



Cooking Up a Story

Empowering Women
Through Cooking



An Activity of the Nutrition Enrichment and Healthy Living Program



JDC Israel Ashalim
Touching Lives, Transforming Communities



A special thanks to everyone who took part in the creation of this cookbook

Thank you to the women of **Nazareth Illit** who shared their stories, their recipes and who opened their minds to a healthier way of cooking.

Thank you to **Efrat Zohar-Lefkowitz** for leading this group from start to finish, not only as a chef, but as a true facilitator who helped these women realize that they truly can adapt their dishes to be healthier and still remain authentic.

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On behalf of my family's Foundation, my sister, Nina and I had the opportunity to visit The Cook and Host Program in action.

We met with a group of women from different cultures and backgrounds. They prepared a sumptuous, healthful meal for us utilizing the nutritional knowledge that they had acquired as participants in this program. Each of them prepared a dish and prior to serving it told a story about their unique situation and the genesis of their recipe. As they shared their experiences they lit up the room with smiles and enthusiasm!

Their stories were compelling and the dishes were varied and delicious I suggested they create a Cookbook.

Empowering women through nutritional cooking is a recipe for success!
The S & P Foundation is proud to support The Cook and Host Program.

Enjoy the Book,

Susan Shulman Pertnau



Dedicated with love and appreciation to the memory of Professor Stanley Mills who devoted his life to the health and welfare of the children of Israel



Dedication

In June 2012, Susan Shulman and Nina Saslove, members of the Kay Family, visited the Cook and Host Group in Nazareth Illit as part of JDC-Ashalim's Nutrition Enrichment and Healthy Living Program. The Cook and Host Group is composed of women - native-born Israelis, veteran immigrants and relative newcomers - who gather together to talk about health and nutrition, memories and aspirations. The women come to share family stories and recipes, but also to cook and learn how to create healthier versions of traditional dishes. Susan and Nina were so moved by these women, that they encouraged the group to compile a cookbook of their recipes and stories.

JDC-Ashalim and the women of the Cook and Host Group would like to thank Susan and Nina, Barbara and Jack Kay and the S&P Philanthropic Fund for their generous support of this initiative. Thanks to them, these women's recipes and stories will be preserved for posterity and cooks around the world will be able to create healthier versions of traditional dishes.

Proceeds from the sale of this cookbook will go to support the Cook and Host Group in Nazareth Illit and replicate this model in other cities across Israel.

The Cook and Host Group

The program: The Cook and Host Group brings together women from different cultures and backgrounds to learn about nutrition and how to prepare healthy, low-cost meals for their families. While chatting, cooking and learning, they also absorb the benefits of the "Cooking Therapy" model. Cooking Therapy, developed in Israel by Mrs. Ayelet Barak, uses the emotions and senses associated with food to address underlying social, emotional and familial issues and needs of the women.

Cook and Host meetings were developed by a staff of a chef, a social worker and a dietician and were lead by Chef and Cooking Therapist Efrat Zohar-Lefkowitz. This team of professionals aimed to support the group in three main areas:

- Impart practical health-promoting knowledge on how to manage the family menu at low cost.
- Provide social-emotional support to allow each participant to experience success in improving a personal recipe, thus opening a lifestyle change for her and those around her.
- Create a female leadership group in the community by connecting women from different backgrounds and bridging cultural gaps through food.

Since joining the group, the women have changed their cooking habits and now prepare regular, healthy, family meals within a realistic food budget. Each woman has a chance to demonstrate her newfound skills, her love of cooking and her family's stories when she hosts the group in her home, preparing a healthy version of a beloved recipe.

The Place: Nazareth Illit, a city in Israel's lower Galilee, has a population of 52,000, half of whom are immigrants from across the globe. Despite the development of industry, tourism, and public and educational institutions, prompted in part by the wave of immigrants, many Nazareth Illit families



are underprivileged and unemployment remains high. The Nazareth Illit municipality has partnered with JDC to create a number of community-empowerment programs, including the Cook and Host Group, whose members represent a cross section of the city's population.

The Nutrition Enrichment and Healthy Living Program

The Nutrition Enrichment and Healthy Living Program is a flagship project of JDC-Ashalim promoting health in cities throughout Israel characterized by low socio-economic status. This program provides children and adults with the knowledge that encourages them to adopt a healthy lifestyle, and empowers them to take control of their physical and emotional well-being. Specifically, the program addresses rising rates of obesity, poor nutrition and disease by providing children, parents, and professionals with essential information and tools to improve dietary habits, physical fitness and dental care practices amongst Israel's most vulnerable populations. Over the years, the program has proven that promoting healthy living helps at-risk populations leave the circle of risk.

The Nutrition Enrichment and Healthy Living Program was established thanks to the generous support and vision of Professor Stanley Mills, of blessed memory, and the Kay Family. In the 10 years since its inception, the program, conducted in partnership with the Ministries of Social Affairs, Education and Health and local municipalities, has grown to include health-promoting activities in 22 cities, reaching over 160,000 children and adults. As a result, many schools now have programs designed to encourage their students to eat healthful foods, brush their teeth, and engage in physical activity. Similarly, an increasing number of parents are learning how to provide their children with nutritious food and a healthier lifestyle.

JDC- Ashalim Programming

Recognizing the growing needs of Israeli children at risk, JDC founded Ashalim in partnership with the Israeli government and the UJA-Federation of New York, in 1998. Ashalim works on behalf of children and youth at risk by expanding the range of services and programs offered to children at risk and their families, improving existing services and providing support to field professionals. Ashalim's efforts are helping thousands of Israel's youngest citizens fulfill their potential, thereby strengthening the fabric of Israeli society.

The Cook and Host Group is a shining example of healthy living programming. The group is a collaborative effort of the Nutrition Enrichment and Healthy Living Program and JDC's Better Together Community Empowerment Program. Better Together is a comprehensive community initiative which inspires long-term change in blighted neighborhoods by bringing together residents and service providers to create a brighter future for the neighborhood's children.



Table of Contents

This cookbook is divided into four thematic sections. While the dishes in each section vary, the stories of the women behind them share a common thread.

Finding My Place

The stories behind these recipes focus on finding one’s place in the world and a search for self.

Chana’s Harira (Moroccan Berber Soup)	8-9
Dorit’s Latkes (Potato Pancakes)	10-11
Chani’s Khinkali (Georgian Dumplings)	12-13
Yana’s Sirniki (Cheese Pancakes)	14-15

A Taste of Health

The stories behind these recipes reflect the pursuit for health for one’s self and for one’s family.

Bella’s Gefilte Fish	16-17
Leah’s Grenadiermarsch (Austro-Hungarian Dumpling Dish)	18-19
Viyorika’s Mamaliga (Romanian Corn Bread)	20-21
Shosh’s Ma’asuba (Yemenite Pancakes)	22-23
Yulia’s Seed Sweets	24-25

Cooking Through Lack and Hardship

The stories behind these recipes deal with scarcity and hardship, and the dishes that emerged from difficult situations.

Hannah’s Borscht (Beet Soup)	26-27
Olga’s Lentil Soup	28-29
Mazalit’s Majadra (Middle Eastern Lentils and Rice)	30-31
Shula’s Ethiopian Chicken Stew	32-33

Neighbors and Friends

The stories behind these recipes are connected to childhood memories of family, neighbors and friends.

Etti’s Ketzitzot (Middle Eastern Meatballs)	34-35
Doris’ Kubbeh Soup (Kurdish Meat Dumplings)	36-37
Ilana’s Tzimmes (Sweet Carrot Stew)	38-39
Tzippy’s Potato Salad	40-41



A Taste of Morocco: Chana's Story

I was born in Beni Mellal, Morocco in 1949. When I was 14, we made aliyah to Nazareth Illit. I never attended ulpan, but I promised myself that one day I would learn a profession. At the age of 35, I decided to carry out my promise. I went to the local employment office and convinced them to send me to a chef's course. For a full year, I left my house - and my five young children - early in the morning and traveled to Haifa to fulfill my dream. That year was the hardest and most fulfilling of my life. I graduated with honors and found work as a Kitchen Manager at a Kibbutz. I had succeeded in turning my passion into a career.



Chana's Harira (Moroccan Berber Soup)

Ingredients:

2 large onions, chopped
 2 tablespoons olive or canola oil
 5 celery stalks with the leaves finely chopped
 8.5 ounces (250 gr) chickpeas
 8.5 ounces (250 gr) green lentils
 8.5 ounces (250 gr) peeled fava beans (fresh or frozen)
 3 large ripe tomatoes, diced
 Generous tablespoon of turmeric
 Salt and black pepper
 ½ cup chopped coriander
 3.5 ounces (100 gr) very thin noodles (for soup)
 2 tablespoons flour
 Juice of 3 large lemons

Directions:

- In a large pot, fry the onion in the oil until golden. Add celery and chickpeas and continue cooking for 5-7 minutes.
- Add the lentils, fava beans, tomatoes, turmeric, black pepper and salt.
- Add about 68 ounces (2 liters) of water to the pot, until the vegetables are covered. Bring to a boil. Clear the foam which rises to the top, add the chopped coriander and cook on a medium-low flame for 45 minutes, until the beans are soft.
- Add the noodles and cook for an additional 10 minutes.
- In a small bowl, prepare a stabilizer (thickener) by mixing two cups of water with 2 tablespoons of flour and the lemon juice. Turn the soup-flame to high, and when it begins to boil, add in the flour mixture, pouring in slowly in a thin stream. Stir constantly and keep the soup simmering to prevent lumps from forming. Continue cooking on medium flame for 10 minutes.
- Serve.

Nutritional Tips:

- Chana's mother made a meat version of this soup, and when Chana prepared it without meat, she used to add soup mix. At the Cook and Host Group, Chana realized that soup mix is both unhealthy and unnecessary. The vegetables and spices lent a richness and flavor to the soup so that artificial flavor enhancers became unnecessary.

The recipe I chose to share - harira (the traditional soup of Morocco) - is a reminder of my childhood in Morocco and cooking in my mother's kitchen. My mother's harira was one of her most beloved dishes. Making harira was like organizing a big party; that's how excited we were and how much work she put into it. She would soak the beans for hours, grind the spices with mortar and pestle, and peel and chop the vegetables with precision. We lived in a large compound with four other families who all shared a communal kitchen. When my mother made harira, the house would wake to the sounds of the kitchen and the smell of her cooking, which would spread throughout the compound. One by one, all of the house's residents would drift into the kitchen to check on the progress of the soup. When it was finally ready, everyone would gather to eat this soup, which filled our stomachs with nourishment and our hearts with love.





Latkes for My Father: Dorit's Story

I was born in 1952 and grew up on Kibbutz Sha'ar Hagolan, which my parents, who immigrated from Poland, helped found. When I was seven, my family moved to Nazareth Illit and I had to get used to city life. All of a sudden, bike paths were replaced by roads, and lawns became sidewalks. With time, I began to think of Nazareth Illit as home. When I married, my husband and I decided to build our lives here. Nazareth Illit is where I had my three children and established my career as a kindergarten teacher. I have taught generations of Nazareth Illit children over the years.

The recipe I chose to share - latkes (potato pancakes)- is a recipe from my childhood. Here is its story.

My father was born on Chanukah in Poland. He came to Israel as a young man, fought in the Palmach (the elite fighting force of pre-state Israel) and served as David Ben-Gurion's bodyguard. My father did not like to host parties, but every year on the first night of Chanukah, my small family would gather, along with my father's friends from the Palmach and other friends he picked up over the years, to celebrate his birthday. The smell of frying potatoes filled the air, reminding him of the smells of his childhood in a home long gone and far away.

The plate of latkes would sit in the center of the table like a birthday cake. It was both a reminder of my father's past and a testament to the life he built for himself here, alongside the country. Even though my father is no longer alive, every year on this day, I cook the latkes he so loved, latkes filled with memories.



Dorit's Latkes (Potato Pancakes) 20-25 pancakes

Ingredients:

2.2 pounds (1 kg) peeled potatoes

1 egg

1 tablespoon flour

1 teaspoon salt

Sprinkle of freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

- Grate the potatoes on the fine holes of a grater. Squeeze the grated potatoes with hands to remove liquid. Place in a strainer and let sit for 10 minutes until most of the liquid has drained.
- Add the egg, flour, salt and pepper and mix well.
- Heat a non-stick skillet over a medium-low flame. In the meantime, mold the batter into round pancakes. Gently place the pancakes in the skillet. Flatten the pancakes with the help of a spatula, making sure to keep their round shape.
- When the pancakes have browned on both sides, remove to a baking pan and bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 10-15 minutes.

Nutritional Tips:

- The original recipe Dorit inherited from her mother included deep-frying the latkes in oil. Thanks to the Cook and Host Group, Dorit was exposed to the idea of using a non-stick skillet, which allowed her to fry the latkes without any of the oil.
- Additional vegetables including carrots, zucchini and leeks can be added to the batter to decrease the latkes' carbohydrate count and add nutrients to the meal.
- The latkes are best served with yogurt mixed with a clove of crushed garlic and two tablespoons of chopped dill.





Food was Our First Language: Chani's Story

I was born in Georgia in 1967. When I was six, we made aliyah, becoming the first Georgian Jews to settle in Nazareth Illit. My large extended family lived crowded into a small apartment in an immigrant neighborhood. We scraped and struggled, but we built a life for ourselves.

Like many Georgian girls, I married young, at 16. My husband was the love of my life, but within a year he had died in a work accident. It was years before I could think of dating again. Eventually, at the age of 32, I remarried. Then tragedy struck again. A work accident left my husband completely disabled. I take care of him, and our three children.

The recipe I chose to share - khinkali (Georgian dumplings) - reminds me of my first days in this new land.

We lived crowded together in a strange and unbelievable ingathering of exiles - Russians, Georgians, Moroccans and Romanians. In our neighborhood, the apartments felt like train cars - they were so crowded together.

The neighborhood children would play together in the courtyards. We would look at and recognize one another, but none of us spoke the same language.

In the afternoon, the smells of each family's cooking would fill the stairwells. The children would once again gather in the courtyard at dusk, this time with their plates and their own family's special foods. We would curiously look at and breathe in the aromas of each dish. The first words we learned were the names of the different foods. Food was our first language; it helped us form connections and make friends. I would bring soft and airy khinkali, filled with cheese, made by hand by my mother and grandmother.



Chani's Khinkali (Georgian Dumplings)

Ingredients:

For the dough:

8.5 ounces (250 gr) white flour

8.5 ounces (250 gr) whole-wheat flour

1 egg

7 ounces (200 ml) water

Sprinkle of salt

For the filling:

7 ounces (200 gr) 5% bulgarian, feta or other salty cheese

7 ounces (200 gr) farmer cheese

1 egg

Directions:

- Combine dough ingredients in a mixing bowl and mix until the ingredients are blended and dough is soft.
- Remove the dough to a lightly floured work surface and knead until smooth and supple. Set aside.
- In a medium bowl, combine cheeses and egg, mixing well.
- Boil water with a little salt in a large pot.
- Split the dough into two parts, roll out one portion of the dough until it is 0.4 inches (1 cm) thick. Using a glass or cookie cutter, cut the dough into circles, then roll the dough out to form circles 2.4 inches (6 cm) across.
- Place one tablespoon of filling in the center of each circle. Close the circles into crescent shapes, pressing down the edges. For a fancier finish, create accordion pleats along the edge of the dough using your thumb and index finger, pinching the top of the dumpling together to seal. Alternatively, connect the two ends of the crescent, turning them both inwards, so that they form a shape similar to tortellini.
- Repeat with the remaining dough.
- Place the dumplings in boiling water, cooking for about 10 min. The dumplings will float to the top of the pot when done.

Nutritional Tips:

- The original recipe used by Chani's mother and grandmother used only white flour and included two tablespoons of butter in the filling. Thanks to the Cook and Host Group, Chani decided to replace half the white flour with whole-wheat flour (which increases the dumplings' dietary fiber, vitamin and mineral counts), as part of her journey towards healthy eating. At the Cook and Host Group, Chani learned that the filling tasted just as good without the butter, which added unnecessary and unhealthy saturated fat to the dish.
- The dumplings are best served sprinkled with crushed garlic or with an onion fried in canola oil.





Remembering My Grandmother: Yana's Story

I was born in 1979 in Yekaterinburg, Russia. When I was 15, I moved to Israel on my own, as part of the Na'ale high-school program, which brought youth from the former Soviet Union to spend their high-school years in Israel. I had no family and no language in which to communicate.

The program leaders saw that I was unhappy and set me up with an adoptive family in Nazareth Illit. Meeting this family changed my life. I really felt like I had a place with them. They became like my family and Israel became my home. Eventually, my mother made aliyah and we reconstructed our family in Nazareth Illit.

Today, I am a mother of three and a fitness teacher at the local community center.

The recipe I chose to share – sirniki (cheese pancakes) – is a remnant of my childhood in Russia.

Every vacation, my family would pack our bags and head for the country. The sights of the busy city would soon give way to green fields, lush orchards, and birds chirping. Eventually I saw the most beloved sight, my grandmother, laden down by heavy pitchers of milk, which she carried to her dairy.

There she would make a thick drink, which she poured into jars and cooked. She would then place the mixture in cheesecloth, and hang it throughout the kitchen where it turned into juicy blocks of cheese.

My grandmother used this cheese to make sirniki. She put a lot of love into the sirniki she made for us and I always felt that this food, in particular, expressed our connection to one another.



Yana's Sirniki (Cheese Pancakes)

Ingredients:

This recipe can be made in two variations: sweet and savory. Both recipes start with the same base:
12 ounces (350 gr) Farmer's cheese
1 egg

½ cup of white flour, sifted, plus extra flour for coating the pancakes before cooking

For the sweet version:

2-3 tablespoons of raisins

2 tablespoons brown sugar

Sprinkle of salt

Powdered sugar (for decoration)

For the savory version:

½ teaspoon of salt

2 tablespoons of finely chopped parsley

2 tablespoons of finely chopped dill

Directions:

- Choose a version and mix all the ingredients in a bowl.
- Mold the batter into medium-size balls and coat them with flour.
- Place in either a ceramic non-stick pan and cook on a low flame without oil, or, if using a regular frying pan, heat two tablespoons of olive or canola oil and cook on a medium-low flame.
- The pancakes are ready when they turn golden-brown on each side.

Nutritional Tips:

- The original recipe Yana received from her grandmother included adding a tablespoon of salt with each version. At the Cook and Host Group, Yana learned that she could cut back on the salt and still retain the taste.
- The sweet pancakes are best served with honey or silan (date honey) or cream cheese.
- The savory pancakes are best served with cottage cheese or 9% sour cream.





Bella's Gefilte Fish

Ingredients:

3 mullet fish (9 lb or approximately 4 kg)
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 4 carrots, sliced 0.12 inches thick (3-4 millimeters)
 3 medium beets, sliced 0.2 inches thick (5-6 millimeters)
 3 large onions, peeled and cut into quarters
 1 egg and 1 additional egg yolk
 1 loaf of white bread, crust removed, which has been soaked in water and squeezed dry
 1 tablespoon canola oil
 3 bay leaves
 3-5 whole allspice berries
 Salt and freshly ground pepper

Directions:

- Carefully remove the fish heads and tails and clean the intestines, without cutting through the stomachs. Cut each fish into 3-4 pieces.
- Remove the fish meat from the head, tail and remaining pieces, leaving some meat on the skin and bones so that they retain their original form. Set aside pieces for step five.
- Using a food processor or meat grinder, grind the fish with the bread, eggs, salt and black pepper.
- In a large pot, layer the beets and carrots. Fill the pot with 1.2-1.6 inches (3-4 cm) of water, enough to mostly cover the vegetables, but not so much that they start to float.
- Stuff the fish pieces (casings) with the ground fish mixture, making sure the fish are full, but not overstuffed. Carefully place the stuffed fish pieces in the pot. Add the onion quarters. Add water until the tops of the fish are nearly covered.
- Bring the water to a boil on a high flame. Once the water boils, add the bay leaves and allspice berries and reduce heat to a low flame. Cook uncovered for 40 minutes.

Nutritional Tips:

- The original recipe called for carp. At the Cook and Host Group, Bella learned that she could replace the carp with mullet, a fish which is lower in fat and higher in Omega-3 fatty acids (Omega-3 is necessary for brain function and proper growth and development, and may help lower the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, certain cancers and arthritis). By switching carp for mullet, Bella increased the dish's nutritional value, without diminishing its taste.
- The fish is best prepared a day in advance, allowing it to absorb all the flavors prior to serving. It can be served directly from the refrigerator.



Remembering My Mother: Bella's Story

I was born in Minsk, Belarus in 1949. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, I dreamed of making aliyah, but my daughters were against it, so for years I delayed the move. Finally, in 2010, I made aliyah, settling in Nazareth Illit. In Minsk, I was an art teacher. Here, I volunteer at JDC's Better Together community program, where I run a puppet theater for children. Many of the children come from Russian-speaking homes and their mothers translate for me, as my Hebrew is not yet fluent. Better Together helps me give something to the community while at the same time helping me to integrate and feel like I belong.

The recipe I chose to share - gefilte fish - is one I used to make with my mother when I was a child.

I would stand on a stool in the kitchen, next to my mother, holding a food-grinder in my little hands. My mother worked with great concentration, cleaning and chopping the fish which soon would become a meal fit for kings. My job was to grind the fish, mixing it with bread that I had moistened and wrung dry with my own hands.

The years passed, and my mother got sick. Whenever I caught the smell of gefilte fish, tears would come to my eyes as I thought about my mother and the love she put into her fish. I could never bring myself to ask my mother for the recipe. Today, my mother has passed on and I have spent years trying to recapture her recipe. The recipe I share here is the result of years of experimentation, trying different combinations until I found one that best approximates the fish my mother used to make.





A Leftover Feast: Leah's Story

I was born in Timisoara, in what was then Yugoslavia (now Romania), in 1947. In 1961, my family made aliyah, eventually settling in Nazareth Illit. I studied physical education at the prestigious Wingate Institute and education at Haifa University. I married and raised two sons. For years I taught physical education at the local middle schools, eventually serving as the assistant to the physical education supervisor at the Ministry of Education. Today, I am officially retired and I volunteer at a local community center, where I organize and promote cultural events.

The recipe I chose to share - *grenadiermarsch* (an Austro-Hungarian dish made from leftovers)- is a recipe from my childhood in Yugoslavia: Every so often, the disease and pollution of the city would send us to the village where my grandfather, a doctor, lived. In his courtyard was a vegetable garden full of squash, onion, potatoes, tomatoes and cucumbers, the source of the simple and nutritious meals we ate during our stay. Inside, the stove would be full of pots of potatoes, vegetables, pasta and dumplings all watched over by my grandfather's housekeeper, who was like a grandmother to us. The sight of the housekeeper preparing the *grenadiermarsch* for us is seared into my memory. We called it the leftover meal, as it was usually prepared with the leftovers from the previous meal. All we needed to do was add some extra ingredients and with a few simple steps we had a beloved and tasty meal.



Leah's Grenadiermarsch (Austro-Hungarian Dumpling Dish)

Ingredients:

8 red potatoes, boiled with the peel

14 ounces (400 gr) cooked whole-wheat pasta, such as shells

3 large onions, cut into medium/small pieces

2 tablespoons canola oil

Sprinkle of salt

For the dumplings:

1.5 cups whole-wheat flour

3 eggs

1 tablespoon canola oil

Sprinkle of salt

Directions:

- In a frying pan with high sides, fry onion in canola oil until lightly browned.
- Peel the potatoes and cut into 0.8 - 1 inches (2-2.5 cm) chunks.
- To prepare the dumplings, boil water in a pot with a little salt. While the water is heating, mix all dumpling ingredients together until smooth. When the water boils, place a large-holed grater over the pot and grate the dumpling batter into the pot, creating miniature dumplings about the size of a teaspoon. Cook for a few minutes until the dumplings float to the top. Remove using a slotted spoon and transfer to a bowl.
- When all the ingredients are ready and the onions have browned, add the rest of the ingredients to the frying pan, covering the onions first with the potato chunks, followed by the cooked pasta and topped with the dumplings. Heat through and serve warm.

Nutritional Tips:

- The original recipe used white flour and white pasta. At the Cook and Host Group, Leah substituted whole-wheat flour and pasta. Leah was surprised that this change did not affect the taste of the dish at all. By replacing whole-wheat flour for white, she was able to significantly increase the dish's nutritional value as whole-wheat flour is rich in dietary fiber, which benefits the digestive system and helps one feel full.
- The *grenadiermarsch* is best served with pickled vegetables.





Viyorika's Mamaliga (Romanian Corn Bread)

Ingredients:

1.5 cups corn flour or polenta
 34 ounces water (1 liter)
 1 teaspoon salt
 14 ounces (400 gr) hard
 bulgarian, feta or other salty
 cheese (5% fat)
 Two 6.8 oz. (200 ml)
 containers of 9% sour cream

Directions:

- Coarsely grate the salty cheese on the large holes of a grater.
- In a large pot, boil water with a teaspoon of salt. When the water boils, add the corn flour, stirring constantly until smooth. Cover the pot and cook on a low flame for 15 minutes until the mixture gains the consistency of a soft porridge.
- Preheat the oven to 350 degree Fahrenheit. Spread a square 8 x 8 inch (20 x 20 cm) Pyrex casserole dish with a thin layer of salty cheese and sour cream. Cover with a layer of cornmeal porridge, between 0.4 and 0.6 inches thick (1-1.5 cm), a second layer of cheese and sour cream, a second layer of cornmeal and a final layer of cheese and sour cream.
- Bake for 10 minutes and serve. The mamaliga can also be served cold, without cooking, for a softer, more gelatinous texture.



Cooking for my Daughter: Viyorika's Story

I was born in 1954 in Baia Mare, Romania. We made aliyah in 1983, after my youngest daughter was diagnosed with celiac disease. The doctors in Romania could not treat her as they thought she would not survive, so we moved to Israel in the hope of giving her a better life.

The transition to a new language and country and the stress of having a sick child took its toll on the family, and my husband and I divorced. But with better medical care, my daughter thrived and today is a mother to a four-year-old daughter of her own. In Romania, I worked in fashion design and today I teach art at JDC's Better Together community program.

The recipe I chose to share - mamaliga (Romanian corn bread)- is a traditional Romanian dish I cooked for my daughter throughout her childhood.

Every morning, I would rise early to send my daughter to kindergarten and later to school. As part of our morning routine I would prepare mamaliga, a gluten-free Romanian dish, for her. Mamaliga was such a part of our morning routine that it was as if I was cooking on autopilot, as if the pots were cooking themselves and I was just supervising. My daughter was so limited in what she could eat, I loaded the mamaliga with healthy food for her, adding milk, honey, egg yolk and calcium tablets. I would cook all this with the corn flour, and it became my daughter's daily diet, granting her nourishment, giving her sustenance. The mamaliga was such a part of our life that I became known as the mamaliga mother. For years, mamaliga was my nickname, and my life.



Nutritional Tips:

- In Viyorika's original recipe, she used pre-sliced yellow cheese. Thanks to the Cook and Host Group, Viyorika was exposed to the idea of substituting the sliced cheese with salty cheese, which has a fat content of 5% as opposed to the 22-28% fat content of the sliced cheese. This creates a major change by significantly reducing the amount of saturated fat in the dish.
- The mamaliga can be served as a main course or as an accompaniment to fish.





Shosh's Ma'asuba (Yemenite Pancakes)

Ingredients:

For the samneh (Yemenite clarified butter):

10.5 ounces (300 gr) plain unsalted butter

10.5 ounces (300 gr) salted butter

One dry dodonaea (hop bush/candlewood) branch, approximately 3.9 inches (10 cm) long *

For the batter:

1 cup white flour

1 cup whole-wheat flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1.5 cups of water

1 teaspoon of salt

4 eggs, (put aside, do not add to batter)

4 teaspoons samneh

Directions:

- For the samneh: Light a low flame on the stove and singe the dodonaea branch, letting it burn slightly or until it begins to smoke (like incense). Turn off the flame and place an inverted aluminum or enamel pot over the branch to capture the smoke.
- Flip the pot right-side up and place the butter inside. Melt over a low flame, gently stirring the top layer to prevent clumping. A harder bottom layer will form. Cook until the butter liquefies and turns into a transparent gold color on top and golden brown on the bottom. Pour the transparent liquid into a glass jar, leaving the harder residue in the pot. Refrigerate the glass jar**.
- For the batter: in a bowl, whisk both flours, baking powder, water and salt until the mixture gains a creamy consistency.
- Pour enough batter to cover the inside of a non-stick skillet. Cook on both sides like a pancake.
- Cut into pieces the size of silver dollars then place the ma'asuba in a heavy pot, covering well to keep warm.
- Place another pancake in the skillet and repeat the process.
- After a quarter of the batter has been cooked, open the pot and mix a teaspoon of samneh and one egg into the ma'asuba, mixing well. Make sure to keep pot closed when not mixing. The heat from the ma'asuba will cook the eggs.
- Repeat until all the batter has been used and the pot is full, adding a teaspoon of samneh and one egg each time another quarter of the batter is used.
- Make sure that the samneh and eggs gently coat the dough, so that there are no lumps. Dish into small bowls and serve.

* As this flavoring may be difficult to find outside of Israel, the samneh can be made without it.

** Note: The samneh is best when cooked in large amounts. Samneh will last a long time in the refrigerator.

Nutritional Tips:

- The original recipe used by Shosh's mother used only white flour and included coating the frying pan with samneh. At the Cook and Host Group, Shosh saw that by using a non-stick skillet she was able to cook the ma'asuba without any samneh or oil. By reducing the amount of samneh in the dish, Shosh was able to significantly cut the fat content, using the samneh only to add flavor. It was important to Shosh to maintain the original flavor, a more realistic approach to healthy eating than completely cutting out familiar tastes. Shosh also saw that she could substitute half of the white flour for whole-wheat flour, and increase the dish's nutritional content, without changing the taste.



Ma'asuba, What Did They Do With It?: Shosh's Story

I was born in Tel Aviv in 1944. My father was a career soldier, as was my husband. I lived all over the country before finally settling in Nazareth Illit, where I raised six children and worked as a teacher. Twelve years ago, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and for a while, I lost the ability to speak. After a long rehabilitation process, I retook control of my life. Today, I serve as the head of JDC's Accessible Community for the Disabled in Nazareth Illit. I organize cultural and leisure activities, and facilitate support groups. This work gives me strength and makes me a better wife, mother and grandmother to my 15 grandchildren.

The recipe I chose to share - ma'asuba (Yemenite pancakes) - is a story from my childhood.

In the neighborhood where I grew up, in the southernmost part of Tel Aviv, all the neighbors, young and old, hoped for a taste of my mother's ma'asuba.

She generally only made this dish for new mothers or as a breakfast for young children who needed a nutritious, filling meal to start the day.

Today, before my grandchildren come to visit, they call me to make sure I will make ma'asuba for them. One of the mysteries surrounding this dish is the source of its name. The name is Arabic, and I believe it denotes the way in which the dish is stirred, but my grandchildren and I have come up with a more creative explanation. In Hebrew the name sounds like Ma Asu Ba? What did they do with it?

I have already seen six generations of my family eat this dish. I pray that they continue to eat it for generations to come.





A Healthy Choice: Yulia's Story

I was born in Siberia in 1975, but spent my childhood all over Russia, following my father, a soldier, on his various assignments. As a child, I battled multiple health problems including severe asthma, chronic bronchitis and numerous allergies. My childhood was a blur of hospital stays and doctors' visits. In 2006, I made aliyah with my husband and children, settling in Nazareth Illit. My dream is to improve my Hebrew so that I can teach health and nutrition to children. Thanks to the Cook and Host Group, I now have a whole new vocabulary to enjoy, and learn.

The recipe I chose to share - seed sweets- is one I created as a treat for my children. I remember when I was 12 years old and in the hospital again. I was sick of it. I'd spent nearly half my life in cold, forbidding hospitals being given medicine and injections and I couldn't do it anymore. By chance, I came across a health article in a magazine which helped me to change my life. Thanks to this article, I changed my diet and began to exercise, giving up white flour and sugar and substituting legumes and nuts for medicine and doctor's visits. Slowly, my health improved until I no longer suffered from the various ailments that kept making me sick.

The choices I made all those years ago continue to affect my life today. The sight of grocery shelves stacked high with chocolate, sweets and candy loaded with food coloring makes me dizzy. It breaks my heart to hear young children calling out for these treats, using them for comfort. I felt in my own body how harmful these foods can be and I did not want to give them to my children. But like all children, they craved sweets, so I created "seed sweets" for them, which I give them in health and happiness.



Yulia's Seed Sweets

Ingredients:

1.75 cup ground flaxseed
 5 heaping tablespoons of carob powder
 1 cup unsweetened peanut butter
 1 cup ground almonds
 ¾ cup honey
 Shredded coconut and sesame seeds to coat

Directions:

- In a bowl, mix all the ingredients to form a single mixture.
- Mold the mixture into small balls, about 1.2 inches (3 cm) across.
- Coat the balls with coconut and sesame seeds.
- Place in a dark (opaque) container and store in the refrigerator.

Nutritional Tips:

- Flaxseed is extremely healthy because it contains Omega- 3 fatty acids, which our body needs to function properly. Ground flaxseed should be used shortly after it is ground, before it has a chance to oxidize and lose its effectiveness. When storing flaxseed, it should be kept in the freezer to prevent oxidation.
- Almonds contain a large amount of calcium and it is therefore highly recommended to integrate them into our diet. As they also contain a lot of fat (albeit a healthy fat), it is best to eat them in moderation.
- The sweets are best served with a drink made from soy milk and carob powder.





The Family Power Plant: Hannah's Story

I was born in Gomel, Belarus in 1942. My family was very poor so everyone was expected to contribute to the family's income. There was no money for university. Instead, I began working in a local plastic factory, helping support my family. In 1980, I moved to Israel with my husband and two daughters. Ten years later, I brought my mother to Israel and cared for her during the last years of her life.

After working in a number of blue collar jobs, I recently retired. Now two things keep me busy - my grandchildren and the Cook and Host Group.

The recipe I chose to share - borscht (a beet soup popular throughout Central and Eastern Europe) - is a testament to my mother's determination to keep her family well-fed despite our poverty.

As a child, the sight of our empty pantry broke my heart, but somehow my mother was always able to cook and feed us, as if she created the food by magic. On Fridays and holidays, our house would fill with the smell of frying onions, peppers and tomatoes. Occasionally, these scents would be joined by the smell of chicken or meat, food that was rare and expensive. Even a small piece was enough to make us happy and fill us with energy.

The pot in which my mother used to make her borscht was like the family power plant; it served as the bond that connected the family. The Friday borscht gave us the strength to survive the week, as it contained my mother's strong will, perseverance and love.



Hannah's Borscht (Beet Soup)

Ingredients:

3-4 chicken thighs, skin and fat removed, cut into two pieces each

1 carrot, sliced into coins

1 large onion, finely chopped

1 large beet, grated

1 large red pepper, grated

1 carrot, peeled and grated

2-3 tomatoes, peeled and chopped or diced small

3 potatoes, cut into eighths

3 tablespoons of tomato paste

¼ of a white cabbage, cut into small pieces

½ teaspoon of sugar

Lemon juice or citric acid to taste

Salt and black pepper to taste

Directions:

- Fill a large pot with water. Add the chicken and bring to a boil. After the water has boiled, drain the water, rinse the chicken and return to the pot. Fill the pot with fresh water, add the carrot coins and bring to a boil.
- On a second burner, fry the onion in a non-stick skillet, slowly adding the beet, grated pepper, carrot, tomatoes and potatoes. Cook for a few minutes, add the tomato paste and cook for an additional 2-3 minutes.
- Add the contents of the skillet to the pot containing the chicken and carrot coins.
- Season the soup with lemon juice or citric acid, sugar, salt and black pepper.
- Add the cabbage and cook on a low flame for 40 minutes.

Nutritional Tips:

- When Hannah presented the recipe to the Cook and Host Group, she neglected to mention that her mother used to remove the skin and fat from the chicken. The group learned that by removing the skin and fat, the soup was healthier, and just as tasty. Indeed, this is way Hannah's mother originally made the soup.



Olga's Lentil Soup

Ingredients:

17 ounces (500 gr) red lentils

2 tablespoons of olive or canola oil

1 large onion, chopped

1 carrot, peeled and diced (medium sized pieces)

3 medium potatoes, peeled and diced

Juice of one lemon

Salt and white pepper to taste

Directions:

- Soak the lentils in cold water for one hour.
- Heat the oil in a pot. Add the onion and carrot and fry until golden. Add two liters of water and bring to a boil.
- Strain the lentils and add to the pot. Cook on a medium-low flame until the lentils turn soft.
- Add the potatoes and cook for 15-20 minutes.
- Transfer the soup to a food processor or use an immersion blender, blending the soup until smooth.
- Add the lemon juice to the soup, and add salt and pepper to taste.

Nutritional Tips:

- There was no need to change the ingredients or cooking methods of Olga's original recipe, which was healthy and nutritious. At the Cook and Host Group, we suggested adding fresh lemon juice, which helps our bodies better absorb the vitamins and minerals found in the lentils.

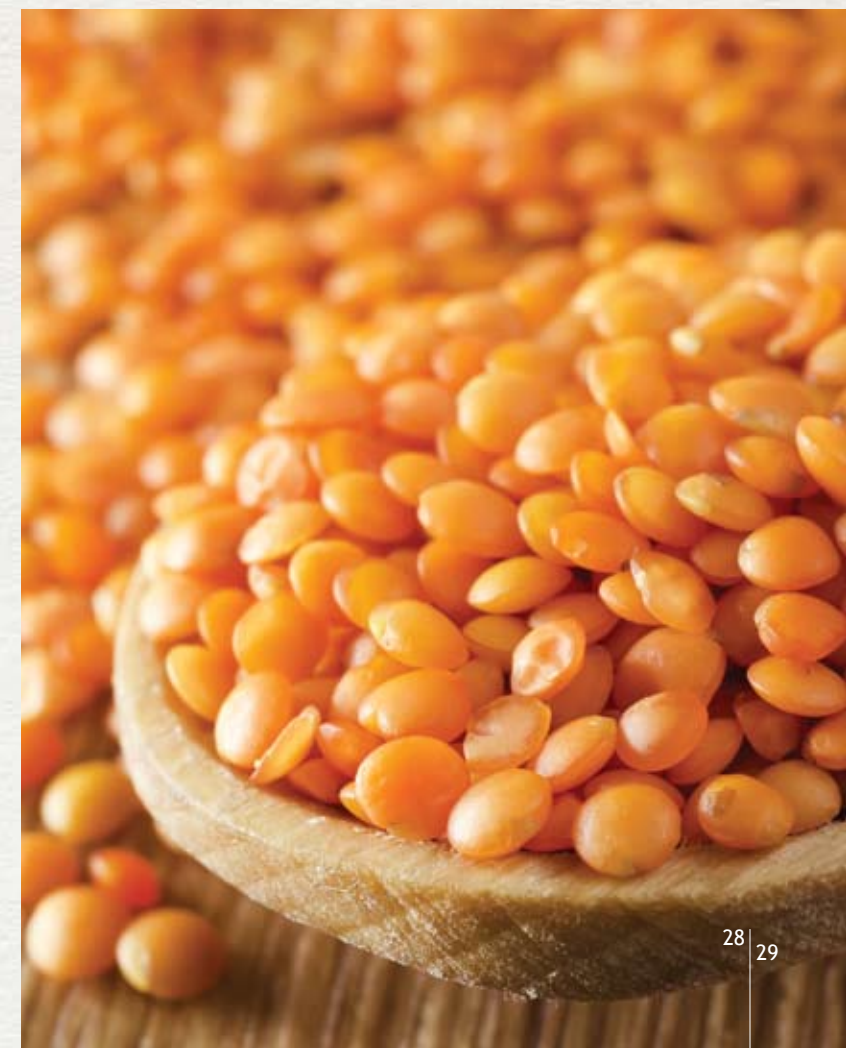


A Long but Rewarding Process: Olga's Story

I was born in Moscow in 1966. After graduating high school, I received a Bachelor's Degree in Management and worked as the cultural director of a local community center. In 1999, I left Moscow, the only home I ever knew, and moved to Haifa with my daughter.

In Israel, I worked in many fields, never really finding my niche. Last year, I moved to Nazareth Illit and got a job as a neighborhood coordinator with JDC's Better Together Community Program. I organize neighborhood programs, serve as the program coordinator for a group of mothers who volunteer in the community, and oversee the community center's National Service volunteers.

The recipe I chose to share - Lentil soup - is a reflection of the process of my conversion to Judaism. I was born to a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother. In Russia, I was considered a Jew, but when I came to Israel, I was the Russian daughter of a Jewish father. I felt Jewish and wanted to be recognized and related to as such, and so I began the conversion process. Like the soup recipe I chose to share, the process was simple, but lengthy. I failed the test a number of times and almost lost hope, but the desire to convert always nagged at me, troubling my thoughts. Finally, ten years after my initial attempt, I passed the test, proving to myself and everyone else how important it was for me to officially convert. I love this country and feel it is my home. The soaking, peeling, cutting, cooking and grinding of the soup ingredients remind me of the time, the path and the progression of my conversion process. The soup is nourishment for my body and the conversion was nourishment for my soul.





Mazalit's Majadra (Middle Eastern Lentils and Rice)

Ingredients:

2 medium onions

2 tablespoons of olive or canola oil

2 cups of brown basmati rice, soaked in cold water for an hour and then drained

17 ounces (0.5 kilo) green lentils

Tablespoon of salt

Directions:

- Cut the onions into rings, separating each one.
- In a pot large enough to hold all of the ingredients, heat the oil and fry the onions until they turn golden-brown.
- While the onions are frying, pick through the lentils removing any stones or misshapen or discolored lentils. Rinse, drain and add to the onions. Fry for an additional two minutes. Add enough boiling water to cover the lentils and mix well. Return the water to a boil and reduce the flame to low. Cook for half an hour, until the lentils start to soften. (Be careful not to let the lentils get too soft as they will continue to cook with the rice).
- Add the rice to the pot along with the salt and four cups of boiling water. Mix and return the water to a boil. Lower the flame and cook for 30-40 minutes, until the water is absorbed.
- Use a fork to check that the rice and lentils are soft, taking a sample from the bottom of the pot. Fluff the majadra with a fork and let it sit, covered, for 5-10 minutes before serving.

Nutritional Tips:

- The original recipe Mazalit received from her mother used Persian rice and vegetable oil. At the Cook and Host Group, Mazalit learned about the differences between the various types of oil, their respective nutritional properties, and why it is healthiest to use olive and canola oil. (Olive oil has a high content of monounsaturated fatty acids and antioxidants, and canola oil is high in healthy unsaturated fats and fatty acids.)
- Substituting brown rice for the original white rice increases the majadra's health benefits by increasing the amount of dietary fiber in the dish.



Different Perspectives: Mazalit's Story

I am the 13th generation to be born in Israel on my mother's side. My family lived in Haifa throughout my childhood and teenage years, and went through many tough times and financial setbacks. Because we were able to lean on each other, we survived these obstacles together.

I met my husband in Haifa, and after we got married we moved to Nazareth Illit, where we live today with our three children. I run community projects for JDC's Better Together Community Program. I'm also a full-time mother, caring for my children. I teach them about Jewish values, traditions and Zionism and instill in them a love of the land and its people.

The recipe I chose to share - majadra (Middle Eastern Lentils and Rice) - is a recipe I learned from my mother. My mother always made a clear distinction between Shabbat dishes and food she prepared during the week. Although she put extra effort into her Shabbat food, my mother had hands of gold which could make any dish taste wonderful. The majadra recipe I chose to share is one of her weekday recipes, and to this day she makes me promise that I will only make her majadra, which I love, during the week. For her, the majadra is a reminder of tough times when that was the only dish she could afford to make for us. For me, the majadra is a beloved dish - both filling and nourishing - which satisfies me and warms my heart.





Through the Deserts of Sudan: Shula's Story

I was born in 1963 near Gondar, Ethiopia. I married at 16, and a few months later we began the arduous journey to Israel. This was a secret aliyah, and anyone caught was killed or sent to jail. I gave birth to my eldest daughter during the journey; she was one year old by the time we arrived in Israel, settling in Nazareth Illit.

I raised seven wonderful children here, but my family was hit by tragedy last year, when my 23-year-old son died suddenly. I fell into a depression and never left my house. When I was invited to join the Cook and Host Group, I saw it as an opportunity to ease this depression, to meet other women and to serve as a representative of Ethiopian cuisine and culture.

The recipe I chose to share - an Ethiopian chicken stew - reminds me of both my journey to Israel and my childhood in Ethiopia. Our journey to Israel was long and difficult. For over a year, we walked through the deserts of Ethiopia and Sudan, traveling at night and hiding during the day. We traveled light - carrying some dried food and a few clothes on our backs. My grandmother would dole out handfuls of roasted chickpeas or barley, and that was our daily ration of food. We were hungry and tired. Sometimes, we were able to make injera, traditional Ethiopian bread, and the smell of it would remind me of the food we used to eat - a stew with onion, ginger and garlic, the unique mixture of spices which my grandmother would crush by hand, the chicken and the eggs poked with holes so that the juicy sauce would be absorbed by them. This was the chicken stew of which I dreamed throughout our long journey.



Shula's Ethiopian Chicken Stew

Ingredients:

One medium chicken, skin removed, cut into 12 pieces
 Juice of one lemon
 2 tablespoons of olive oil
 1 head of ginger (approx. 1 ounce, 28 gr), peeled and finely chopped
 2 heads of garlic, peeled and finely chopped
 3 onions, finely chopped
 2 tablespoons of ground spice mixture, made by grinding together equal parts of basil seed, turmeric and dried rue flower
 2 tablespoons of cayenne pepper
 Salt
 12 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and poked with a knife so that the cooking juices can seep in

Directions:

- Marinate the chicken in the lemon juice for half an hour, then rinse thoroughly.
- Heat the olive oil in a large pot, then add the ginger, garlic and onion and fry over a low flame. Add the spice mixture and cayenne pepper, and cook until a thick mixture is formed.
- Add two cups of water and bring to a boil. Add the chicken pieces, cover, and cook over a high flame for 15 minutes.
- Place the hard-boiled eggs between the chicken pieces, cover and cook over a medium-high flame for 15 minutes.

Nutritional Tips:

- This is the original recipe used by Shula's mother and grandmother in Ethiopia, and it provided the Cook and Host Group with a wonderful introduction to the Ethiopian kitchen. The women of the group learned that the traditional raw materials and cooking methods used by Ethiopian cooks are inherently healthy and nutritious and that traditional Ethiopian cuisine is a healthy option for modern cooks as well.





Etti's Ketzitot (Middle Eastern Meatballs)

Ingredients:

1 large onion, finely chopped
 1 tablespoon of olive or canola oil
 17.6 ounces (500 gr) of ground beef
 1 medium potato, finely grated
 1 head of garlic, peeled and crushed
 1 cup of finely chopped dill
 2 tablespoons of matza meal
 1 egg
 Coarse corn meal to help form the meatballs

Directions:

- Fry the onion in oil until soft.
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Mix all the ingredients together, except the corn meal, mixing well.
- Combine a tablespoon of meat mixture with a handful of corn flour, using your hands to form round balls.
- Place the balls on a baking sheet and bake for 15-20 minutes until they are crunchy on the outside and juicy on the inside.



Neighbor's Ketzitot: Etti's Story

I was born in northern Romania in 1945. As soon as I graduated high school, my parents requested permission from the government to make aliyah. All of a sudden, our lives turned into a nightmare. My father was arrested on false charges and imprisoned for two and a half years. I was rejected from every university and was unable to find work. Finally, my father was released and we were granted permission to leave Romania and move to Israel.

I met my husband and moved to Nazareth Illit, raising three children and working as a cashier in Nazareth Illit's main supermarket until my retirement.



The recipe I chose to share - ketzitot (Middle Eastern meatballs) - was popular not only with my own family but with all of our neighbors as well. "Neighbor's Ketzitot" is what we called the delicious Middle Eastern meatballs that my grandmother used to make. The scent of the meatballs would drift into the stairwell and neighboring apartments, announcing to everyone that a heaping plate of meatballs would soon be served. The taste of these juicy and flavorful ketzitot cannot be described, only experienced.

When we moved to Israel, my mother carried on my grandmother's tradition, creating a new fan club of neighbors and children who eagerly awaited the taste of "Neighbor's Ketzitot." I opened the most recent branch of the "Neighbor's Ketzitot" fan club in Nazareth Illit, where my neighbor's twin daughters are amongst the biggest fans and devour every meatball. I share the ketzitot recipe with all who want it and in this way, perpetuate the memories of my mother and grandmother.

Nutritional Tips:

- In the original recipe, the ketzitot were fried in oil. At the Cook and Host Group, Etti was pleasantly surprised to discover that baking the meatballs did not harm their taste. In fact, Etti felt that baking them made the meatballs crispier, as they were no longer absorbing lots of oil. By baking the ketzitot, Etti was able to retain their juiciness and reduce their fat content.
- The ketzitot can also be made on the stove top using a non-stick skillet and cooking them over a low flame.





My Mother's Legacy: Doris' Story

I was born in Mosul, Iraq in 1947. I made aliyah with my family in 1951 and we were sent to live in a tent camp near Kiryat Shemona. My mother, who had grown up in a beautiful house, had a very hard time adapting to the difficult living conditions. Thanks to connections through friends, we were able to move to a transit camp in Tiberias which had much better conditions. My childhood and teenage years were spent on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

After I got married, I moved to Nazareth Illit, where I raised three daughters and worked in a factory. Today, I am retired: I am busy caring for my grandchildren and attending activities at the local community center.

The recipe I chose to share -kubbeh soup (Kurdish meat dumplings) - is a legacy from my mother.

Kubbeh, was my mother's trademark during my childhood in Tiberias. Round or flat, large or small, fried or baked, in soup or in sauce, for week-days and for holidays, there was always some sort of kubbeh cooking in our house. My mother was a kubbeh- making champion. The speed and agility with which she made them was source of pride and inspiration for her family.

I learned to make one simple, basic type of kubbeh from my mother. I hope this recipe will be passed on from generation to generation, perpetuating my beloved mother's memory.



Doris' Kubbeh Soup (Kurdish Meat Dumplings)

Ingredients:

For the kubbeh (Kurdish meat dumplings):

17.6 ounces (500 gr) semolina

Sprinkle of salt

2 cups of cold water

12 ounces (350 gr) ground beef

Salt and black pepper to taste

For the soup:

2 tablespoons of canola oil

1 medium onion, finely chopped

5 tablespoons of tomato paste

Juice of one lemon or one tablespoon citric acid

Salt and black pepper to taste

2-3 cups of water

2 cups frozen okra

Directions:

For the kubbeh:

- In a bowl, mix the semolina, salt and the cold water until a soft dough is formed. Set aside until the meat filling is ready.
- In a second bowl, mix the ground beef with salt and pepper, then fry in a non-stick skillet until the meat has browned.
- Briefly refrigerate the meat mixture.
- Take a handful of dough the size of a ping pong ball in your hand, then spread it out over your palm, forming a shallow bowl.
- Place a tablespoon of meat in the center of the dough. Fold the dough over the meat to cover it and roll into a ball. Repeat until all of the batter and filling have been turned into balls of kubbeh.

• Set aside.

For the soup:

- Place the canola oil in a pot. Add the onion and sauté until golden.
- Add the tomato paste, lemon juice, salt and black pepper. Add the water and bring to a boil.
- Add the okra and cook over a low flame for 10 minutes.
- Gently add the kubbeh, one at a time, and cook for an additional 30 minutes.

Nutritional Tips:

- Doris chose to share a soup made with okra - a unique vegetable loaded with nutrients. Okra is high in fiber, vitamin C, folates and antioxidants and is a good source of calcium and potassium. By sharing this recipe with the Cook and Host Group, Doris introduced the women to a vegetable many were unfamiliar with beforehand, thereby broadening their culinary horizons.





Ilana's Tzimmes (Sweet Carrot Stew)

Ingredients:

3.5 ounces (50 gr) of raisins
(mix dark and golden raisins)

10 of pitted prunes

10 of dried apricots

2.2 pounds (1 kg) chicken legs,
skin and fat removed, cut into
thighs and drumsticks

2 tablespoons olive or canola
oil

17.6 ounces (500 gr) of carrots,
sliced into coins

7 ounces (100 gr) of sugar

½ teaspoon of salt

Directions:

- Soak the raisins, prunes and apricots in water for an hour to soften, and then drain them well.
- In a wide, deep pot, heat the oil and brown the chicken on all sides. Then transfer it to a plate.
- Place the carrot rings in a pot and lightly fry in the remaining oil. Add water to partially cover the carrots. Cover the pot and cook on a low flame for half an hour or until the carrots become soft.
- Add the chicken, dried fruit, sugar and salt. Bring to a boil over a high flame. Once the water boils, lower the flame and cook, covered, for 30 minutes

Nutritional Tips:

- Ilana's grandmother used to cook the chicken with the skin and the fat. Although Ilana was concerned that by removing the skin and fat, the chicken would taste dry, the Cook and Host Group showed her that it did not affect the taste and it made the dish healthier by lowering its fat content.
- The tzimmes is best served with rice and a green salad.



The Scent of Tzimmes: Ilana's Story

I was born in Russia's Ural Mountains in 1965, but spent my childhood in St. Petersburg. I grew up in the shadow of Judaism. Since my parents were members of the Communist Party, they had to hide their religion and customs, but our Jewish identity was always there, lurking in the background.

When I was 14, I secretly joined a Jewish underground student group, where I learned Hebrew, and Jewish values and traditions. In 1990, I was finally able to realize my dream of moving to Israel. Today, I am the proud mother of an Israeli soldier. I work as Nazareth Illit's Conversion Coordinator, helping Russian immigrants through the conversion process.

The recipe I chose to share - tzimmes (sweet carrot stew) - is a recipe my grandmother used to make in communist Russia. My childhood home was a living incarnation of the communist ideology - five families in one house, sharing a communal bathroom, shower and kitchen. In the midst of this constant chaos, my grandmother Yulia loved preparing a meal for visiting friends. She used to fill the stove with pots full of delicious food and I would be drawn to the kitchen, like a person under a spell, blindly heading to the pots on the stove. Into my little mouth would go slices of carrot, pieces of juicy chicken, and sweet dried fruit - the tzimmes that my grandmother often prepared with dedication and love.

After my grandmother's death, my mother collected all of her handwritten recipes and taught herself to make these dishes. I hope to learn all of these recipes from my mother and pass on the taste of tzimmes to those I love.





Love and Food: Tzippy's Story

I was born in Romania in 1954. When I was five, we moved to Israel to be closer to my father's parents who lived on a moshav in the lower Galilee. My youth was spent in the fields and orchards surrounding our home. I did my army service with the Israeli police force, continuing to serve with the police's Northern District Command until my retirement. My colleagues used to joke that my office was also a kitchen. I fed my co-workers like I fed my son, spoiling them with hearty breakfasts, cakes and treats. This love of baking and desire to give to others is something I inherited from my mother.

The recipe I chose to share - potato salad - was one of my mother's most beloved dishes.

We could always find my mother in the kitchen, baking and cooking for the family, neighbors and friends. One of her most popular dishes was her potato salad, or mayonnaise salad as she referred to it, on account of the homemade mayonnaise she would make using eggs fresh from the hen-house.

My father would bring the potatoes from the field and my mother would cook them, adding the fresh mayonnaise and homemade pickles, turning this simple salad into a meal fit for kings. Unfortunately, my mother, who used to provide us all with love and food, did not live a long life, but she left us with wonderful tastes, smells and memories. I think of her every day that passes. May her memory be a blessing.



Tzippy's Potato Salad

Ingredients:

Salad:

5-6 medium Desiree (red-skinned) potatoes

3 medium carrots

6 hard-boiled eggs

3.5 ounces (100 gr) pitted Kalamata olives

1 cup of frozen peas, defrosted

Dressing:

2 tablespoons of Dijon mustard

½ cup of light mayonnaise (5%) with an olive oil base

Juice of 2 lemons

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions:

- Fill a pot with water and cook the potatoes and carrots (with their skin) until soft. Be careful not to overcook. Drain away the cooking liquid.
- Let the potatoes and carrots cool and then peel and dice into small to medium cubes. Dice the hard-boiled eggs and combine with the cooked vegetables and peas in a large bowl.
- In a separate, smaller, bowl create the dressing by combining the mustard, mayonnaise, lemon juice, salt and pepper and mix well.
- Pour the dressing over the vegetables and mix gently, so as not to crush the vegetables. Mixing too hard may cause the salad to turn into a vegetable puree.
- Taste, adjust seasonings and serve.

Nutritional Tips:

- Tzippy's mother called this salad "mayonnaise salad," but at the Cook and Host Group, Tzippy changed its name to "potato salad" and adjusted the ingredients accordingly. Tzippy originally used canned carrots and peas and double the amount of mayonnaise. She now substitutes fresh carrots and frozen peas, which have less salt and more nutrients, and reduced the amount of mayonnaise. She also replaced regular mayonnaise with a lower-fat, olive oil based version. By adding lemon juice, Tzippy was able to maintain the flavor and create a salad that she was satisfied with, both in terms of taste and nutritional value.





Appendix

Dairy Delights

Chani's Khinkali (Georgian Dumplings)	12-13
Viyorika's Mamaliga (Romanian Corn Bread)	20-21
Yana's Sirniki (Cheese Pancakes)	14-15
Shosh's Ma'asuba (Yemenite Pancakes)	22-23

Soups and Stews

Shula's Ethiopian Chicken Stew	32-33
Doris' Kubbeh (Kurdish Meat Dumplings) Soup	36-37
Ilana's Tzimmes (Sweet Carrot Stew)	38-39
Chana's Harira (Moroccan Berber Soup)	8-9
Hannah's Borscht (Beet Soup)	26-27
Olga's Lentil Soup	28-29

Plenty of Potatoes

Leah's Grenadiermarsch (Austro-Hungarian Dumpling Dish)	18-19
Dorit's Latkes (Potato Pancakes)	10-11
Tzippy's Potato Salad	40-41

Meat, Fish and More

Etti's Ketzitzot (Middle Eastern Meatballs)	34-35
Mazalit's Majadra (Middle Eastern Lentils and Rice)	30-31
Bella's Gefilte Fish	16-17

A Sweet Ending

Yulia's Seed Sweets	24-25
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