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Repast

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Adventures in Jewish Baking



Fresh bialys from a batch made by CHAA member Phil Zaret. Read his article, "Achieving the Perfect Homemade Bagel", on pages 13-15.



Joshua Lott for the *New York Times* (Jun. 29, 2013)

Repast

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Orthodox Rabbi Aaron Teitelbaum of New York, center, blesses wheat on a Christian farmer's land in Yuma, AZ, where it is grown to make flour for Passover matzah. Two men, dressed in Hasidic robes, lived in a trailer for seven weeks to make sure the crop, once matured, was untouched by rain or other moisture that would promote fermentation, which is forbidden for the ritually unleavened bread. Back in New York, the grain will be milled, the dough mixed and kneaded, and the bread baked using centuries-old methods.

SEPHARDIC MATZAH *continued from page 9*

Each of these instances recalls a period of persecution, yet each is also a testament to endurance; and without having them represented in the matzah, my remembrance of the Exodus at Pesach would be lessened. And yes, it can all be summed up for me in the simple act of mixing together flour and water and eggs, rolling dough, and baking it. I know— it seems odd to give so much significance to such ordinary ingredients, to making a dry flatbread. But my homemade matzah is infused with sorrow and with joy, with the weight of history and with the power of memory. I feel it as I bake, each year.

Making matzah for the first time was something new and novel, something to cross off my culinary “to do” list. I prepared it again last year; does that make it a tradition, now? Or do I need to wait until this year— third time’s the charm—to enshrine it as such? (*Chazakah* is a Jewish tradition that dictates that the third instance makes something permanent.) This having become an integral part of my holiday commemoration, Pesach is no longer the same for me without taking the time to bake matzah. The results might not meet any religious requirements or uphold the letter of the law. But the process pays great respect to the spirit of the law, to history, to memory, and to survival. ■

GROWING UP IN A MIDWEST JEWISH BAKING FAMILY

by Elliott Grodsky

Elliott Grodsky of Farmington Hills, MI, is a retired English teacher. He earned BA and MA degrees at Wayne State Univ. in Detroit in 1963 and 1971, respectively. His teaching included 35 years in Detroit public middle and high schools, and another 19 years part-time at Schoolcraft College and Oakland Community College.

My father, Abe Grodsky, was a baker and business owner almost all of his adult life. He learned his baking skills early as a helper in his father's bakery (the original family name was Wyszogrodzki). As a young man in his 20s, Abe attended a school for a time in Chicago to learn the chemistry of baking. Afterward, he worked for some years as an employee, but, soon tiring of employee status, he ventured into entrepreneurship.

My memories of my father as an independent bakery owner are rooted in the store he had in Chicago about 1950-53,

and later ones in Detroit. Prior to the 1950s he and Ike, who was one of his triplet brothers, had been business partners in New York, but I was too young to have memories of that.

My parents maintained a kosher household and practiced the major dietary rules. Since my father's stores catered largely to Jewish customers, he conformed to a major requirement of Jewish law by keeping his store closed every Saturday, the weekly day of rest known as *Shabbos*.

The Hours of Toil Were Never Counted

My father always seemed to be in the "shop". But in fact, he would eat and sleep at home (always very soundly, I must add), go to Masonic meetings and spend time coaching or "posting" other men in the secret catechisms of Freemasonry, and go to *shul* dutifully at holiday times. He would eat with the family whenever he didn't have to be in the shop to get the goods (breads and rolls, but occasionally some of the Danish) ready for the next business day.

Besides the requirement to keep the store stocked, there were the people-tending needs: managing the salesladies in the "front", the porter, the agent from the bakers' union, suppliers of eggs, flour, plastic bags, and five-pound slabs of chocolate, to name a few people, and, of course, usually one other bread baker and the cake baker. The store was necessarily the priority, and his hours spent toiling in it were never counted. They ended whenever the work was finished, and then it was time to sleep.

continued on next page



I was probably sitting on a stack of flour sacks when I took this photo of my father Abe making *rugelach* in his bakery, with sunlight streaming through a nearby window. To make this traditional Jewish pastry, he's cutting out narrow, flat strips of cake dough using a round-blade pastry cutter, similar to an ordinary pizza cutter. He'll cut the strips again crosswise and fill the resulting pieces of dough with fruit, nuts, cinnamon, and perhaps some other ingredients. Then he'll roll each one closed, and bake the pastries in an oven.

A BAKING FAMILY *continued from page 3*

If he were tired, he never seemed to show it or speak of it. That he was tired, however, was revealed in the depth of his sleep and grogginess upon waking. I recall the manner of waking him when my mother was busy at the bakery and I was alone with him at home in the late afternoon. I roused him gently by speech and some gentle nudging. Then, after he rose to a sitting position with his head tilted back and his eyes slowly opening, I proffered the favorite waking agent—a tall, cold glass of orange juice. He extended a steady hand, I placed the glass in it, and he drank it all at once.

His mission was always to take care of the family at all cost while making a product to meet his standards of quality.

Helping Out at Dad's Bakery

I loved to watch my father work. I wanted to be like him, but he was not interested in teaching me. It seemed clear, though I don't recall his ever voicing it, that a baker's life wasn't what he wanted for me.

Nevertheless, he did let me do tasks "in the back" often enough to keep me happy. I flushed with importance at his signals to break eggs by the quarts for the dough mixes, peel and chop onions, fill doughnuts with jelly or custard, bag breads for delivery to his jobbers when he converted his business to wholesale bread production, and fire up the massive, gas-fed, white-tiled ovens.

A couple of experiences are worth describing in greater detail. One memory was my joy at being allowed to "make the sour", that is, to make the sour dough, a blend of plain water and flour used only for rye breads. My requests to perform that service would be better described as soulful entreaties, because of my father's continual reluctance to consent. He and I knew the job was arduous and likely undoable by a slightly-built 135-pounder. However, I wanted a chance at that mark of accomplishment even if it meant having my arms, encased to the elbows in the yeasty muck, pulled free in one great sucking sound. I did succeed, but the commitment quickly paled—it was very hard work.

The other experience, which I had several times, was delivering large, impressively-built wedding or *bar mitzvah* cakes in my father's 1957 Chevy 210 station wagon. It was a physically demanding job as well as a psychological challenge. Our store's porter, T.C., was a sturdily-built, cooperative, smiley young man who cleaned pans, swept up, and occasionally stole our baking supplies for later resale. He and I would carefully deposit the frighteningly tall, buttercream-laden wedding cakes, or the less tall but equally bedecked *bar mitzvah* cakes, in the back of the wagon and set out to the caterer's hall.

The greatest trial was maneuvering the cake onto the display table without toppling it. We walked slowly with tiny steps and straining arms up curbs and thresholds toward the table setting and eager onlookers. Once, after delivering a large cake that had suffered a slight corner crinkling during our handling, I was met with rage from the buyer. Since I had neither the skill nor corrective squeezebag supplies with me, I could offer no remedy. The angry lady continued to rant as my

discomfort slowly turned to anger and a plan of settlement. I told her if that she remained dissatisfied, I could take the cake back and let her settle with my father after her cakeless party. The cake stayed.

I also made other deliveries in our station wagon. This last task was, by far, my favorite activity. By my father's trust in me to accomplish the deliveries, I grew in confidence. The act of driving was an important activity to a young man, and being trusted to do it well was truly significant.

In the early 1960s, delivery minivans had not quite caught on with business owners, so we used a Chevy station wagon. I was given free use of this car, which took me to my classes at Wayne State after the deliveries and was always available for my personal use. I used to load this car to spring-creaking level with bins of warm breads that steamed the windows. Often, I would have to return to the bakery for a second load. It was a happy labor born of my father's reliance on me.

Ethics, Resourcefulness, and Thrift

In addition to the maturing experiences gained through my father's cautious doling of responsibilities, I continued to observe his operation, and my understanding and respect for him grew.

First, I learned by continual observation the meaning of ethical job performance. Abe was intolerant of the laggard worker, the latecomer, or the man who took an "unreasonable" amount of time to eat his meal. Consequently, there was often tension between him and the union business agent, as workers occasionally complained of my father's displays of impatience. Yet, in appreciation for good performance, my father paid his conscientious workers higher than union-scale wages.

A second characteristic of my father was his resourcefulness. He was capable of doing whatever was necessary to keep his business going profitably. In particular, when neighborhood conditions caused a marked loss of retail trade, my father closed the retail end and went into the wholesale business full-time.

The wholesaling experience started with the converted retail store known as "Weiner's Sanitary Bakery" on Linwood Avenue in Detroit. My father secured jobbers or "drivers" who would supply retail outlets on their routes. They gave him daily supply orders, and he met their needs dependably by early morning. He had his financial heyday with wholesaling for several years in the early 1960s.

In another location and with the next retail business that my father acquired, the retail operation again had to be dropped and replaced by wholesale. This time I saw him adapt most effectively and confidently to launch his new enterprise. A local restaurant offered a large sandwich specialty made from a "Big Wheel" bread, a cylindrical loaf about twelve inches long and six inches in diameter. The owner needed a steady daily supplier. My father contracted with a local tinsmith to make a unique hinged pan to mold dough into the needed configuration. After convincing the restaurant owner of his capabilities—in part, by changing into a business suit and tie for the meeting—he gained his confidence as well as a

lucrative and long-lasting relationship. Thus, he helped a restaurant owner with a special need and thereby acquired a profitable business account.

Finally, a memorable facet of my father's personality was his thrift. He and my mother had been young adults during the Great Depression and learned to be frugal and to stretch a precious dollar. There were a number of situations in which I was involved in their philosophy and practices of saving. I recall, for example, that a request for a stick of chewing gum was answered with half a piece; butter on a piece of bread had to be spread vapor-thin; paper had to be used on both sides; and my plate had to be left crumbless. When very young, as I observed in the family photo album, I wore my sister's outgrown sunsuits, and later I was given my boy cousin's hand-me-downs. When my father bought us a bicycle, it was to be shared by my sister and me. When one of its tires became slightly torn and detached near the rim, causing the inner tube to bulge out dangerously, I decided I could not ask for a repair; instead, I rode carefully and kept checking the tire.

Probably the episode of frugality that affected me the most socially concerned the time I joined the Boy Scouts and had to ask for money for a uniform. I was given only enough money for one part, the neckerchief. That just wasn't sufficient for me to feel that I fit in, and I dropped out. Because I was aware, even as a child, of the relatively high cost of a two-week stay at a Summer camp and understood my father's reluctance to pay, I did not lobby for such an extravagance. I learned not to ask for any expenditure that might be judged trivial.

My father's philosophy about work, his actions as a businessman, and his financial conservatism cannot define him fully or perhaps even truly. They are merely a few of the markers of the man that I, his son, consider predominant. He will be another kind of man to other people. What I saw in the man is what I found significant and admirable, even the trait that I described as a somewhat exuberant thriftiness. Those are the characteristics that have influenced me through the years and for which I am grateful. I have my father's work ethic and have tried always to produce a good "product", painful though

it might have been at times. I have found ways to care for my family by finding sources of income. And I have learned foresight and ways to conserve my finances.

Becoming Father to the Father

When he was in his mid-50s, life suddenly became complicated and slowed my father's activities considerably. He developed a heart condition and suffered at least two heart attacks. He had smoked long, unfiltered Pall Malls for at least 20 years. In addition, he was a happy, unmindful eater— in quantity— of Jewish cooking, with its abundant fat content. His arteries became clogged and were further ravaged by the effects of smoking. In his condition, bypass surgery was not a promising option. He tried to alter his diet, but he couldn't break the smoking addiction. To the horror of those who discovered how he tried to relax, packs of cigarettes were found under the driver's seat of his car.

He suffered from pains and consequently worried about his health. As he slowed in activity, he became moderately depressed, at least by my observation.

Yet his moodiness led to another state of mind which I found appealing. To a degree, he became dependent on me. He sought my company and wanted to go places with me. When I was young and wanted to fit into his working world, I would try to tag along when he delivered orders and ran necessary, miscellaneous errands. My signature request was, "Can I go witcha?" or "I wanna go witcha." This often worked and I was always excited. My father never forgot my words, for he used them in seeking my attention and my company when we both were many years older and our life circumstances had changed, I becoming older and more mature and independent and he becoming older and more needy. When I offered to go to the hardware store for a small item to fix his doorlock, he said, "I'll go witcha." It is still a sentence that stays with me, this time because of the fact that my father spoke it to me.

Our relationship had come full-circle. In a sense, I had become father to the father, and welcomed it. ■

Bakery Breads

by Marvin Brandwin

At night when the bakery closed the breads came off the shelves.
They gathered around the countertops and talked among themselves.
The raisin, pumpernickel, rye and other breads plain or seeded
Reflected on how their loaves began and the joy of being kneaded.
They passed the night discussing what daytime sales had brought
And wondered who on the following day was likely to be bought.
Each spoke with thoughtful words and respected what the others said
For as the seeded rye remarked, "Don't forget we're all well-bred."
Then the pumpernickel said, "I thought your being funny was a rumor
But now I know it's true for you do have a wry sense of humor."
And in the morning when the bakery owner came to open the store
All the breads were on the shelves and as silent as the day before.

The three poems in this issue of *Repast* are by CHAA member Marvin A. Brandwin from his books, *A Smorgasbord of Verse: Easy to Digest Food Poems* (Charing Cross Press, 2009) and *A Taste of Rhyme: Second Helping* (self-published, 2011). Marvin is an Asst. Professor Emeritus of Psychology in the Dept. of Psychiatry, Univ. of Michigan Health System. He grew up in Brooklyn, where he rooted for the Dodgers.

RAIDER OF THE LOST KNISH

by Laura Silver

Laura Silver is the author of a forthcoming book, Knish: In Search of the Jewish Soul Food (Brandeis University Press, May 2014). Currently a Media Project Associate at Transportation Alternatives in New York, she has worked as a writer, researcher, producer, or teacher at a variety of organizations, including the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, The New School Univ., Edible Hudson Valley, WNYC and NPR radio, the UJA-Federation, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage. An earlier version of this essay appeared last year on the website Jewish Ideas Daily, recently re-launched as Mosaic. Ms. Silver has degrees in French and comparative literature from the Univ. of Massachusetts at Amherst, and in English and poetry from the City Univ. of New York (Brooklyn College).

I took the knish for granted; then it was gone.

More than *latkes*, *matzah*, or the chopped-apple-and-walnut *haroset* that crowned the Seder plate, knishes were our religion. My family went on Brooklyn-Queens Expressway pilgrimages to Mrs. Stahl's Knishes of Brighton Beach, and harbored the findings in our freezer. My parents ushered knishes into the toaster oven and moved magazines to make room on the Saturday afternoon table.

More than Hebrew School, a Torah scroll, or the eternal light in the synagogue, the knish provided sanctuary. It encapsulated my identity: ethnic, funny, and grounded in the past.

When my father's mother got a spot in coveted senior housing on the beach a few blocks from Mrs. Stahl's, our lives intermingled with the stuffed dough in a new way. Gramma Fritzie was not a knish baker, but she was a knish consumer extraordinaire. I stocked her icebox at each visit: a half-dozen of the kasha (buckwheat) variety, to be heated in the toaster oven and served to guests and the parade of international home aides who managed the unpleasant and unmentionable aspects of the aging process. Angie from Trinidad, Paulane from Haiti, and Renate from Russia all became conversant in the ways of my grandmother and in the ways of the knish: one syllable, non-silent K, served with mustard.

I inherited my grandmother's teapot, her popcorn popper, and unused Hallmark stationery; but when I really needed to conjure her, I went to Mrs. Stahl's. The store wafted warm and oniony with strains of Yiddish. I took my kasha knish hot and headed for the boardwalk, hoping for an encounter with the spirit of my grandmother. Elderly men in long shorts, earphones, and metal detectors scoured the beach; I relied on the knish. I gazed up at the window of Apartment 12A of the Scheuer House and



imagined Gramma staring down, speaking to me through the steam that emanated from the paper bag.

Mrs. Stahl's became my surrogate grandmother. The woman behind the counter was Latina, but that diminished nothing. When my father's Aunt Esther died, my parents and I went to the graveside service on Staten Island, lingered awkwardly, and made a beeline for Mrs. Stahl's, for solace and something to stick in

our stomachs. We knew her offspring more intimately than Aunt Esther's.

Then she, too, disappeared.

For 70 years, Mrs. Stahl's Knishes had stood beneath the elevated subway at Brighton Beach. Then it became a Subway®. Sepia maps of old New York covered the walls of the sandwich franchise and masked the real history the shop embodied. I could not revive Mrs. Stahl's knishes, so I set out to gather facts.

A handful of phone calls led me to Mike Conte, the Vineland, NJ, pasta maker who purchased Mrs. Stahl's recipe from the shop's final owner. Conte made his kitchen kosher, mixed the dough and filling by machine and finished the knishes by hand. He baked Mrs. Stahl's staple next to his heirloom *gnocchi* and *tortellini* and trucked the Ashkenazi pockets to New York, where deli cases and bagel shops took them in. Small placards with the Mrs. Stahl's name accompanied each shipment, but no one displayed them.

That was 2005, on my father's side.

In 2008, I landed in Bialystok, Poland, for a look at the land of my maternal forebears. I met up with my mother and four of her cousins. The older generation was gone; we were several times removed. It had been decades since we'd seen each other. They lived in New Jersey, we lived in New York.

Our guide took us to the Jewish cemetery of Bialystok. Tomek Wisniewski read Hebrew from the disheveled tombstones and commandeered Cousin Ed to lift one of the toppled monoliths. No luck. We drifted toward the black obelisk that commemorated the pogrom of 1906 (our people left in 1914 and 1920). I admired the shiny, upright graves of the adjacent cemetery, Catholic.

We immersed ourselves in rich hot chocolate and a sauna. The Hotel Branicki (four stars) provided thick white robes and slippers, but no place to hang shock or mourning. I had arrived with visions of a Shabbat dinner with lace curtains that would evoke my mother's mother. Three times I asked Tomek to introduce us to the Jewish community. Three times he said there were only six people, none of whom had been born there. We were five women and one man, all descendants of Max and Celia Levy, buried in Washington Cemetery, Brooklyn. Cousin Ed kept saying that the last name, in Poland at least, had been Czapnik, according to what his father told him. I was not convinced and did not want to argue.



A scene at Mrs. Stahl's Knishes in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, NY, around 1980.

Photo by Barbara Pfeffer, donated in 1999 to the Museum of Jewish Heritage, Manhattan.

At dusk on our third and final night in Bialystok, my mother's cousin Maxine (named for Max Levy) remembered about the birth certificate. Maxine (she goes by Max) had traveled from San Diego to New York, through Prague and Warsaw, with a large brown duffel bag nicknamed The Beast. Its belly held a Ziploc® bag. The Ziploc® bag held a sheet of beige parchment, decked with official stamps, official seals, and official signatures. The sun began its descent. The wall behind the hotel glowed red. Our train was slated for 10 A.M. the next day. Tomek translated: in the town of Knyszyn was born a daughter, Szjena Czapnik (Jean, my grandmother's youngest sister, may she rest in peace, had died two years earlier, in Florida).

A year later, I landed in Poland with black and white printouts of knishes. Square ones, round ones, fried and baked, split and whole, exposed and encased in aluminum foil. Karol, a Polish Jew and new friend from Warsaw, agreed to be my interpreter. Tomek met us at the Bialystok station. Wooden churches and bales of hay pocked wide fields and a tarp of relentless sky. I expected "Fiddler on the Roof" meets "The Golden Girls", and braced myself for the local Hadassah chapter and the decades-old *cholent* they would have kept on the stove for just this occasion. "So you're the great-niece of Szejna Czapnik? She was a small child, but feisty."

Tomek sent Karol and me to roam the town square, then ushered us into Knyszyn Town Hall to the second-floor office of a Gene Wilder look-alike. The head of public relations for the town glanced at my knish headshots with a good-natured smile. Modern-day Knyszyn has 2,000 inhabitants; before World War 2, it had twice that number, half of whom were Jews. The town historian, Henryk Stasciewicz, arrived by bicycle, in a sportscoat. The men purred and sputtered. They asked for Aunt Jean's birth certificate and incanted, "Czapnik". I plucked words from the Polish: *Placzęca* (weeping, as in willow). *Pamiętać* (remember). *Ulica* (street). The men stood and sat, raised their voices and lowered them. They opened books and urged them

shut. I stared at the window with its lace curtains and thought: Nana's kitchen.

I saw her get teary over a cutting board, once. She blamed the onions. Nana made *kugels* with corn flakes, split pea soup, and seltzer-fluffy *matzah* balls. At the bakery on Jerome Avenue, she bought bow-tie cookies, chocolate horns and salt sticks, but Eva Farbstein née Levy never served knishes and never mentioned Knyszyn.

In Knyszyn, Pan Henryk (we addressed him with the everyday honorific for elders) took Tomek, Karol, and me to the graveyard. We parked on the outskirts and unfolded a quick picnic: local beer and a baked roll with vegetable guts. Pan Henryk tucked in his cuffs, turned up his collar, and led us through a forest studded with tombstones. We saw markers from the 1700s with Hebrew inscriptions worn to near-oblivion. Ten years before our visit, Tomek, who is not Jewish, transcribed and transliterated names from 700 *matzevot*, or grave markers. My family did not figure in, but the knish did. According to local legend, professional mourners hired to cry at funerals distributed filled pastries to the bereaved, to acknowledge grief and assuage it.

The following year, en route to Knyszyn yet again, I got waylaid at the State Archive in Bialystok. I wrote the Polish words for birth, death, and marriage on official state forms. Those forms brought binders, which brought more binders, which brought books of birth records in Cyrillic and a name I had never heard: Riwa Mordkowna (Riva, daughter of Mordechai), alongside one I had tried to ignore, Czapnik. My mother's mother was born with a name, nearly erased; in 1898, not in Bialystok, but in Knyszyn.

I haven't given up on the knish, and occasionally bake my own. More important: I'm a direct descendent of Knyszyn, which explains my penchant for wide sky, heavy carbohydrates, and haggling with the past. ■

SEPHARDIC MATZAH FOR PASSOVER

by Mary Bilyeu

CHAA member Mary Bilyeu has just moved to Toledo, OH, where she has been appointed as the new Food Editor at The Blade. Previously she was a freelance food writer and worked as the Rabbis' Administrative Assistant at Beth Israel Congregation in Ann Arbor. She maintained two regular food columns, "You Should Only Be Happy..." and "Frugal Friday", for AnnArbor.com, another food column for the Washtenaw Jewish News, and her own blog (foodflooze.blogspot.com). Mary has won or placed in more than 60 cooking contests. Her previous article for Repast was, "Molly Goldberg and Her Jewish Cookbook" (Fall 2012).

Two years ago at Passover (*Pesach* in Hebrew), I baked my own matzah for the first time. It was an amusement, a new project I'd never tackled before. The matzah—and I—meet no *halakhic* standards, standards of Jewish law. I can't mix and roll and cook an entire batch of the unleavened bread in the required 18 minutes, which is considered a short enough window that the bread will not rise. And I'm not officially Jewish although, as I like to say, I fake it pretty well. I consider myself a secular Jew (and recovering Catholic).

Why am I taking the time to make this bread myself? Why not simply buy a box at the grocery store, even perhaps investing a bit more for higher calibers of imported matzah rather than settling for the standard-issue square slabs that a friend once referred to as tasting "like wall"?

I symbolically cast off sins by performing the ritual of *Tashlich* at Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, reciting special prayers while tossing small bread crumbs into the Huron River. I light the Yellow Candle distributed by the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs on Yom HaShoah, the day that commemorates the Holocaust, in memory of the millions who were persecuted and lost. And I give *mishloach manot* (bags of treats) filled with homemade *hamantaschen* to loved ones at Purim, in addition to giving gifts to the poor, which is considered the greatest obligation at the holiday. I'm observant, actually, in my own way, though not to any degree of orthodox or "Because God said so" obedience. (And, of course, many of my observances revolve around food!) I live my life according to the Jewish calendar, but I only engage in those practices that have meaning for me.



Some of Mary Bilyeu's home-baked matzot

The next question to ask, then, is: "What do I derive from making matzah myself?" Everyone I know thinks this is an absurd way to spend my time; people are truly aghast to find out that I do it, as it is unheard of. I am the only person I know who has ever taken on this project, even just for the experience.

So, what do I learn? How do I benefit? Where is there significance in this action that no one else attempts as a part of their own holiday preparations?

I sound a bit like the rebellious child, who asks the second of the famous four questions at the ritual *Pesach* meal, *Seder*: "What is this observance to you?" Except that, instead of turning it back to others to explain what import the holiday and its practices hold for them, I seek to find it for myself rather than merely engaging in rote recitation or copycat behavior.

And for me, the lessons and spirit of *Pesach* come not from depriving myself of leavened bread for the duration of the eight-day holiday or from engaging in a final search to cleanse my home of *chametz*, forbidden foods, with a traditional feather and spoon and candle. In fact, as a non-Jew and the administrative assistant for two rabbis, I am the one who symbolically purchases *chametz* from the congregants so they will not be in possession of it. Why hunt for and banish crumbs, for example, when I'm already acquiring numerous families' worth of them in addition to my own? I didn't grow up with any Jewish traditions in my Catholic household, and so I have to create my own. But I also have to have a reason to do so.

Making the matzah enables me to appreciate how rushed the Israelites were—so desperate to escape bondage in Egypt when finally granted a brief window of opportunity—that their bread couldn't be permitted time to rise before they gathered their very few possessions and ran for their lives. I linger in my kitchen for two hours baking matzah at my leisure because I choose to spend a morning doing so, rather than striving, in a panic, to provide my family's sustenance for an exhilarating, but also terrifying, journey. As I take the

first batch out of the oven, my initial feeling is pride. Yet almost instantly after that, I see that I've exceeded the 18-minute window but have only the two matzot that would fit on a baking sheet; and I realize that there would have been no luxury for me of puttering in the kitchen any longer. There is a sense of failure in having missed a deadline, just a hint of what the consequences would have been to my family, dependent upon me for food. The sense of just how short this time frame is cannot fully be internalized without trying to meet the impossible standard myself.

Significance also comes from knowing that Angelina de León, whose recipe I use (see sidebar), had to pretend to convert to Catholicism during the Spanish Inquisition to avoid expulsion or death. And yet, she still felt the power of tradition and history and faith in continuing to bake matzah in her home, where she made the mistake of bestowing trust upon a servant, a member of her own household, who betrayed her and reported a forbidden activity. Baking this unleavened bread, as her ancestors before her had, was so critical to Angelina that she risked her life for it. She could have ignored the holiday, she could have made a concerted effort to adopt the teachings of the Catholic Church. Instead, she baked matzah, knowing fully that while it represented the liberation of her ancestors, this act might also jeopardize her own freedom. Her recipe is still accessible because it was entered into evidence at her trial.

And import comes from wiping the last traces of whites from the shells after I crack the eggs that enrich the matzah, a habit I adopted after reading about it in *Miriam's Kitchen*, the biography of a Holocaust survivor who teaches her daughter-in-law about life, family, Judaism, and resilience while they cook together. Miriam refuses to waste even the tiniest portion of the egg after near-starvation during the war. And now I can't dispose of an egg shell anymore without making sure I've salvaged every tidbit, a small remembrance of an event—like the Inquisition, like the Exodus—that came before my time but which can, and must, be kept relevant decades, centuries, or millennia later. That seemingly insignificant action resonated with me, and I continue to remember Miriam by repeating it.

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Matzah

by Marvin Brandwin

Matzah is a kind of bread.
Flat, because it has no yeast.
Created when Moses and his people fled
From Egypt through the Middle East.
Three thousand years have turned aside
Since matzah taste was rather newish.
And now it's eaten far and wide
By folks who aren't even Jewish.

Angelina de León's Matzah

(slightly adapted)

According to an article about "Jewish Foods of the Inquisition" (Andrée Brooks, *New York Times*, April 16, 1997): "It was a few days before Pesach in 1503 in northern Spain. Angelina de León was kneading a dough of white flour, eggs and olive oil, flavored with pepper and honey. She formed walnut-size balls, flattening them into round cakes and pricking them with a fork. Maria Sancho, the family maid, was watching. This was exactly the sort of recipe that the Inquisition authorities had told servants to report.... All of which would provide proof that this was a household of secret Jews [Conversos]—Jews who had ostensibly converted to Catholicism under pressure from the Church but who had clung to their Jewish rituals."

4 cups white flour
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
4 eggs
6 tablespoons honey
4 teaspoons olive oil
8 tablespoons water

Preheat oven to 400° F.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour and pepper. Mix well.

In a large measuring cup, combine eggs, honey, olive oil, and water; mix into the dry ingredients to make a dough. Do not overmix.

Divide the dough into 16 equal portions, and shape into balls. On a lightly-floured surface, roll each ball into a thin disk about 8 inches in diameter. Pierce all over with a fork.

Bake on cookie sheets for 10 minutes, or until matzot are golden at the edges. Cool on racks.

Makes 16 matzot.

Note: Matzah cake meal may be substituted for the flour, although the dough does not roll out as well. Increase the water by one half and bake for three minutes longer.

Note: The source article by Andrée Brooks was based on the work of husband-wife team David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson, professors at the University of Rhode Island, who later included Angelina de León's story and recipe, along with scores of others, in their award-winning book, *A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews* (New York, 1999).

WHY RYE?



JEWISH RYE BREAD FROM EASTERN EUROPE TO EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

by Amy Emberling

Amy and Geoffrey Emberling are new members of CHAA. Amy is a Managing Partner at Zingerman's Bakehouse in Ann Arbor, and Geoff is a researcher and lecturer in Near Eastern Studies at the Univ. of Michigan, where he specializes in Mesopotamian archaeology. Amy was one of the original members of the Bakehouse when it opened in 1992, and has been Managing Director for many years. She completed a BA in sociology at Harvard Univ. in 1988 and an MBA in marketing at Columbia Univ. in 1999; in between, she trained at l'École de Gastronomie Française at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, and also worked in Michigan restaurants. She spoke to our group in October 2009 on the topic, "Bread at the Origin of Civilization: A Baker's View".

Rye bread occupies two very different parts of my life. One is the professional world of artisan baking at Zingerman's Bakehouse, where we have baked Jewish rye bread and pumpernickel daily for the last 21 years, as well as German and French rye loaves. The other "rye sphere" of my life is my personal ethnic identity and family culture, which includes Jewish cuisine.

Rye Bread from Ike and Tootsie's Deli

I was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, a former coal-mining and steel-making town of 35,000 or so (it's been a diminishing population for as long as I can remember), on the beautiful and relatively remote island of Cape Breton in far eastern Canada. Go ahead and ask, everyone does: Were there really Jewish families there? Yes, there were. A community started there in the 19th Century and continues to this day. During my early childhood, the synagogue was thriving and was the center of religious and community life for about 100 families. However, by the time I was a teenager, in the 1980s, the community was clearly struggling, and it is now significantly diminished. My generation left for more promising opportunities, mainly in Halifax, the capital of the province, and Toronto.

In my family, the Levitens, we ate traditional Ashkenazi Jewish foods mostly during the Jewish holidays. *Gefilte* fish, chopped liver, matzah-ball soup, brisket, *tsimmes*, and *mandelbrot* were all familiar fare. At non-holiday times, a

guest would know our ethnicity from the bagels, lox, and pickled herring we ate at every Sunday brunch, and the Montreal smoked meat we warmed for Saturday lunch and ate on the fresh rye and pumpernickel we'd picked up after Saturday services. The prevalence of pickles and horseradish might have also been a clue that we weren't Irish or Scottish, the primary heritage of most of the rest of the community.

Rye and pumpernickel brings us to the other center of Jewish life in Sydney, the place where we could buy some of this food: Ike and Tootsie's Delicatessen. I just love saying that— Ike and Tootsie's. Who calls anyone Tootsie anymore? I don't even know what the official name of the delicatessen was. We just referred to it as Ike's and we'd go there every Saturday after synagogue. My mother would pick us up after Saturday morning services. We'd head over to Ike's to pick up fresh bread, often still warm: rye, pumpernickel, and what we called French. My mother bought more than we really needed because we often managed to eat half of each loaf during the drive home. Warm bread is irresistible in almost any form! My memories of rye bread are as much about visiting this deli as they are about actually eating the bread.

Ike's was a tiny store, very Old World in its atmosphere, packed with items, just like the stalls I have visited in Middle Eastern markets. In keeping with earlier times, Ike and Tootsie and their two children lived above the store. Live above the store? That seemed both exotic and mysterious to me. I preferred visiting when the store was busy because it gave me time to explore. I didn't complain about the extra time it took for Tootsie to whisper gossipy news to my mother. I loved seeing the foreign languages on the labels and peering through the glass jars trying to figure out what was in them. It was inside this store that I first discovered *panettone*, *halvah*, and artichokes. The smell of the store intrigued me, too. It was a mix of spices and pickle brine, olives... and probably a little dust, because not so many people in Sydney bought these unusual things, which therefore sat on the shelves for a long time. Each week I'd look carefully to see if something new had come in or if a jar had been sold.

Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada, in the 1970s, was very far away from the origins of the Jewish rye bread eating tradition. I wondered as a child why we ate this strong and foreign-tasting bread while my predominantly Catholic Scottish and Irish friends knew nothing about it. I understood that as Jews this is what we ate— but why? I wondered what it had to do with us? The answers to these questions came much later in my life when, as a professional baker, I began to explore the history of grains and styles of bread.

A Little History of Rye

Rye has never been the most popular of grains and has definitely taken second place to wheat and barley in world history. The rye plant was a wild weed in ancient Mesopotamia, the original breadbasket of the world, and there is some evidence that it was domesticated and grown intermittently before wheat and barley became the predominant grains there. Growing conditions are much



A Jewish breadseller does business in the streets of Krakow, Poland, around 1910

From an old postcard, photographed by Tomek Wisniewski

more favorable for rye in Northern Europe, where it is cooler and wetter, and it's believed that it was domesticated there around 1000 BCE. The first written records of rye cultivation were by the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder around 77 CE. He noted that it was grown around the Alps, and commented that it was "a very poor food and good only to avert starvation."

In more recent times, rye has been grown widely in Northern Europe and Russia. Rye is a weed that grows with wheat and was harvested and reseeded with wheat even when farmers didn't really want it. Interestingly, rye and wheat were often harvested and ground together, and the resulting flour was called *maslin* in English and *shitnitse* in Yiddish.¹ This was the primary form of flour in Northern Europe well into the 19th Century. It was produced as far south as Romania, the most southern reaches of Ashkenazi culture, where New World corn would become the predominant grain. There, the rye and wheat were sometimes ground with split peas or barley. So the Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern Europe were very familiar with rye, while Sephardic Jews were not at all.

Maslin is a key to the history of rye bread. Having the rye and the wheat mixed together was actually fortunate—even if unintended—for the baker and, in my mind, the eater as well. Both wheat and rye have the protein called gluten; gluten strands are formed in bread and stretch to hold the carbon dioxide given off by yeast. This results in loft and holes in the crumb of the bread, so gluten allows for a lightness in bread. Since rye has less gluten, a loaf made from 100% rye is very dense. The mixture of wheat and rye in maslin allows the high-gluten wheat to create a more pleasing texture in the bread. Most Jewish rye breads made

in the United States today are primarily wheat with a little rye.

The original rye bread of Northern Europe took the form of *kornbrot* (*korn* being the Yiddish word for rye²) and *schwarzbrot* (black bread). The differences between these two breads had to do with how refined the rye flour was and how much wheat flour was added to it, *schwarzbrot* being the more dark, coarse, and heavy of the two breads. Most daily bread of the Jews in Eastern Europe had very little wheat in it because of the expense. The poorer the community, the darker the bread. Sometimes caraway or *chernuska* (nigella) seeds were added to the bread, lending some additional flavor to what is otherwise a relatively mild-tasting grain. Most Americans think that rye bread has a very strong flavor, but that's really the caraway that is often added to the dough—not the rye itself.

Jewish rye bread was made from a sour rye starter called *roshtshine*. Before the mid-19th Century introduction of commercial yeasts and baking powders, virtually all leavened breads were made with sour starters. To add color, moistness, and a deeper flavor, bakers used a form of sour starter called an *altus* or *alte brot*, "old bread". I believe that this was also an economic strategy—a way to use unsellable bread rather than to waste it or feed it to animals. It has also been suggested that this was a symbolic religious gesture of maintaining the circle of life by adding some of yesterday's bread to today's. The bakers generally made large rounds or ovals weighing many pounds. They were then sold by weight, in pieces. Before placing the loaves in the wood-fired ovens, bakers would make a glaze of sifted rye flour and water. The effect was a slightly lighter and shiny crust

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WHY RYE?

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relative to an unglazed loaf. This glaze was called *kharmushke*.

The bread was eaten in chunks or slices as an accompaniment to the other foods on a person's plate. It might have been schmearred with chicken *schmaltz* (rendered fat, a non-dairy item suited to kosher rules) and topped with herring and onions on a good day, or with meat or chopped liver on a more special day. These traditions were brought to the United States in the mid-19th Century, where they evolved to what I became familiar with in my childhood. German, Polish, and Russian bakers continued to make a tangy rye bread using a starter and a combination of rye flour and the much more common, and now not nearly as expensive, wheat flour. Add some commercial yeast to the mix and we have arrived at what was dubbed Jewish Rye, the bread of Jewish deli sandwiches.

Rye Bread at Zingerman's Bakehouse

I discovered some of this history and solved my childhood mystery of "why rye?" in the early 1990s when we opened Zingerman's Bakehouse. The Bakehouse was created initially to make bread for Zingerman's Delicatessen. The most important breads we needed to master were Jewish Rye in all its forms—caraway seeded, not seeded, *chernuska*, *tsitsel* (a round loaf with a slit in the top made from a caraway-free dough; the Yiddish word means "breast"), and pumpernickel.

The process we chose to follow is remarkably similar to the method of our Old World forebears. In September 1992, we created a rye sour that we have fed and fermented every day since. To create this starter, we followed the same steps as had Jewish bakers of Poland and Russia 200 years earlier. We mixed rye flour with water, and put raw chopped onions and caraway seeds wrapped in cheesecloth into the sticky mixture. Then we left it to ferment. Eight hours later, we fed it more rye and water and let it ferment for another few hours. We then used it to mix our first loaves of rye bread. These initial loaves didn't have any old bread in them because we didn't have any bread to use. After we baked our first batch of bread, however, we saved several loaves, cut them up, added water, and made a mash, which we simply refer to as "old". Each day now we bake extra loaves specially to turn into old for our future recipes.

The way we bake our rye breads is also remarkably similar to the original method. Before putting the rye loaves into the oven, we brush them with water, our modified *roshtshine*. This helps them develop a shiny crust. When we remove the baked loaves from the oven we brush them with cold water. The goal here is for the contrasting heat of the bread and coolness of the water to cause a reaction in the crust, a crackling, which gives it what is now the distinctive look of modern American Jewish Rye bread.

Today, most rye and pumpernickel loaves are used for making sandwiches, so they're made in a narrow, oblong shape that can be turned into uniform slices. The large loaves of the past are now a novelty. But I and my partners, Ari



Fresh loaves of various kinds of bread on display at Zingerman's Bakehouse in Ann Arbor

Weinzweig and Frank Carollo, actually prefer the bread of a large loaf. Because of its size, the interior is able to remain moist and last longer. To honor the tradition of large loaves and our own preference for them, we bake them on the weekends, hoping that some customers will also enjoy them. These days, most people don't need such a large loaf, and relatively few of our customers enjoy buying a section. We all want our own loaves, and one that yields slices perfect for the ideal American sandwich.

Since wheat is widely available and relatively inexpensive in the United States, Jewish rye bread has evolved to have very little rye in it at all. Most often the rye is found only in the sour, which is then added to the dough of wheat flour, water, salt, and commercial yeast.

Although we still use a sour and old bread to make our rye at Zingerman's, lots of bakeries today skip these steps. Formerly, the sour was necessary because no commercial yeast was available. But by the 1850s, yeast was becoming available and bakers started to add it to their breads. It allowed them to shorten fermentation times, make their lives easier, and perhaps make their bread loftier. Although a sour adds flavor and texture to Jewish rye bread, some bakers skip this time-consuming step and just use commercial yeast.

Rye flour is used in lots of other breads—German and Scandinavian rye breads are dense breads with higher rye content (like the *Vollkornbrot* we make at the Bakehouse), and French *pain de seigle* uses some rye. But Jewish rye has real personal resonance for me, and I'm glad to be continuing the tradition at the Bakehouse. ■

Endnotes

1. Gil Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), p. 511.
2. It is still possible to find bakeries in the U.S. today that refer to rye bread as *korn* bread. Of course, this confuses most Americans who don't know the history and wonder what corn has to do with the bread they're eating.

ACHIEVING THE PERFECT HOMEMADE BAGEL

by Philip M. Zaret

Phil and his wife Barbara are longtime CHAA members. He was raised in the New York City area, majored in Classics at the University of Michigan, and made a living as the owner-manager of a local photocopy shop. Phil also worked for over 10 years as a volunteer at UM, where he bound and repaired library books and developed an index of culinary references found in manuscripts at the William L. Clements Library. "Raising My Chances of Success: Forty Years of Bread Making" was Phil's article in our Fall 2013 issue.

Why make bagels at home, when there are excellent bagels produced commercially? I say they're just not as satisfying as a really good homemade bagel.

The bagels I make are 3½ inches in diameter. As I recollect, that is about that size of the bagels I had when I was a kid in the 1950s. When bagels became popular in the U.S., maybe 30 years ago, they started expanding in size—I'm guessing that it was a marketing technique. But I don't think today's big bagels are quite like the ones in the good old days. They seem more white-bready than the traditional "firm" bagel.

I make other kinds of rolls besides bagels, but I found it a great challenge to make a nice-looking, good-textured, tasty bagel of a proper size. My bagels start out with 3½ ounces of dough; today's bagels must be almost twice that amount. Trying to make a bagel (or any food) as close as possible to a commercial product might seem pointless, but there are no bagels out there like mine these days. I have made a "retro" commercial product.

Growing Up with Bagels

For me, bagels are a food and they're also a memory. I probably chewed my first bagel around 1950. At that time, bagels were available in few locations and they came in one flavor—plain.

But they were unique. Some comedian called a bagel a doughnut dipped in concrete. It's true. They had a thick crust and a chewy interior. You had to work to eat a bagel. (Or maybe my mother—in the interest of economy, as was her wont—would purchase day-old bagels, which guaranteed their solidity.)



Some of Phil Zaret's bagels from a recent batch

At any rate, my memory of a bagel is not completely replicated by even the best commercial bagels today.

Actually, I'm not certain that my forebears in the "old country" (or countries) ever had a bagel, but by the time they arrived on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1905, bagels were probably common fare for Eastern European immigrants. I think bagels were popularized in Poland, and my ancestors came from two cities in Ukraine and a small village in Bessarabia, now in Romania.

I grew up in a heavily Catholic community (Nutley, New Jersey), and the only religion I was exposed to was Catholicism and Protestantism. I was raised totally without religion. People think I'm joking when I say this, but I never heard the word "Jew" until I was 10 years old (and it was not in a pleasant context). I once jokingly referred to myself as a "culinary Jew", since that was the only connection I had with Judaism. I do have some pedigree, however. My great-great-grandfather was the chief rabbi of Odessa, sometime in the mid-19th Century. His son, my great-grandfather, forsook all religion, and that was passed down to me through grandfather and father. My mother was raised in a Jewish household (her parents spoke Yiddish), but she forsook religion for the more seductive cult of Communism, as did my father.

At home, I was exposed to a variety of cuisines. We had a combination of Russian (or Ukrainian), Jewish, and American foods. Bagels and lox were a Sunday breakfast treat. As I recall, my mother would buy about 3 ounces of lox, for which she must have paid a huge amount of money based on the fuss that was made over it. If my brothers and I were lucky, my father would share a bit of it with us.

My mother decried the insipidity of commercial white breads, and to this day, I especially like bagels and rye bread and other chewy breads. Another favorite from my childhood were onion rolls, but I never had *bialys* until late into adulthood.

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HOMEMADE BAGELS *continued from page 13*

Taking the Plunge with a Homemade Bagel

Commercial bagels were (and might still be, for all I know) a “guild” product— the private intellectual property of professional bagel bakers, with ingredients and techniques shrouded in secrecy— like the formula for Coke. One can achieve nearly identical results, however, in the home kitchen.

I began home baking in the early 1970’s. My mother was a good baker, and she’d purchased a booklet by Sue Anderson Gross titled (appropriately) *Bagels, Bagels, Bagels* (St. Charles, IL: Kitchen Harvest Press, 1974). I got a copy of it and attempted my first homemade bagel. Not bad. The “boiling” of the bagels is a surprising concept, but I’d made pretzels before, and they go through the same process. In point of fact, a soft pretzel is in many ways hardly different from a bagel— only the shape varies.

Despite easy success, I did not altogether like the result of my first attempt at a homemade bagel. My objections were twofold: texture and appearance. As it turned out, achieving the optimal texture was easier than achieving the optimal appearance.

Let’s start with texture. The recipe in *Bagels, Bagels, Bagels* calls for water, yeast, salt, sugar, malted-milk powder, and all-purpose flour. This produces a roll with a hole, but I wouldn’t call it a bagel. Commercial bagel bakers must use high-gluten flour and cold-rise the dough for a considerable amount of time to achieve that dense, chewy texture. The malted-milk mix, I assume, is used in place of malt syrup. One can purchase malt syrup, but it certainly is not as prevalent as malted milk mix. In 1974 in St. Charles, IL, where the booklet was produced, there was probably not a lot of malt syrup in the supermarket. At the time I first made bagels, such an exotic item as “bread flour” was not widely distributed, either.

In time, however, all of the proper ingredients became available, and I incorporated them. I experimented with using malt syrup instead of malted-milk powder, but the syrup is incredibly sticky and heavy, and it made shaping the bagels extremely difficult. Thus, I prefer to use the powder.

I rarely make plain bagels, and I rarely use toppings. Instead, I try to incorporate flavor into the bagel itself. My usual output is made of whole wheat, rye, or a combination thereof, usually with something extra like wheat bran, wheat germ, or flaxseed.

My perfected recipe for rye bagels appears in the sidebar on the next page. You will note that there is no shortening. The absence of shortening produces a denser, chewier bagel. If your results are too tough for you, add 2 tablespoons of solid shortening to the recipe.

My recipe can also be altered by substituting whole wheat for rye flour, or by simply using only bread flour to produce a plain bagel. Caraway is optional except for rye bagels. You can flavor your bagels with onion powder, garlic powder, or any number of other powdered ingredients. I prefer not to put whole



YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York

A studio portrait of a bagel seller in Kishinev, Bessarabia (modern Chișinău, the capital of Moldova), circa 1900

seeds into bagels, as they poke one’s gums like little metal shavings. If you want to add toppings to your bagels, such as onions or poppy seeds, you can do so by dipping the just-boiled bagels in a small bowl of the topping.

The Hole Needs a Lot of Attention

Now that we’ve addressed the texture, let’s move on to the shape and appearance of the bagel.

Sue Gross, in *Bagels, Bagels, Bagels*, says to roll each bagel-sized lump of dough into a ball by placing it on the working surface, cupping your hand over it, and rolling it about in tight little circles. She then instructs you to poke your finger through the ball, grab the circle of dough in both hands, and pat it into a round shape, i.e., pull outwardly as you rotate the dough between your fingers.

This method has two problems: (1) the hole will invariably be off-center, and (2) the bagel will be, well, ugly— a lumpy, bumpy, asymmetrical thing. It just won’t look like a bagel.

All right, I might be obsessive, but I like my food to look good. Commercial bakeries use huge pieces of machinery that cost thousands of dollars to extrude perfectly shaped bagels. That can’t be done at home, but let me describe my solution and its odyssey.

One can punch a hole with some sort of device, like a corer used for juicing lemons or a cannoli tube. This isn’t bad, but the

Phil Zaret's Rye Bagels

Yield: about twelve 3½-ounce bagels.

½ cup warm water
 2½ teaspoons yeast
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 1½ cups rye flour
 1 teaspoon salt
 ¼ cup wheat gluten
 1 cup nonfat dry milk
 ¼ cup malted-milk powder
 1 tablespoon malt syrup
 ⅓ cup ground caraway
 1⅓ cups warm water
 2½-3 cups bread flour

Proof yeast in ½ cup warm water with sugar. Combine dry ingredients except bread flour. Add proofed yeast and remaining warm water. Mix. Add enough bread flour to make a stiff but not dry dough. Knead. Let rise.

With kitchen scale, measure out pieces of dough, each 3½ ounces. Shape into bagels. Add two tablespoons salt to a large pot half-full of water. Bring it to a boil. Drop bagels in two at a time and boil 35 seconds, then flip them with a large slotted spatula and boil another 35 seconds; one side will be less lumpy than the other. Place the bagels smooth-side up on a well-greased baking sheet. If available, parchment paper lightly coated with spray oil will prevent sticking. Repeat with rest of bagels.

Put bagels in a cold oven. Turn heat to 400° F. and bake for 20 minutes. After the first 12 minutes of baking, rotate pan by 180° for even baking. When baked, remove pan from oven and remove bagels to cooling rack. You might need a stiff metal spatula to remove bagels from the pan, if some stick. (Some recipes advise sprinkling cornmeal on the sheet to prevent sticking. This works well with Deli Corn Rye; for some reason it's not intrusive and it gives the bread character. With bagels it is quite intrusive, as one might suspect if one has ever eaten a bit of raw cornmeal.)

hole comes out squarish and ragged. A “real” bagel is rounded all over, including the hole. Also, unless you stretch the hole, it tends to “heal” over completely, and definitely does not look bagel-like. Stretching a punched hole invariably moves it from the center and, once again, you have a lopsided bagel.

One could cut the bagel from a sheet of dough using a biscuit cutter, but the bagel turns out looking like a training wheel from a kid's bike.

Many bagel makers use the rope-tying method. They roll the piece of dough into a rope (as for a pretzel), then join the ends together. Unless you are extremely skilled and have just the right



Craig Lee for the *New York Times* (Dec. 26, 2012)

Founder-owner Dan Graf of Baron Baking, a bagel producer with outlets in Oakland and Berkeley, CA

consistency of dough, you cannot mask the seam—which looks funny when baked—and quite often the bagel comes undone at the seam. The only advantage of the rope-tying method is that, because the rope is completely round in cross-section, so is the resulting bagel, like a commercial one.

My solution involves countering two basic problems: the hole tends to seal during baking, and the dough tends to rise excessively, giving the bagel a “bloated” un-bagelly shape.

After measuring out my lump of dough, I begin pulling the dough in on itself, forcing loose ends underneath and stretching the top till all the loose ends are joined and pinched together and the top is round and smooth. I then put it on the surface and roll it around with my hand, until it's as round as possible. Keeping the crimped side down, I take a solid glass trivet and press the ball as flat as I can. This serves to counter some of the excessive rising, and it produces a nearly perfect circular disk.

I then poke a hole in the middle of the disk of dough, not with a blunt instrument—my finger—but with a sharp, pointy instrument that I made a long time ago. Namely, I removed one of the thick, rigid cardboard covers from a three-ring binder and poked a six-inch nail through its center, creating a lethal-looking version of a desktop spindle that might be used for anchoring scraps of paper. While eyeballing the nail, I feel for the very center of the disk of dough (easier to find than with a ball) and impale it on the spike. One could use a ruler to determine the exact center, but even *I* think that's too obsessive.

Then I gently remove the dough from the spike and work the hole by pulling and rotating, until the hole is about one inch in diameter. Once again I place the bagel on the surface, this time with the crimped side up, and flatten it again with the glass trivet to seal the crimps and counter excessive rising, trying not to let the hole migrate. I put the shaped bagel on a dry baking sheet and proceed with the process.

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AMERICAN FOODWAYS: THE JEWISH CONTRIBUTION

We report here on four talks given last Fall at the Univ. of Michigan in conjunction with the exhibit, “American Foodways: The Jewish Contribution”. Items in the exhibit included many from the Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive (JBLCA), and others loaned by collectors from across the country. The exhibit ran Sep. 4 – Dec. 8, and its entire contents can now be viewed online at bit.ly/19QS1tl. Videos of the talks are available at the same location (click on “About this Exhibit”).

What Jews Have Brought to the Table

Jan Longone, Adjunct Curator of Special Collections at the Univ. of Michigan Libraries, co-curated the exhibit and made an extensive presentation about it on Sep. 24.

We learned from her that the first Jewish-owned establishment of any kind in North America was, quite naturally, a kosher meats shop. It was founded in New Amsterdam in 1660 by Asser Levy, a butcher originally from Eastern Europe. He was one of a group of 23 Jews who’d arrived in 1654, fleeing Recife, Brazil, when Dutch rule ended there; they are believed to be the earliest Jewish immigrants to North America. The entrepreneurial Levy would eventually own a slaughterhouse and a tavern, as well.

A few more treasures from the exhibit section on “Butchers, Bakers, and Markets”:

- A recent booklet on the Sephardic Jews who immigrated to Seattle from Greece and Turkey in the early 1900s, and their role in helping establish the famous Pike Place Market.
- Copies of the *Baker’s and Confectioner’s Journal*, a trade-union organ published 1886-1966, with pages printed variously in German, Yiddish, and English. Notable articles include histories of bagels (1950) and matzah (1951).
- Materials on Gottlieb’s Bakery, founded by a Russian Jew in Savannah, GA, which was in business 1884-1994; Kasanoff’s, the leading Jewish bakery in Boston in the 20th Century; and Eli’s Cheesecake Co. in Chicago, which started as a restaurant in 1945.

Examples from the exhibit section on advertising ephemera include 1930s bilingual Yiddish/English recipe booklets from Crisco (“The Hebrew Race Has Been Waiting 4,000 Years for Crisco”) and Wolff Brothers kasha (Paterson, NJ); a 1960s ad, “You Don’t Have to Be Jewish to Love Levy’s Real Jewish Rye”; a 1962 ad for Mogen David kosher wines; Manischewitz’s pamphlet on matzah, and its eight-day Passover menu planner

(1961); and Passover ads from Planter’s peanut oil, Maxwell House coffee, and others.

A few of the menus on display are a 1961 specimen from Grossinger’s, in the “Borscht Belt” of the New York Catskills; another from the Yonah Schimmel knishery in Manhattan (“It takes a Downtown knish to satisfy an Uptown craving”); others from Katz’s Deli and Russ & Daughters Smoked Fish, a block apart from each other on Houston Street on the Lower East Side; from Annie’s Kitchen, a kosher Chinese restaurant in Flushing, Queens; from Starky’s Authentic Restaurant in Bozeman, MT, including both Corned Beef and Corned Buff (i.e., buffalo) sandwiches; and a Passover menu from the Domenica Restaurant, in the Roosevelt Hotel in downtown New Orleans.

Interestingly, some of America’s early non-Jewish cookbooks included a few Jewish recipes. Many of the authors championed kosher cooks’ and butchers’ concern for the cleanliness of foodstuffs. Sarah Josepha Hale included “Stewed Fish, Hebrew Fashion” and “To Fry Salmon in the Hebrew Fashion” in her *Mrs. Hale’s New Cook Book* (1857), and “Compote of Oranges—A Hebrew Dish” in her 1845 re-issue of Eliza Acton’s *Modern Cookery in All Its Branches*. The renowned *National Cookery Book* (1876), published in conjunction with the Philadelphia Centennial Fair, included 14 traditional Jewish recipes such as “Haman’s Ears for Purim Night” and “Crimblech for Passover”. Sarah Tyson Rorer’s *Mrs. Rorer’s New Cook Book* (1902) had a chapter on Jewish cookery, with recipes from a prominent Philadelphia housewife.

Jewish cookbooks on display include the first in English, Lady Judith Montefiore’s *The Jewish Manual* (London, 1846); the first in America, Esther Levy’s *Jewish Cookery Book* (Philadelphia, 1871); the first in the South, Mrs. C. F. Moritz and Miss Adèle Kahn’s *Twentieth Century Cook Book* (5th ed., New York, 1898, first published a year earlier in Alabama); and others from Bertha Kramer, Fannie Ferber Cox and Lavinia S. Schwartz, Mildred Bellin, and Florence Greenbaum. The role of print and broadcast media is seen in Jewish cookbooks from the *Chicago Sentinel* (1936), the *Jewish Examiner* (Brooklyn, 1937), and the *New York Times* (2003), as well as *The Molly Goldberg Cookbook* (New York, 1955).

A large section of the exhibit is devoted to Jewish fundraising cookbooks, including at least one from every U.S. state and the District of Columbia. Examples include the earliest in Michigan, *The Temple Cook Book* (Detroit, 1903), and the earliest in California, *The Council Cookbook* (San Francisco, 1909). More recent examples include one from Congregation Sof Ma’arav in Honolulu, *The When You Live in Hawaii, You Get Very Creative During Passover Cookbook* (1989).

Among the more scholarly books displayed are Marcie Cohen Ferris’s *Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South* and Linda Mack Schloff’s “*And Prairie Dogs Weren’t Kosher*”: *Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest Since 1855*.

Mary Bilyeu, a CHAA member and JBLCA volunteer, assembled materials for the section on food festivals, such as the HardLox Jewish Food and Heritage Festival (Asheville, NC, begun in 2003 but “Getting Better Every Schmeer”), the Yiddish Food Festival (Cheyenne, WY), and the When Pigs Fly! Kosher BBQ Cook-Off and Festival (Birmingham, AL).



2ND AVE DELI
KOSHER RESTAURANT & CATERERS

Table placemat, 1990s, from the 2nd Ave Deli in Manhattan. The deli was founded in 1954 by Polish immigrant Abe Lebewohl.

Janice Bluestein
Longone Culinary
Archive,
Special Collections
Library,
Univ. of Michigan

“Cooking Reform Judaism”

Deborah Dash Moore, Professor of History at the Univ. of Michigan and Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, spoke on Nov. 19 about “Cooking Reform Judaism”, which is also the title of her forthcoming book. She showed that community (fundraising) cookbooks from Reform Jewish temples have been a concentrated reflection of the movement’s social history, values, and mores in at least four respects:

- they assert a powerful role for women, especially in the home
- they are based on a populist, vernacular approach to religious tradition and doctrine
- in their selection of foods, they encourage acculturation with the mainstream
- they express a Jewish identity whose horizons are national and international rather than primarily local and regional.

Dr. Moore discussed a number of examples. For instance, *The 1914 Cookbook* (Guild of the B’nai Zion Temple, Shreveport, LA) was notable in incorporating recipes reflecting customs from across the U.S., not just the South. *Precious Secrets Cook Book*, 4th ed. (Temple Israel Sisterhood, Dayton, OH, 1959), included only a minority of recognizably Jewish recipes, and their holiday significance was omitted; Passover recipes were presented as “Easter Dishes”. *In the Beginning: A Collection of Hors D’Oeuvres* (Rockdale Temple Sisterhood, Cincinnati, OH, 1975) included many *treyf* foods, especially bacon; with its clever, jaunty style, it was noticed by the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and sold about 100,000 copies.

The largely middle-class women compiling these cookbooks frequently debated to what extent the recipes should respect

kosher dietary restrictions. Violations tended to follow a steady assimilation over time, starting with the commingling of meat and milk items, leading to the consumption of shellfish, and finally the admission of pork into the kitchen, especially bacon and lard. However, some Jewish Reform cookbooks of the 1980s showed a revived interest in kosher dishes as part of a broader attraction to international foods.

Kugel History

Univ. of Michigan history graduate student Avery Robinson spoke on Nov. 19 about “Luxion and Puddings: Jewish Identity and Cultural Transmission in America”. He co-curated “American Foodways: The Jewish Contribution” and a smaller exhibit elsewhere on campus, “A Gendered Perspective on American Jewish Foodways”.

Robinson shared some findings from his MA research into the history of kugel and related foods. Puddings arose in history, he explained, as a practice of boiling, baking, or steaming cereals. Traditional Jewish puddings include the *schalet*, a sweet bread dumpling baked in a stew; the *charlotte* (originally *sharlotka*), a sweet pudding made in a mold; and the *kugel* (from a German word for “ball”), which arose among the Ashkenazi Jews of Europe around 1100.

Although a side dish, the kugel in Eastern Europe had strong cultural and religious significance. Potatoes were daily fare, but potato kugel was a festive dish eaten only on *Shabbos*, the sabbath day. The traditional recipe includes egg and *schmaltz* (chicken fat), whereas *luxion* or *lokshen* (i.e., noodle) kugel is usually a dairy-based dish, either savory or sweet. In comparing

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IN DETROIT, NAPLES, & BELTSVILLE

HISTORIC FOOD INNOVATIONS
EXPLORED BY CHAA

*We summarize here our CHAA meetings from last Fall.
The December theme meal is reported on the next page.*

Great Lakes as Cultural Confluence

Bill Loomis spoke to us on Sep. 15 about his book, *Detroit's Delectable Past: Two Centuries of Frog Legs, Pigeon Pie and Drugstore Whiskey* (History Press, 2012). The book covers the period from Detroit's founding by French settlers in 1701 through 1925. Born in Detroit, Bill is a business consultant based in Ann Arbor, and writes on local history for *The Detroit News*.

Mr. Loomis first covered the legacy of Cadillac, Campau, and other wealthy French colonists, who owned ribbon farms fronting the Detroit River. They were especially proficient at fruit orcharding; the tiny Detroit Pear was used in making preserves and wine, while varieties of apple included the *Pomme Blanche d'Hiver*, *Pomme de Neige*, and Detroit Red. Farmers' markets emerged early, the Eastern Market on Gratiot Avenue being the main survivor; one could even purchase maple sugar there from Native Americans. Classic foods little-remembered in Detroit today, mostly of French or Indian heritage, include *sagamité*, an Indian corn porridge with animal fat and maple syrup; muskrat; frog legs; fried oysters; *tourtière*, a meat pie of pork, pigeon, or fish; turtle soup; calf sweetbreads; beef tongue; and *Charlotte russe*, a type of molded pudding lined with ladyfingers.

The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 accelerated settlement in Detroit. A covered-wagon route, the Old Chicago Road, led further west, with taverns at frequent intervals; some of these acquired great reputations. Oysters, turtle soup, and lamb chops were among the "draws" typically featured by the taverns.

Bill contrasted cooking methods on hearth and stove, the latter becoming more common during the Civil War era. He also discussed important area cookbooks, including *Dr. Chase's Receipt Book* (1856 and later), *The Home Messenger Book of Tested Receipts* (1873), and *The Detroit Creamery Cook Book* (1917).

[Editor's note: See previous issues of *Repast* for articles on Detroit-area French foods (Winter 2004 and Spring 2007) and Detroit-area stove makers (Spring 2001 and Summer 2010).]

Pizza as a Global Conjunction

Ben Graham spoke to us on Oct. 20 concerning "Pizza: A (Global) Layered History". Ben, a Ph.D. student in history at the Univ. of Michigan, has been studying environmental changes in early medieval Italy.

The classic *pizza margherita* was invented in Naples in the late 1800s. Ben discussed the Asian and South American origins of its three main ingredients: wheat flour, tomato paste, and mozzarella cheese.

- Wheat, especially glutinous wheat that allows dough to rise,

is the product of millennia of careful cultivation. It was the first grain that humans fully domesticated, allowing civilization to arise in the Fertile Crescent (c. 8000 BCE).

- The tomato is indigenous to the Andean region. Until the 19th Century it was regarded with suspicion by Europeans, a key reason being the continued influence of humoral theory in medicine. The plant was studied by botanists and grown in gardens as an exotic symbol of wealth. Canning and other industrial methods of the 19th Century would allow tomatoes to be preserved against spoilage.
- Mozzarella is made from the milk of water buffalo. These were first domesticated in the Indus Valley, most likely an accident within the practice of sacrificing wild aurochs. When the water buffalo was introduced to southern Italy, apparently by Arabs during medieval times, it thrived in the wet climate there.

The subsequent diffusion of pizza around the world is partly the result of Italian immigration; e.g., pizzerias had arisen in New York by 1912. But more complex factors are also at work, especially with accelerated globalization. Today, for instance, the world's leading pizza-consuming region is Scandinavia. There, pizzas are usually bought frozen. The leading brand is Norway's Pizza Grandiosa. In Sweden, prawns are a popular topping.

Improving the Turkey

On Nov. 17, during the run-up to Thanksgiving, we were treated to "Turkeys: The Facts and the Myths". Our presenter, Richard Balander, Assoc. Professor in the Animal Science Dept. at Michigan State Univ., had spoken to us about chicken eggs the previous November.

Dr. Balander noted that the wild turkey had become nearly extinct in the U.S. by the 1930s. Today, there are some 7 million in North America, their original homeland. Five subspecies of *Meleagris gallopavo* thrive in the U.S. itself, and a separate species, the ocellated turkey (*M. ocellata*), dwells south of the border. The wild turkey is much smaller and leaner than the domesticated; typical adults weigh 15-17 lbs. (tom) or 10-11 lbs. (hen). The corresponding figures for today's domesticated birds are 49-63 lbs. (tom) or 13-21 lbs. (hen). (For more on the wild turkey, see Andrew Smith's cover story in *Repast*, Summer 2006.)

Turkeys were already being domesticated in Spain and England in the 16th Century. The body configuration of a broad-breasted turkey is such that it cannot mate naturally but reproduces only with artificial insemination. The USDA at Beltsville, MD, developed improved breeds, including one in 1951 with creamy white skin, as consumers preferred. A typical turkey farm has about 50,000 birds at any given time. Production is much different than for chickens: for medical reasons turkeys must be raised on floors, not in cages; their feed is much lower in protein; and consumer preferences are much more brand-oriented.

Turkey consumption in the U.S. peaked in the mid-1990s, pushed by increased use of the meat in hot dogs, sausages, and cold cuts. Since then, production has ebbed due to competition from Brazil and other countries. Minnesota leads the U.S. in production; Virginia and North Carolina have recently surged as many tobacco farmers abandon that crop. In the U.S. today, only about 30% of turkey meat is sold as whole birds to consumers. ■

LARDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS!

You could do worse than to roll across Europe while gazing out the windows of the Orient Express. Imagine that your train has left the Paris station that morning. You and your travel companions, including new friends that you've made aboard the train— your appetites stimulated by the hours of hearty conversation and lonesome views of the French *maquis*— have found your way to the plushly appointed restaurant coach.

You're admiring the elegantly curtained windows when a smartly dressed and mustachioed waiter walks up, beaming proudly, and sets a tray on your table. In a loud, clear voice that can be heard above the regular clacking of the 1.4-meter tracks, the occasional piping of the train whistle or squeal of the brakes, he announces, *Une sélection de fromages avec une confiture de tomates* (a platter of cheeses with sweet tomato preserves).

If it is the equal of the platter supplied by CHAA member Nancy Sannar at our Orient Express theme meal last December 8, it includes a Roquefort cheese made from ewe's milk, a cow's-milk Camembert, as well as a mild *chèvre*. The bright orange preserves— set, with a dainty spoon, in a *sucrier* of clear glass, and glistening as if glazed themselves— are made from cherry tomatoes and a hint of vanilla. To enjoy all of this there's also a crusty *baguette*, just picked up that morning at a city bakery.

This was some of the scenery at the Ladies' Literary Club in Ypsilanti, MI, where 26 members of the Culinary Historians gathered for a train trip of the mind, the heart, and the taste buds. We have Phil Zaret to thank for dreaming up another clever and interesting theme and for organizing the participatory meal, and facility caretaker Susie Andrews for all of her help. The small dining tables seating 4-6 people reminded us of the dining atmosphere inside a railcar. We had two buffet tables lined with dishes of our own making: one for the meal itself, the other for dessert.

The Romance of the Rails

The Orient Express was a celebrated trans-European passenger service established in 1883. In its original form it was operated between Paris and Istanbul by the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits. It connected 18 cities, including Strasbourg, Vienna, Budapest, and Bucharest. Similar lines have operated in the intervening decades, with varied routes as far south as Milan, Venice, Belgrade, and Sofia, and with connections northward to Warsaw and southward to Athens.

There's compelling romance in traveling by rail across an entire continent, passing through so many countries and cultures from the smokestacks of Europe to the walls and parapets of Asia. Another aspect of the service that captured the popular imagination was the relative luxury afforded the well-heeled passengers in such cramped quarters. The original train had a restaurant coach, four sleeping coaches with 14 beds apiece, and two baggage cars.



A poster advertising the Orient Express

Image: Wikimedia; U.S. public domain due to copyright expiration

The fine accommodations also extended to elegant dining. According to a recollection cited in the Wikipedia article on the Orient Express, the multi-course menu for the first “test train” (*train éclair de luxe*), which departed from the Gare de l'Est in Paris on Tuesday, October 10, 1882, was as follows:

- an appetizer of oysters
- soup with Italian pasta
- *turbot à la sauce verte*, cold turbot sauced with a mayonnaise enriched with puréed green herbs
- *poulet à la chasseur*, a hot dish of sautéed chicken and mushrooms in a tomato sauce
- *Chateaubriand*, or fillet of beef garnished with *pommes de terre château*, small, whole, peeled potatoes sautéed in butter, then stove-cooked to a golden color and sprinkled with chopped parsley
- *chauds-froids de gibier*, preparations of cooked game, served cold
- lettuce
- *mousseline au chocolat*, a chocolate pudding
- a buffet of desserts
- fine wines and champagne.

So come along for the ride as we recollect our own sumptuous meal and the intriguing landmarks along the way. Relax— sit back and enjoy— for we have a long journey ahead of us: it is 2000 kilometers to Istanbul!

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ORIENT EXPRESS

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France: Entrée to a Journey

A dark man in a trenchcoat passes you in the aisle of the train car. He takes puffs on a Gauloise, and it calls to mind the plumes billowing from the smokestack of the forward locomotive. There's something mysterious about him—so elegant and yet so raffish at the same time. He looks Parisian—or is he?

Besides the cheese platter brought to our meal by Nancy Sannar, we enjoyed a few other French classics—and one mysterious dish, perhaps a *faux*-French impostor the likes of which had never before been seen anywhere:

- *salade niçoise* [Jan and Dan Longone], the celebrated composed salad of potatoes, green beans, and olives. The Longones followed a recipe from Craig Claiborne, adding peeled grape tomatoes and slices of onion and green pepper. They served it with *mushtah* flatbread from the New Yasmeen Bakery in Dearborn. For more on this salad and the differing interpretations of it, see *Repast*, Fall 2002, p. 10.
- *haricots verts au beurre mousse* (green beans with foaming butter) [Rich Kato] from a recipe in Georges Blanc and Coco Jobard, *Simple French Cooking: Recipes from Our Mothers' Kitchens*.
- *mousseline au chocolat* [Julie and Bob Lewis], as noted above, a dessert that was served on the train's maiden voyage in 1882. Julie used a recipe in Julia Child's *The French Chef Cookbook*.
- *porc et jicama à la passion* [Howard Ando], a main dish of diced pork, *jicama*, and passion fruit, which Howard invented for the occasion and christened himself. Inspired by French Indochina and French Polynesia, he took a dish familiar to him and sneakily replaced the water chestnuts with the equally crunchy *jicama*. We cannot complain: it was delicious.

The Sweets and Sours of Central Europe

Marzipan formed in the shape of a train [Margaret Carney and Bill Walker] was a delightful surprise worthy of the Orient Express. This feat might have been the first of its kind in culinary history! To pull it off, Margaret and Bill started from scratch with blanched almonds, and



followed recipes in Sarah Kelly Iaia's *Festive Baking* and Phyllis Glazer's *Jewish Festival Cooking*.

After marzipan, which was originally from the Middle East, was introduced to Spain and Italy in medieval times, Italian traders spread it to the rest of Europe. Confectioners recognize two main types, which they call French and German. The latter, which is especially associated with the northern port cities of Lübeck and Königsberg, is traditionally made by grinding equal quantities of almond and crystallized sugar into a paste, then cooking this briefly, adding rosewater, and spreading it out to cool. A rich ingredient symbolic of good fortune, marzipan is an important component of certain holiday sweets such as Passover stuffed fruits, Christmas *stollen* (fruitcakes), and *Königsberger herzen* (heart-shaped cookies).

The fine baking traditions of Central Europe are on display in the *Esterházy torta* of Hungary [Amy and Geoff Emberling]. It is one of the Hungarian baked goods now available at Zingerman's Bakehouse in Ann Arbor, where Amy is a Managing Partner and longtime baker. This *torta* consists of layers of toasted walnut cake, vanilla pastry cream, and whipped cream, coated with a *fondant* of vanilla and dark chocolate in a distinctive striped design. It is named after Prince Pál III Antal Esterházy (1786–1866), a diplomat and member of an immensely wealthy family in the Hungarian nobility.

In the 19th Century, Budapest had become famous for fine hotels, restaurants, pastry shops, and cafés. These were fondly recalled by George Lang in his *The Cuisine of Hungary* (1971):

There are few delights more enchanting than sitting down at a charming little lace-covered table and drinking espresso or hot chocolate with whipped cream, accompanied by a delicately decorated slice of *torta* or an endless variety of dainty *mignons* which make the Western *petits fours* seem like five-and-ten-cent gewgaws next to Tiffany's diamonds and precious stones.

Other Central European treats at our meal included:

- orange-beet salad [Jane Wilkinson], made with diced beets, slices of orange and onion, dill, and capers.
- *rotkohl mit äpfeln* (sweet-sour red cabbage with apples) [Bridget McGarry], a side dish found in *The Cooking of Germany* (Time-Life Foods of the World). Bridget, a guest of Sherry Sundling, achieved the basic flavors by using sugar, red wine vinegar, and bacon fat. Before serving, she stirred in the additional “secret” ingredients: several tablespoons of Trappist red currant jelly, and a few jiggers of Oak Leaf Shiraz wine.
- *koteletten* (sweet-sour meatballs) [Randy Schwartz and Mariam Breed] from Claudia Roden's *Book of Jewish Food*. The ground-beef meatballs are cooked in a sauce made with tomatoes, vinegar, brown sugar, and crumbled ginger snaps. Randy and Mariam served them with *farfalle* (butterfly, bowtie) noodles.
- *käsekuchen mit rosinen* (cheesecake with raisins) [Rita Goss] from Mirko Trenkner's *The Food and Cooking of Germany*. This delicious cake uses farmer's (curd) cheese and sour cream, and is further flavored with caster sugar, lemon rind, and vanilla extract. The raisins are pre-soaked in almond liqueur.
- *pane* (Italian bread) [Phil and Barbara Zaret], a homemade baguette-shaped loaf, sliced and accompanied with a stick of butter.

Where Cross and Crescent Meet in Eastern Europe

Some can boast of journeying twice around the world. But we can out-boast them: at a single meal, we had the rare privilege of tasting two versions of *mămăligă*, a cornmeal mush which is the national dish of Romania. Both were layered in a casserole, baked in an oven, and topped with sour cream. Other than that they were quite different, but equally delicious:

- *mămăligă cu brânză* (“with cheese”) [Phil and Barbara Zaret], using a recipe that Phil found on Food.com, incorporates cornmeal, butter, and grated cheddar cheese.

- *mămăligă la cuptor* (“baked”) [Octavian and Jan Prundeanu] was more elaborate, a main rather than side dish, with *feta* cheese, ground pork, and bacon. Tavi, who hails from Romania, prepares this at home frequently as a “comfort food”. He uses a recipe in *Paul Kovi’s Transylvanian Cuisine*.

The eastern portions of what would become Romania were Ottoman principalities from the 15th through 19th Centuries, and *mămăligă* is an example of how the Ottomans, based in Istanbul (Constantinople), were the heirs of Roman and Byzantine civilization. Romania had been stamped with Rome’s culture when it was the province of Dacia, roughly 100-275 CE. *Mămăligă* and the similar *polenta* of Italy have their roots in ancient *pulmentum*, the staple grain porridge of Roman legionnaires, usually made from wheat, barley, or millet. In the centuries after Columbus, the preferred grain for this porridge gradually switched to corn. Originally a peasant dish, *mămăligă* is still often eaten that way: a simple porridge without the addition of dairy or meat products. Especially when dried and then sliced with a piece of thread, it is very commonly used in place of bread, by itself or to accompany other dishes.

Laura and Dan Gillis contributed two other foods of Eastern Europe, both from *A Quintet of Cuisines* (Time-Life Foods of the World):

- *ratza*, a Romanian dish of braised duck with shredded fennel and white cabbage. Additional flavoring ingredients include bacon and sauerkraut juice.
- *medeni kurabii*, Bulgarian honey cookies. These are called *kurabiye* in neighboring Turkey, another sign of Ottoman influence.

Turkey: Gateway to the Orient

A woman who boarded in Bucharest is wrapped in a veil like Mata Hari. Her perfume is seductive!

As we steamed toward the terminus of our journey at Istanbul, our meal featured three grand dishes of Turkey. First

came the spectacular *perde pilavi* (“veiled” pilaf) [Gwen and John Nystuen] from Siirt, a town in southeastern Turkey. Gwen, who has long enjoyed learning about Turkey and cooking its foods, used a recipe from *Saveur* 90 (Feb. 2006), p. 57. The pilaf is made with toasted short-grain rice, shredded boiled chicken and its broth, *mirepoix* vegetables, blanched almonds and pinenuts, and dried currants, and is perfumed with mint and other herbs and spices. Gwen baked this in an ovenproof Creuset casserole completely lined and covered with a sheet of dough that she’d made with wheat flour, eggs, milk, and yoghurt. The top crust is decorated with almond halves, and the whole is baked until golden.

Next came the famous *hünkâr beğendi* (“the sultan’s pleasure”) [Judy Steeh], a lamb stew (called *tas kebabi* in its own right) served on a bed of puréed eggplant in a *béchamel*-type sauce. This dish is thought to trace back to the Sultanate itself, although the occasion is uncertain: some point to a celebratory meal enjoyed by Sultan Murad IV toward the middle of the 17th Century, others to an 1869 banquet for Eugénie, Empress consort of Napoléon III, when she visited Sultan Abdülaziz on her way to attend the opening of the Suez Canal.

Rounding out our meal was the exquisite and opulent *çerkez tavuğu* (Circassian-style chicken) [Sherry Sundling]. This is a buffet dish of poached chicken, which is shredded or diced and then bound in a rich, creamy sauce made with walnut paste. It is served at room temperature, with some paprika-infused oil drizzled on top: that bright hue and piquant bite contrast with the beige color and rich taste of the rest of the dish. These customs are a heritage of Circassian people, originally from the Caucasus region; for more on the dish, see *Repast*, Winter 2006, p. 14. Sherry got her recipe from in-laws in the Pek family, who are Ann Arbor-area Turkish immigrants. She topped the dish with pomegranate seeds and flat-leaf parsley.

And so ends our rail-linked journey across a continent— a voyage whose allure, mystique, and savor will live on in our minds for quite some time! ■

All meal photos are by Mariam Breed



Turkish *perde pilavi* (“veiled” pilaf) by Gwen Nystuen, above, and *hünkâr beğendi* (“the sultan’s pleasure”) by Judy Steeh, right

JEWISH CONTRIBUTION *continued from p. 17*

regional preferences for sweetened or unsweetened varieties of kugel and other puddings, Robinson found that they seem to obey the same “Gefilte Fish Line” that the late Yiddish linguist Marvin I. Herzog, in his 1965 doctoral dissertation, famously drew through Eastern Europe, dividing savory on the east (Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine) from sweet on the west (Poland). The same line divides speakers of Southeastern and Northeastern Yiddish dialects from those of Central Yiddish, respectively.

Along with Jews themselves, the kugel migrated westward. Lady Judith Montefiore’s *The Jewish Manual* (London, 1846) included several kugel and pudding recipes. Jews in America were making kugel from about 1700 but, reflecting their cultural assimilation, early 19th-Century American cookbooks did not mention the dish, or even the Shabbat stew, *cholent*. As the immigrant tide swelled, however, some books began to include kugel: Bertha Kramer’s *Aunt Babette’s Cook Book* (Cincinnati, OH, 1889) had a matzah version, and there were several kugels and puddings in the very mainstream *Settlement Cookbook* (Milwaukee, WI, 1901 and later editions) of Lizzie Kander (Mrs. Simon Kander).

The popularity of kugel in America was revived with the Jewish identity movements of the 20th Century, but most of these versions were watered-down “comfort foods”, quite different from the kugels of Eastern Europe. Examples include those of Molly Goldberg, Ruth Reichl, Molly Katzen, and Mark Bittman.

Delis in the U.S.

Ted Merwin, Assoc. Prof. of Religion and Judaic Studies at Dickenson College (Carlisle, PA) and Director of the Milton B. Asbell Center for Jewish Life, gave a Nov. 20 presentation, “Where Harry Met Sally: The Jewish Deli in America”. He shared some of the main themes from his forthcoming book, *Pastrami on Rye: An Overstuffed History of the Jewish Delicatessen*, which focuses on the significance of the deli as a social gathering place.

The delicatessen, which reached its height in Germany, arose in the 18th and 19th Centuries as a place where one could buy modest quantities of pricey “delicacies”, especially preserved meats. Their elaborate window displays typically featured a boar’s head. Even today, the most important foods at a deli are the smoked, pickled, or cured meats.

Katz’s, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, was one of the earliest delis in the U.S. (1888). For decades, delis remained few and far between, due to the impoverishment of tenement Jews, the suspect nature of preserved meats, and the lack of any custom of purchasing prepared foods outside the home (Jewish women were the queens of their kitchens).

The deli and the synagogue created a communal Jewish identity: these were probably the earliest two types of places in the U.S. where Jewish immigrants from different parts of Europe mixed with one another and overcame their great cultural and linguistic differences. During the 1920s and 1930s, when the second generation of Jews was moving into the middle-class mainstream, the atmosphere of the deli was homey and inviting. Reuben’s and Lindy’s in the New York theatre district became

celebrity hangouts in the 1920s. At the Carnegie and the Stage Delis, founded in the 1930s, the serving sizes of sandwiches and other foods reached legendary proportions, a celebration of “making it” in America and the excesses of the Big Apple. The same decade was the heyday of actual kosher delis in New York, of which there were some 1,550, celebrated by the Brooklyn-born writer Alfred Kazin.

The deli phenomenon declined after World War 2 for several reasons. Many Jewish families moved from city centers to suburbs. Due to advances in food-processing technology, deli foods were available at every supermarket, while the fare offered by delis themselves came to be seen as unhealthy. Like everyone else in America, Jews became interested in a variety of other ethnic cuisines (indeed, conversely, many urban African-Americans grew especially attracted to Jewish foods). Even as all this happened, the deli became enshrined as an icon of Jewish culture, most vividly evoked in the comedy sketches of the last few decades. ■

HOMEMADE BAGELS *continued from p. 15*

I pause here to consider a basic question: Why a hole? After all, a hole is, by definition, something that things can fall through. A surface with a hole is definitely not ideal for holding spreads or bits of food. But, without a hole, a bagel is just another hard roll. (There was a traditional function of the hole in the long history of bagel baking, but that’s another story.) Therefore, my ideal bagel is one that has a very small hole, about the diameter of a matchstick. You can see through it, yet it does not permit the passage of foodstuffs.

Though there are many steps to making a bagel, the time from start to finish is considerably less than for baking a loaf of bread. The baking time is half, and you can eat your results immediately and not have to wait the mandatory two or three hours before you slice your bread.

All of this might seem way too obsessive and labor-intensive, yet once you have done it a few times, all of the steps become routine and feel quite purposeful and satisfying. You aren’t just making a roll, you are crafting an edible *objet d’art*. ■

Bagels

by Marvin Brandwin

The bagel’s like a ledge, for when you reach the edge
There is nowhere in the middle to proceed.
And if you eat the hole would the rest be part or whole?
It’s both the question and the answer that we knead.

MORSELS & TIDBITS

Those whose curiosities and appetites for Turkish food were whetted by our Paris-to-Istanbul feast (see pp. 19-21) will want to consider the 2014 annual Culinary Tour to Turkey, running Sep. 8-16 and led by **Joan B. Peterson** of the Culinary Historians of Wisconsin (CHoW). Limited to 8-11 participants, this culinary odyssey through ancient, Ottoman, and modern Turkey includes cooking classes and demonstrations, and visits to food and spice markets. For more info, visit <http://www.eatsmartguides.com/turkey.html>.

CHAA founding member **Jan Longone** made a Jan. 16 presentation at the Dames Dinner, at Temple Beth Emeth, Ann Arbor, on the subject, "American Charitable Cookbooks and the Women Who Wrote Them". The women of this temple are planning to create a charity cookbook of their own.

Apart from Jan's role in the recent Univ. of Michigan exhibition (see pp. 16-17), two other CHAA members have been busy with exhibits:

- **JJ Jacobson**, Assoc. Curator of Special Collections at the UM Libraries, co-curated "And It Was Just Right: Food and Cooking in Children's Literature" with UM Librarian Emeritus **William Gosling**. Materials for the exhibit, which ran Dec. 4 – Jan. 15 at the Ann Arbor District Library, were selected from UM's Longone Archive and UM's Children's Literature Collection.
- **Margaret Carney**, director of The Dinnerware Museum, announces that the "Three Courses" exhibit will continue at Ann Arbor's Museum on Main Street through May 12. She has scheduled a special tour for CHAA members on Mar. 23 (see Calendar, p. 24). **Jacob Axelrad** interviewed Margaret for "The Cutlery Curator", an article in Ann Arbor's *Current* magazine (Feb. 2014), focusing on her background, the current exhibit, and the founding of the museum.

In addition, two friends of CHAA have new publications:

- *Repast* subscriber and contributor Dr. **Leni Sorensen** of Crozet, VA, is maintaining a blog (<http://www.cookingmaryrandolph.com>) about her recently-launched three-year project to cook every one of the 400+ recipes in Mary Randolph's *The Virginia Housewife* (1824), considered the earliest regional cookbook of the South.
- Asst. Prof. of History **Rebekah E. Pite** (Lafayette College, Easton, PA) has published *Creating a Common Table in Twentieth-Century Argentina: Doña Petrona, Women, and Food* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2013). Dr. Pite spoke to CHAA on this subject in Nov. 2006, when she was a Ph.D. student at UM.

The industrialization of the American box lunch has been a concern of several recent writings. Former *New York Times* business reporter **Melanie Warner**'s new book, *Pandora's Lunchbox: How Processed Food Took Over the American Meal* (New York: Scribner, 2013; 304 pp., \$16

pbk., \$25 hbk.) includes extensive discussion of Harvey Wiley, James Kraft, the rise of frozen foods, and the use of soy derivatives and chemical additives. **Aaron Bobrow-Strain**, an Assoc. Prof. of Politics at Whitman College (Walla Walla, WA), has written *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013; 257 pp., \$17 pbk.). He argues that industrial dreams of perfecting America's loaves, however well-intentioned, actually led to a deterioration in their quality and healthfulness. For example, concern over contamination led to ordinances requiring that bread be wrapped, which doomed many small bakeries that couldn't afford bread-wrapping machines. The adoption of the mechanical bread slicer, invented by **Otto Rohwedder** of Battle Creek, MI, in 1928 and adopted virtually coast-to-coast within two years, reflected an obsession with maximizing the output and minimizing the variability of commercial products. **Pagan Kennedy**'s "Who Made That" column on sliced bread (*New York Times Magazine*, Mar. 3, 2013) revealed that at the time of invention, Rohwedder had moved to Chillicothe, MO, so Missouri rather than Michigan gets the title of "Home of Sliced Bread".

Just as artisanal bread is enjoying a resurgence in interest, old-fashioned at-home milk delivery also continues to revive in popularity, according to two recent articles:

- CHAA member **Robin Watson**'s "The Milkman (and Woman) Cometh Back", in *Culture* (Winter 2013-14), which focuses on Calder Dairy (MI), Manhattan Milk (NY), and Smith Brothers (WA).
- **Lizzy Alfs**'s "Got Milk Delivery?", which was the lead article in the *Ann Arbor News* last Jan. 5, followed Calder milkman Stan Austin on his route.

The Lanham, Maryland-based AltaMira Press, which published **Bruce Kraig**'s book on hot dog culture and **Walter Levy**'s on picnic history, has now launched a series called Big City Food Biographies. The first three releases:

- **Elizabeth M. Williams** (President and Director of the Southern Food and Beverage Museum), *New Orleans: A Food Biography* (2012).
- **Erica J. Peters** (Co-founder and Director of the Culinary Historians of Northern California), *San Francisco: A Food Biography* (2013).
- **Andrew F. Smith** (professor at New School University in Manhattan and member of the Culinary Historians of New York), *New York City: A Food Biography* (2013).

Hungry for more on NYC food history? Don't forget these earlier volumes:

- **William Grimes**, *Appetite City: A Culinary History of New York* (North Point Press, 2009).
- **Robin Shulman**, *Eat the City* (Broadway Books, 2013), a cultural history focusing on the Big Apple's honey, sugar, vegetables, meat, fish, beer, and wine.
- **Mark Russ Federman**, *Russ and Daughters: Reflections and Recipes from the House that Herring Built* (Schocken, 2013), a memoir from the well-known Jewish smoked-fish shop on the Lower East Side. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, programs are scheduled for 4:00-6:00 p.m. and are held at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, March 16, 2014

David S. Potter, Prof. of Greek and Roman History, Univ. of Michigan,
author of *Life, Death, and Entertainment in the Roman Empire*

Sunday, March 23, 2014

(2:00 pm, The Museum on Main Street,
500 North Main Street, Ann Arbor)
Dr. Margaret Carney, director of
The Dinnerware Museum, conducts a
special tour of the "Three Courses" exhibit

Sunday, April 13, 2014

Ruth Mossock Johnston,
food writer and culinary consultant,
author of *The Art of Cooking Morels*

Sunday, May 18, 2014

Helen Zoe Veit, Asst. Prof. of
History, Michigan State Univ.,
author of *Modern Food, Moral Food:
Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern
American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century*

On the Back Burner: We welcome ideas and
submissions from all readers of *Repast*, including
for the following planned future theme-issues.
Suggestions for future themes are also welcome.

- Spring and Summer 2014: Quadricentennial of
Dutch-American Cooking—
Part 1, The Hudson and Delaware Valleys
Part 2, The Great Lakes Region
- Fall 2014: Mid-20th Century Cookbooks

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