents gave us some orange-flavored almond nougat sold under the name Torrone Ferrara. The tiny half-ounce box in which my candy was individually packed was so cute that I held onto it. Reading the side panel now, I see that the Ferrara Confectionery Company of New York claimed the following origin for Italian *torrone*:

The birth of *torrone* occurred in Cremona in 1441 at the famous wedding celebration of Francesco Sforza to Bianca Marie Visconti. The buffet featured a new sweet made of nutmeats, honey and egg whites in the shape of the famous tower of Cremona called Torrione, hence the name *torrone*.

Actually, *torrone* was not named for any tower, and it was far from being "a new sweet" in 1441. The names of *torrone*, *marzapane* and other almond confections, along with the knowledge of how to make them, had arrived in Italy from Spain as the Christian conquest of Iberia advanced during the first few centuries of the millennium. Earlier, the Arabs had planted Spain with groves of almonds in many varieties, including Málaga's large *lawz al-jiná'in* ("garden almond," which became in Spanish *almendra jardín*, whence the corrupted *Jordan almond* in English). People in Alicante would toss almonds into a pot of honey heated to boiling on hot coals, then pour this syrup into rectangular molds lined with flour-dusted paper. The nougat came to be called *turrado* or *turrón*, from the Spanish verb *turrar*, "to boil on hot coals."²⁸ In Jijona, just north of Alicante, the almonds were first ground into paste, producing a *turrón* akin to the *mazapan* of Toledo. Iberian Jews, for whom almonds symbolically recalled the Holy Land, enjoyed *turrón* at Passover, Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot.²⁹

In time, white sugar joined honey as a sweetener for *turrón* and *mazapan*, making these among the first sugar candies produced in Europe. The Arabs in Spain had perfected sugar refinement and sugarcane irrigation, spreading the latter as far north as Castellón de la Plana (the same latitude as Philadelphia) and bringing 74,000 acres under cultivation by 1150.³⁰ Cane is still grown on a small scale outside Málaga and Motril, mostly to make rum. I saw some isolated canebrakes in southern Spain, and segments of

Endnotes



A small patch of sugarcane in Jaén province, southern Spain. At left in the distance are the remains of the 10th-Century Moorish castle of al-Qabdo'áq, modern Alcaudete. (Photo: Randy K. Schwartz)

cane were being sold at a sidewalk fruit stall in Granada, deep green in color, about 9 inches long and 3 inches wide.

In a Granada bakery I tried a *rosco de naranja casero*, or "homemade orange doughnut." It looked like half of a tawny-brown bagel, except that the top was glazed with egg wash and the inside was pale yellow. The texture and flavor reminded me of a mild, orange-zested *mandelbrot*. *Roscós* have been linked to the older *k'ak*, a plain baked bread ring of Egypt dating back to the 1100s or earlier.³¹ A great variety of them were eaten in Moorish Spain, made from matzo meal or white or semolina flour colored with egg yolks or saffron, often flavored with rose water, sugar, ground almond or anise seed. The leavened or unleavened dough would be rolled into logs that were coiled round to make rings, hence the name *rosco*, "coiled thing" in Spanish. Smaller ones, as little as 1½ inches in diameter, are called *rosquillas*. The doughnuts can be fried in olive oil, baked in an oven, or boiled in water and then baked, as with bagels. The fanciest versions have a fruit or nut filling and are topped with honey, syrup or sprinkled sugar. The Jews of Spain celebrated marriages and births with *rosquillas* and the similar *tarales*.³²

The Grand Inquisitors succeeded in expelling most Jews and Muslims from Iberia through sheer terror. Even so, they could not expunge all traces of Moorish culture or cuisine. Simply put, it tasted too good! Ironically, as portions of the peninsula were conquered from the Arabs, it was Catholic nuns who took over baking many treats like *turrón*, *mazapan* and *rosquillas*. The convents produced these sweets in order to raise funds for their own preservation. But in the process, they also preserved a Muslim and Jewish high art of confection, and helped spread it to the rest of Europe. ■

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16. Ford, p. 86; Corriente, p. 11 s.v. 'RR.
17. Ralph Penny, *A History of the Spanish Language* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 223-224.
18. Raymond A. Sokolov, *Why We Eat What We Eat* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), pp. 116-120.
19. Riós and March, pp. 93-97.
20. Mohammed Hammam, "La Pêche et le Commerce du Poisson en Méditerranée Occidentale (X^e-début XVI^e): Tableau Historico-géographique Établi d'Après les Sources Musulmanes," in Mohammed Hammam, ed., *L'Occident Musulman et l'Occident Chrétien au Moyen Âge* (Rabat, Morocco: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres, 1995), pp. 153-4.
21. Margarita López de Pablo López, "La Filière Riz en Espagne," *Cahiers Options Méditerranéennes* 15:2 (1996), pp. 93-100.
22. Sarah Woodward, *Moorish Food: Mouth-Watering Recipes from Morocco to the Mediterranean* (London: Kyle Cathie Ltd., 1998), p. 8.
23. Corriente, p. 67 s.v. BNDQ.
24. Riós and March, p. 185; Joan Nathan, *Jewish Cooking in America* (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998), p. 172.
25. Miguel-Ángel Motis Dolader, "Mediterranean Jewish Diet and Traditions in the Middle Ages," in Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, eds., *Food: A Culinary History* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999), p. 238.
26. Lucie Bolens, "Le Soleil Pulvérisé sur les Tables Andalouses du Moyen Âge: Viandes et Sorbets (XIII^e Siècle)," *L'Andalousie du Quotidien au Sacré: XI-XIII^e Siècles* (Hampshire, UK: Variorum, 1990), p. XI:29. My translation.
27. Gitlitz and Davidson, pp. 171-4.
28. Ibid., pp. 261-3.
29. Ibid., p. 261; Motis Dolader, pp. 225-6.
30. Andrew M. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques, 700-1100* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 28-9; Tor Eigeland, "Arabs, Almonds, Sugar and Toledo," *Aramco World* 47 (May-June 1996), p. 35.
31. García Sánchez, p. 151; Maxime Rodinson, "Recherches sur les Documents Arabes Relatifs à la Cuisine," *Revue des Études Islamiques* (1949), p. 140, 152; Li Guo, "Arabic Documents from the Red Sea Port of Quseir in the Seventh/Thirteenth Century, Part I: Business Letters," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 58:3 (July 1999), pp. 183-5.
32. Gitlitz and Davidson, pp. 266-74; Motis Dolader, p. 229.

CHAA CALENDAR

Apr. 22

(7-9pm at Zingerman's)

Ari Weinzwieg

(Founding partner, Zingerman's
Delicatessen)

"Life on the Wild Side:

The Story of Wild Rice in North America"

May 20

(7-9pm at Walden Hills Community Room)

Sherry Sundling

"The History of Dorm Food"

Call for Volunteer(s)

We have a need for one or more members to volunteer to organize the CHAA archives and to write a summary of our history.

If you might be interested, please contact Margot Michael or Jan Longone.

REPAST

2222 FULLER COURT #1101A
ANN ARBOR, MI 48105-2316



Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

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Ann Arbor Dist. Library/S. Jensen
343 South 5th Avenue
Ann Arbor 48104, <> <>

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