

Dovetail

A Journal by and for Jewish/Christian Families



Earth's Bounty: Food and Faith in our Interfaith Families

Spring is such a great time of year to build new bridges in interfaith families! The slowly warming weather gives such a boost to the spirit as the winter season melts away. The religious holidays, starting with Tu B'Shevat, Mardi Gras, Purim, St. Patrick's Day, and advancing all the way to Easter and Passover, all speak to the renewal of family life and family spirit. The stories, traditions, and prayers of each of these holidays are full of optimism, hope and pride. Oh, and did I mention there's a lot of food?

Food is such a "loaded" word in my household right now, since we have made many resolutions for changes in our diet and lifestyle this year. Over the last several years, the holidays have sometimes turned into a problem we dread because it conflicts with our commitments to eat healthier. At first, we were tempted to just throw out all the old foods and skip the large family meals. When this did not satisfy us (or our extended families) nutritionally or spiritually speaking, we knew we had to find a better way. The answer, of course, was to get creative and do our "recipe homework" so that slowly, but surely, we are finding a balance of tradition and nutrition that works for us.

The first time I realized that I was not alone in this struggle was when a friend of mine posted a few recipes to the Interfaith Email list for Passover: they were kosher for Passover and vegetarian, two obstacles that I really haven't been required to face in my house. Therefore, I knew I should be able to prepare some relatively healthy foods on my own that would help us stick to

our resolutions but also keep the symbolism and stories alive for every holiday we share. It slowly became clear that we had forgotten something very important: the soul needs food, too!

While I can't offer any great recipes or wave an magic wands, I know the stories and articles in this issue will raise your spirits and feed your souls. Carol Rubel offers us a

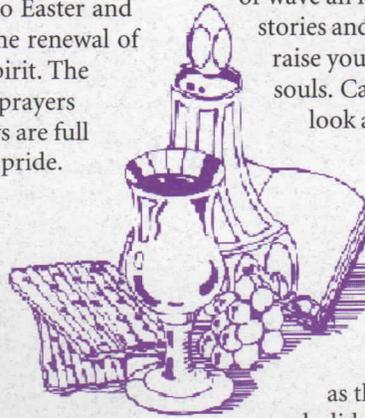
look at her Kitchen Memories and a review of one of

her favorite cook-books. Roberta Rhodes looks at the perplexing questions

we all must face in our interfaith families,

as they are magnified at our holiday tables. A Jewish Civil

War soldier journals his experiences of trying to get matzah for his Passover celebration, though likely he had no idea that anyone would read it in the year 2004. Finally, Patty Kovacs brings us ideas for making Easter Egg hunts for our children that are more than just a search for sugar.



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Attention Frequent Flyers!

Please help Dovetail by donating any free miles you've earned toward tickets for us to use in transporting presenters to the August 6-8 conference in Berkeley. Call Alicia Torre at 650-474-0644 or alicia@torrenimer.org with information. Thank you!

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The bounty of Earth's food and variety of spiritual and religious holidays are not just simple lessons for the children. Why do we eat triangular cookies on Purim? What foods do the trees provide us with and why should we plant more trees? What holiday is sometimes called Pancake Day? Why do we eat lots of green foods on March 17? And what are we going to do with all these hard-boiled eggs in April? These are adult questions with answers that come from our souls, as well as our appetites. Welcome to the journey of every interfaith marriage and family, where there is no one answer to any question and there is a lifetime of faith, sharing, and learning to understand it all.

I want to encourage everyone to check out our email list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/interfaith/>.

Here you can ask for help with your holiday and spiritual needs, and share a recipe or two to help someone else. I would be glad to help anyone sign up for this, and you can feel free email me at: DebiT4RLS@aol.com if you need any help! (Put Dovetail somewhere in the email subject title so I don't delete by mistake).

Keep the Faith!

Debi Tenner 

Dovetail's mission is to provide a channel of communication for interfaith couples, their parents, and their children. No matter what their specific choices regarding faith for their home and children, the more interfaith families can share their ideas, experiences, resources, and support, the more they can make peace in their homes and communities. Jewish and Christian perspectives can dovetail.

Believing that there are no definitive answers to the questions facing interfaith families, **Dovetail** strives to be open to all ideas and opinions. Editorial content attempts to balance and respect the perspectives of both Jewish and Christian partners in interfaith marriages, as well as the diverse perspectives of parents and children of interfaith couples. Inclusion in **Dovetail** does not imply endorsement. **Dovetail** accepts a thoughtful and constructive discussion of all related issues in the Letters to the Editor section, and reserves the right to reply.

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Kitchen Memories: The Cookie as Culture

by Carol W. Rubel

There is a moment during some b'nai mitzvah when family members are called to stand on the bimah as the Torah is passed from generation to generation. When that small, sweet segment of the ceremony happens, I suspect that there are few witnessing it who are not immediately reminded of the relatives no longer with them—no longer able to celebrate joys or to share the burdens of sorrow. The physical act of handling the Torah—of passing it from the eldest generation down to the future generation—is a concrete reminder that the transference of culture and religion happens, often, one to one: father to son and mother to daughter.

But equally powerful as an agent of transfer are the moments that happen not in a synagogue or a church—but in a kitchen. As every family constructs its individual story, the preparation, consumption, and "mythology", as it were, of food is a significant aspect. While the basic preparation of daily meals usually happens without too much thought about the sociological constructs underlying the dinner hour, the holidays—both Jewish and Christian—seem to offer most of us an opportunity not only to cook and to create, but also to reflect and to remember.

Our family, certainly, operates in that way. One of my fondest memories of marrying into my husband's family revolves around one particular Rosh Hashanna meal and the event that followed. My husband's aunts traditionally took turns having the family for a celebration meal following synagogue services. The first meal I shared with them was

delicious, but fairly typical, until dessert was served. Beautifully arrayed on a special serving dish was the family "secret recipe": the confection called "merevteig" by both of the aunts.

I had never seen nor tasted anything like the merevteig. It was a cookie—but not quite. It was a pastry—but not exactly. But it was delicious! Delicate and tender dough alternated with layers of fruit, nuts, and spices. Whatever this was, it was everything that a pastry should be. Try as I might to take only one, I sampled several before asking, rather timidly, whether I might have the recipe.

"Of course," exclaimed the aunts, almost in unison. "But you can't just make it, you have to see it!" That invitation to let me "see it"—to witness the preparation of the family treasure—sealed the deal. We made a date to rendezvous at Aunt Jeanne's kitchen several weeks hence. I should have known that this would not be a simple process, for these kinds of things rarely are. But remember, I was new to the family and still learning how this group of people handled things.

I appeared on the appointed day prepared to watch and eager to learn. Aunt Jeanne had organized the ingredients and laid the table out: all was in readiness. Except for the arrival of Aunt Elaine! You see, the recipe originally had belonged to Aunt Elaine's mother (which would make the actual recipe well over one hundred years old), so, of course, Elaine needed to be part of the attempt to pass the magic of preparation on to me.

Carol Weiss Rubel is the adult child of an interfaith marriage between a practicing Jewish father and an Irish Catholic mother. Carol holds advanced degrees in both English and education and has completed significant work in classical civilization studies. Currently, she works full time as an educator in Scranton, Pennsylvania where she coordinates an alternative education program she founded for at-risk teenagers. Carol is also co-owner of Senior Solutions Simplified, a company dedicated to researching and unraveling any type of problem associated with senior citizens. A nationally published author and motivational speaker, Carol is married to Jeff, an observant Conservative Jew.

Beautifully arrayed on a special serving dish was the family "secret recipe"—the confection called merevteig . . .

Suffice it to say that the making of the merevteig should have been captured on videotape. The aunts alternated between patiently teaching me the intricacies of mixing, rolling, filling, moving, baking, slicing—and arguing with each other as to exactly how the mixing, rolling, filling, moving, baking, and slicing should happen. But by the afternoon's end, I had grasped the fundamentals and felt capable of venturing into my own kitchen. I felt supremely complimented as "the aunts" told me that I had been a good student and they were sure I could handle the challenge of the family secret recipe.

I have become a capable merevetig baker. The recipe is, indeed, a challenge; some have tried to learn but have not been able to master the art. Aunt Jeanne commented, before she moved to Florida, that while she was known for her merevteig, I could now make it every bit as well as she did! When I bake merevteig for a family celebration, or I knead a challah to be used in the bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies of relatives and friends, or I make an Irish soda bread to mark St. Patrick's Day, I find that I cannot help but be grateful that my link in the family chain, the baker, is one that carries these special memories associated with warmth and happiness from one generation to another.

Kitchen memories transfer culture from one generation to another. Whether the family is Irish or Jewish, whether the family culture is reserved or raucous, there is no doubt in my mind that the hands preparing the food nurture not only the bodies but also the souls of everyone around any table. 

A Haggadah for Interfaith Families

The Inter-Faith Family Seder Book: How to Celebrate a Jewish Passover Supper with Christian In-Laws and Non-Jewish Friends by Nan Meyer (1998): The title says it all. This is a delightful, easy-to-use haggadah that, while making the prayers, songs, and ritual accessible and comprehensible to the non-Jew, does not fall into the trap of "Christianizing" the seder. It has such practical pointers as suggesting white rather than purple grape juice for the children because purple stains, "and there may not be much time to get their holiday finery cleaned for Easter Sunday." Then there are sensitive interpretations, such as that for the ten plagues visited on the Egyptians: "When people do evil, they defy God's will and bring suffering upon themselves.... [but] we cannot rejoice over their pain." Finally, traditional songs like "Chad Gadya" are paired with a universalist English paraphrase of "Eliyahu ha-Navi" set to the tune of "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing" (only the blessings are in Hebrew in this user-friendly ritual). We've taken advantage of the special price for orders of 10 or more for our family seder. Review reprinted by permission from Dovetail 7:5.

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Passover in Civil War Times: A Reminiscence of the Civil War

by J. A. Joel, 1866

In the commencement of the war of 1861, I enlisted from Cleveland, Ohio, in the Union cause.... While lying there, [in the mountains of West Virginia] our camp duties were not of an arduous character, and being apprised of the approaching Feast of Passover, twenty of my comrades and co-religionists ... united in a request to our commanding officer for relief from duty, in order that we might keep the holydays, which he readily acceded to. Our business was to find some suitable person to proceed to Cincinnati, Ohio, to buy us matzos.

We were anxiously awaiting to receive our [matzot] and about the middle of the morning a supply train arrived in camp, and to our delight seven barrels of matzos. On opening them, we were surprised and pleased to find that our thoughtful sutler had enclosed two Hagodahs [sic!] and prayer-books. We were now able to keep the [seder] nights, if we could only obtain the other requisites for that occasion.

We obtained two kegs of cider, a lamb, several chickens and some eggs. We had the lamb but did not know what part was to represent it at the table; Yankee ingenuity prevailed, and it was decided to cook the whole and put it on the table, then we could dine off it, and be sure we had the right part. The necessaries for the choroutzes [sic] we could not obtain, so we got a brick which, rather hard to digest, reminded us, by looking at it, for what purpose it was intended.

Horseradish or parsley we could not obtain, but in lieu we found a weed, whose bitterness, I apprehend,

exceeded anything our forefathers enjoyed. The herb was very bitter and very fiery, like cayenne pepper, and excited our thirst to such a degree, that we forgot the law authorizing to drink only four cups, and the consequence was we drank up all the cider. Those that drank the more freely became excited, and one thought he was Moses, another Aaron, and one had the audacity to call himself a Pharaoh. The consequence was a skirmish, with nobody hurt, only Moses, Aaron and Pharaoh, had to be carried to the camp, and there left in the arms of Morpheus.

There, in the wild woods of West Virginia, away from home and friends, we consecrated and offered up to the ever-loving God of Israel, our prayers and sacrifice.

Matzah on Both Sides of the Conflict

Another Union soldier, Myer Levy of Philadelphia, wrote his family that he was strolling through the streets of a Virginia town and noticed a little boy sitting on the steps of a house, eating matzah. When he asked the boy for a piece, the child fled indoors, shouting at the top of his lungs,

"Mother! There's a damn Yankee Jew outside!" The boy's mother came out immediately and invited the soldier to the seder.

As we can see, Jewish soldiers on both sides of the conflict had to go out of their way to obtain matzah. Until the 1845, American Jews would buy matzah directly from their synagogues; there special committees were given the job of shaping them by hand into round

This description of an improvised seder during the Civil War came from the reminiscences of J. A. Joel, written in 1866 in the Jewish Messenger.

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or rectangular forms. As bakeries went into the matzah business in the mid 1800s, observant Jews wrote to the chief rabbi of Gleiwitz in Prussia to inquire whether it was lawful to use machinery to manufacture matzah. His affirmative response was published in the New York Asmonean on February 28, 1851. Because of the lack of religious unity, advertisements appeared in the Jewish press throughout the country proclaiming the kashrut of one matzah over another.

After the Civil War many food businesses sprang up, including matzah bakers. In the early 1800s, Augustus Goodman, the scion of a family of matzah bakers in Posen, Poland, settled in Washington, D.C., where he became a baker for the Union Army. In 1865, he moved to Philadelphia where he opened a bakery that eventually became A. Goodman & Sons, Inc.

After the Civil War, editorials appeared in the Jewish press encouraging northerners to forget their ill feelings towards the south and provide their Jewish brethren there, many of whom had lost everything, with matzah for the seder. 

The necessaries for the choroutzes [sic] we could not obtain, so we got a brick....

A Stranger Floating

by Roberta Pantal Rhodes

It is the first time I have made a Rosh Hashanah dinner. I have been planning it for weeks. I worry that my guests won't think it's Jewish enough or that I'm not Jewish enough. I tell Norman it is for him; he says I am doing it for myself. Finally, we agree it is for the family.

I make lots and lots of lists. One for Citarellas: gefilte fish, matzo balls, four pounds of brisket. The butcher tells me the brisket will shrink to two pounds once it's cooked; then I worry, will it be enough? At Fairway: carrots, potatoes, onions, yams, dried apricots, figs, and grapes. At Zabars: two chickens. At Williams: kasha varnishkes. All foods that I refused to eat as a child, saying they were too stringy, or gooey, or soggy, or fishy.

I want this to be a traditional Jewish meal. There has to be gefilte fish and matzo ball soup and kasha varnishkes and tsimmes and brisket with potatoes and onions and carrots. There has to be.

I don't remember my mother ever making a Jewish holiday dinner with lots of people gathered around a too-small table with tons of food. There were no crowds of people at my mother's house: just my mother, my older brother, and me. It was always the three of us. Never more, never less. We were all each of us had. We were the family.

Places I've forgotten rush back at the oddest times as if they are always there, buried away from consciousness. My mother in her big Jewish Schul hat that she wore once a year when she dragged me to this foreign place to pray for her dead mother whom I never met.

People extended greetings even though they didn't know us. I puffed my face up into a smile, showing my teeth like a snarling dog. We didn't seem to belong there. She said we were Jewish, and that was enough for me. I didn't need Hebrew school, with men in long beards uttering funny words I didn't understand, or trying to read strange configurations of letters.

On the other hand, my father's Italian family celebrated holidays. Fat apple Santas with raisin eyes and marshmallow hats decorated the Christmas table. Strings of flashing lights were twirled around a giant tree that went from the floor to the ceiling, smelling like we were in the woods and not Astoria.

But even there I was a stranger floating among a sea of faces I rarely saw, walking from room to room like a visitor in a museum, examining little saints lined up on my grandmother's dresser, the cross with Jesus over the bed, the rosary with its black beads that my mother forbade me ever to touch.

I wanted to belong somewhere. But it couldn't be with this family because my mother would never let me go. Besides, this family would have to want me, and they couldn't. Wanting me would give them more contact with my father who drank too much. I was rootless, floating in the universe unattached to anyone or anything, belonging nowhere.

I can wait a long time, but it doesn't mean that eventually I will belong somewhere. It doesn't mean that at all. It's possible that nothing will happen, and I will keep waiting. I have heard the words "be patient" many times during my life. But I am not patient. I am always waiting and rushing.

Roberta Pantal Rhodes has had several stories published in Parting Gifts, one of which was nominated for a Pushcart Prize, with another story due out in July, 2004, called "Sunday Promises." In addition, The Harbor Review published, "She Will Not See the Tears" which won first prize from the Writers Voice in NYC. Her stories have also appeared in Kola, a Canadian magazine and Confrontation. Her children's chapter book "Beauregard" was published by Mondo. She has been awarded several residences at the Virginia Center for Creative Arts as well as one from Ragdale. Born in New York City the child of the interfaith marriage of her Jewish mother and her Italian Catholic father.

Please remember us in
your will and trusts.

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www.dovetailinstitute.org

Online discussion group:
[groups.yahoo.com/group/
interfaith](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/interfaith).

Waiting and rushing. I wait until I can't wait any more, then I rush from place to place and find myself waiting some more.

Surprisingly, everyone arrives at our apartment on time. There is no waiting. We are only seven people, crowded together around a table for four, but it is not uncomfortable. Each time I bring out another dish, one of my guests teases me and says, "Oh, my God, are you sure you didn't leave something in the oven?"

But there is one voice at the table that says, "This must be the Italian part of you. They always serve so much food."

Artie and Ruth quickly come to my defense, "So do the Jews."

I don't know if this voice is aware of my need to prove that I am Jewish, or how important this dinner is to me. Even to say the Barucha is hard for me. I think I don't belong to this religion. I have to fight my way into it. I have heard that voice before. I hear it telling me being half Italian is not being all Jewish.

Norman lights the candles and I say the prayer I learned in Hebrew School. *Barucha atah adonoi, eluhenu melech ha-olam, hamotizi lechem min ha-awritz*, Blessed art though oh Lord our God, King of the Universe..., but I am unable to finish and begin to cry. Artie finishes for me, "who bring us forth bread upon the earth, amen." I can't forget that I am half Italian. What is important is that people know I am Jewish. For my Israeli sister-in-law Lea, it would never be a problem. A Jewish mother, a Jewish child. Period, finished.

Sometimes I worry that when I die, God will say I don't belong with the

Jews. That he will say, "She's half Italian, a wop, a guinea, don't let her in," or "send her to the other side where the sauce, pasta and sausage are." But there they will tell me, "She is Jewish, don't let her in. Send the mockie with the matzos to the other side." Who will explain that a child with Jewish mother is Jewish? Who will explain that to Him? Deep in my heart, I know that I am Jewish, but does everyone else know? More important, does God know?

My father acted as if he didn't know that I was Jewish, sometimes asking me on his Sunday visits what religion I was. The first time I replied, "Jewish," he said "No, you're Italian." Then other times he would ask and I'd say, "Italian," but again he'd say "No, you're American." No matter what I said, it was never the right answer.

What is the right answer, to anything? What is right, and what is wrong? Is that the same as good and bad? How do you know that what you know is truly what you know and not something someone has planted in your head? What's truly yours?

While my father never tried to drag me to church or ever gave me a cross that I was supposed to hide from my mother, I wondered how people kneeled for hours praying until the marks from the wooden pews were indented into their skin. Or whether they were embarrassed to confess their sins to the Father, who made them say hundreds of Hail Marys until they were forgiven. I wanted to confess too, wanted to be forgiven.

My father had an agreement with my mother, that I would be raised Jewish, but he had no agreement with me. 

Jewish Cooking In America (review)

Rule of thumb for book and media reviews is that the subject matter should be current—as “cutting edge” as possible so as to be perceived as relevant by the people using the information to make consumer choices. And, as most rules go, this is not a bad one. However, when dealing with a significant piece of a culture in a religion whose traditions reach back to a time over five thousand years ago, looking at a cookbook published a little more than five years ago isn’t such a stretch.

Cookbooks now assume a large amount of display space in most national bookstore chains. One needn’t be especially brilliant to recognize that has happened because cookbooks are “big money” in the publishing world. Whether the chicken or the egg came first—whether the interest in cooking today springs from cable television networks devoted exclusively to food preparation and the array of cookbooks published, or whether those came after Americans decided that there is more to life than “happy meals”—really is not important. The recognition of food as an integral part of the culture is accepted as a given today, much as geometry theorems are accepted without question in classrooms all over the world.

Interfaith couples sometimes face a challenge never discussed during the courtship, engagement, and

wedding preparation phase of establishing a new dual-faith household: when they discover that the “December dilemma” of “tree vs. menorah” also extends to the spring question of “brisket vs. ham.” Because Judaism is a home-centered religion, (and “home” means “food”), it is often a surprise to a non-Jewish spouse when the huge significance of food as part of the holiday rituals is made clear. While meals and food choices are also indicators of history and celebration to most cultures, it is impossible to think of celebrating Jewish holidays without understanding both the significance and preparation of menus.

The complexity of such meal preparation can be made much clearer to anyone interested in learning through the phenomenal book written by Joan Nathan, *Jewish Cooking in America*. The book was translated into a series on PBS television several years ago, and may still be viewed on some affiliates across the country.

The blending of history, anecdote, religious information, and accurate culinary technique together into one volume should make this book an indispensable part of every interfaith kitchen. Mrs. Nathan’s approach to the subject of Jewish cuisine is chronological and sociological. She traces the roots of kashrut and holidays while simultaneously offering appropriate contemporary options for the integration of history

Jewish Cooking In America

by Joan Nathan. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1998).

Book Review

by Carol Weiss Rubel

Carol Weiss Rubel is an educator who holds a bachelor’s degree in English and advanced degrees in English and education. A community activist, her creative approach to problem solving has resulted in the formation of an alternative high school program for at-risk teens in Scranton City School District, Pennsylvania. Sought after as a resource and motivational speaker, Carol embraces collaboration as the optimal problem-solving model in professional and personal avenues. Carol Weiss Rubel is the adult child of an interfaith marriage; she is a practicing Roman Catholic married to an observant Conservative Jew.

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not necessarily imply endorsement of the articles and
opinions expressed herein.

into the modern kitchen. Throughout
the nearly five hundred pages
of the book are the kinds of hints
that one would hope to get from
a kindly relative who wanted a new
cook to succeed.

Beginning with a section called
"Appetizers—from Herring to
Hummus" and working through
breads, soups, fish, meat, poultry,
vegetables, grains, and desserts,
Jewish Cooking in America is
a seminal work for anyone desiring
to deepen both technique and
understanding of Jewish cuisine.
Because the book is written in an
easy-to-follow, conversational tone,
it is the perfect "go to" source for
individuals who may be unfamiliar
with how to plan and serve a
traditional Passover Seder as well
as how to braid an elaborate six-
strand challah, or how to make
a savory cholent. My own copy
is stained and dog-eared—a true
testament to its frequent use. I
personally recommend the brisket
recipe on page 177; it's made me
famous in our family!

In short, for all of us who attempt
to create a harmonious dual-faith
home, this book is a great resource.
If the interfaith family doesn't have
a Bubbe willing to offer lessons in
person, then Joan Nathan's beautiful
work makes a marvelous substitute. 

Food Humor for Interfaith Families

from the Internet

In the new tradition of low calorie foods, here is an Internet Passover Menu ala Lite Humor to serve with generous portions of laughter:

Latkes

A pancake-like structure not to be confused with anything the International House of Pancakes would put out. In a latke, the oil is in the pancake. It is made with potatoes, onions, eggs and matzo meal. Latkes can be eaten with apple sauce but NEVER with maple syrup. There is a rumor that in the time of the Maccabees they lit a latke by mistake and it burned for eight days. What is certain is you will have heartburn for the same amount of time.

Matzo

The Egyptians' revenge for our leaving slavery. It consists of a simple mix of flour and water—no eggs or flavor at all. When made well, it could actually taste like cardboard. Its redeeming value is that it does fill you up and stays with you for a long time. However, it is recommended that you eat a few prunes soon after.

Kasha Varnishkes

One of the little-known delicacies which is even more difficult to pronounce than to cook. It has nothing to do with Varnish, but is basically a mixture of buckwheat and bow-tie macaroni (noodles). Why a bow-tie? Many sages discussed this and agreed that some Jewish mother decided that "You can't come to the table without a tie" or, God forbid, "An elbow on my table?"

Blintzes

Not to be confused with the German war machine. Can you imagine the N.J. Post 1939 headlines: "Germans drop tons of cheese and blueberry blintzes over Poland—shortage of sour cream expected." Basically this is the Jewish answer to crepes Suzette.

Kishka

You know from Haggis? Well, this ain't it. In the old days they would take an intestine and stuff it. Today we use parchment paper or plastic. And what do you stuff it with? Carrots, celery, onions, flour, and spices. But the trick is not to cook it alone but to add it to the cholent (see below) and let it cook for 24 hours until there is no chance whatsoever that there is any nutritional value left.

Kreplach

It sounds worse than it tastes. There is a rabbinical debate on its origins: One rabbi claims it began when a fortune cookie fell into his chicken soup. The other claims it started in an Italian restaurant. Either way it can be soft, hard, or soggy and the amount of meat inside depends on whether it is your mother or your mother-in-law who cooked it.

Cholent

This combination of noxious gases had been the secret weapon of Jews for centuries. The unique combination of beans, barley, potatoes, and bones or meat is meant to stick to your ribs and anything else it comes into contact with. At a fancy Mexican restaurant (kosher of course) I once heard this comment from a youngster who had just had his first taste

of Mexican fried beans: "What! Do they serve leftover cholent here too?!" My wife once tried something unusual for guests; she made cholent burgers for Sunday night supper. The guests never came back.

Gefilte Fish

A few years ago, I had problems with my filter in my fish pond and a few of them got rather stuck and mangled. My son (5 years old) looked at them and commented "Is that why we call it 'Ge Filtered Fish?'" Originally, it was a carp stuffed with a minced fish and vegetable mixture. Today it usually comprises small fish balls eaten with horseradish ("chrain") which is judged on its relative strength in bringing tears to your eyes at 100 paces.

Bagels

How can we finish without the quintessential Jewish Food, the bagel? Like most foods, there are legends surrounding the bagel although I don't know any. There have been persistent rumors that the inventors of the bagel were the Norwegians who couldn't get anyone to buy smoked lox. Think about it: Can you picture yourself eating lox on white bread? Rye? A cracker? Naaa. They looked for something hard and almost indigestible that could take the spread of cream cheese and that doesn't take up too much room on the plate. And why the hole? The truth is that many philosophers believe the hole is the essence and the dough is only there for emphasis. ■

A Different Kind of Egg Hunt

by Patty Kovacs

Parent's Page

For many interfaith couples, the Easter holiday can present intellectual problems and gut responses. We as adults often get hung up on the literal versus the spiritual version of this most sacred Christian story. For example, we may focus on Jesus alone as the one getting a new life, and not the others who get powerfully renewed lives in the story: the disciples of Jesus (and by association, all other followers of Jesus).

For young children, however, the magical elements in this story are apparent without questioning. To them, it is about someone special who died and rose up to heaven because he lived a great life. Much of their sense of the holiday gets fixed onto the secular celebration and all of the tie-ins: bunnies, eggs, baby chicks. Perhaps parents should not steer clear of the secular celebration, but rather try to link its elements with the spiritual story.

This is the very time that nature's new life is seen in spring and spiritual new life is seen in Easter. Focus on the fact that nature has come out of a very hard time when things seemed dark and bleak—winter.

In the same way, the disciples came out of time when things seemed dark and bleak. Their beloved friend Jesus was killed by the Romans. When they realized that Jesus is still going to be with them again in a whole new way, they were overjoyed.

Think also of the sacred and secular ties that are signs of moving away from winter: spring-cleaning, Lent, cabin fever, and the winter doldrums. Easter's sacred and secular celebrations are all filled with signs and symbols of new life.

The secular symbols of eggs and bunnies are signs of the sacred

meanings of fertility and new life. Lambs and bright flowers may be secular symbols, but they become sacred when we use Easter lilies and paschal candles. Secular stories include turning over nature's calendar and leaving the old forms of plants behind for new growth. Butterflies leave their cocoons to fly away. Sacred versions of this are the Easter Vigil and sunrise services held at this time of year. The Passover story marks a changing point in the the sacred calendar of Judaism, with the Exodus from slavery into freedom as the theme. Easter's sacred story is the leaving behind of the bad ways of living and choosing a new and better way of living.

For a family activity, you might want to try a different take on the Easter Egg Hunt that can help build on these connections. Have your kids color pictures of a large Easter egg. If you get ambitious, you may want to go to the computer and copy a big clip art egg with word art that says, "I'm Hatching a Plan for A Better World: See What Treasures I Have Found!"

Then hide those very small plastic eggs. Instead of candy in all of them, fill some with "sweet words." These are special treasures for building a renewed and better world: laughter, joy, peace, love, care, forgiveness, hope, honesty, helping, kindness, manners, gratitude, happiness, excitement, friendship, welcoming, healing, listening, apology, family, community, and sharing. When all are found, gather the kids back together and let them open their eggs, see the words, and practice repeating them after you. Then they can glue the words onto the picture they've colored. 

*Patty Kovacs has developed a K-8 interfaith religious education curriculum that has been used by the Family School of Chicago for the past 10 years. Together with her husband David, she has written **The God We Share**, which includes an overview of the entire curriculum with special focus on lessons for grades K-4. Patty has also written four other textbooks for interfaith families that support the curriculum in the older grades. For more information about these books, e-mail David and Patty at kovacs@interaccess.com or call 773-275-5689. A portion of the sale of these books benefits Dovetail.*

Rejoice in Your Choice: Finding Common Ground in Interfaith Marriage

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Above all, there will be opportunities to exchange ideas and feelings with people in situations similar to your own, whether you're engaged, raising a young family, living with older children, dealing with the empty nest, or finding your way as grandparents in an interfaith family.

If you're involved with interfaith families as a religious or secular counselor, you will find others to network with and draw inspiration from. And, as always, there will be books and tapes for sale, free handouts of ceremonies and other resources, and networking lists to keep you in touch. If you're not already a member, send your dues along with your donation to ensure a 10% discount on conference registration fees and all tapes and transcripts.

Register now at this special Early Bird rate (good till 3/1/04; cancellation deadline 7/15/04). Please include your tax-deductible donation and membership dues.

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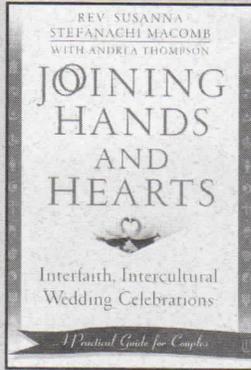
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Joining Hands and Hearts, Interfaith Intercultural Weddings Celebrations, A Practical Guide for Couples

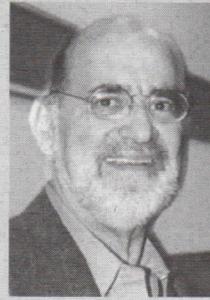
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The first wedding book to feature the rituals, blessings, readings and vows of 14 faiths and dozens of cultures (all fully scripted and explained). Warm and tender counsel is offered to the interfaith/intercultural couple. Interfaith stories and testimonials are interlaced throughout the text. The author, Rev.

Susanna Stefanachi Macomb, an ordained interfaith minister, has officiated at hundreds of ceremonies for people from an amazing variety of faiths and cultures. Praised by couples and clergy alike, *Joining Hands and Hearts* is available at major bookstores everywhere and on Amazon.com.

To learn more about *Joining Hands and Hearts*, to read reviews and/or excerpts, or to inquire into Macomb's services, please visit the author's website: www.susannamacomb.com



Clergy Counseling

Rabbi Allen Secher, a founding board member of Dovetail Institute, is available for counseling interfaith couples and their families in

person, on line, or by telephone.

Rabbi Secher is a longtime adviser to the largest interfaith group in the country, and has been an officiant or co-officiant of interfaith life cycle ceremonies for the past 40+ years. His breadth of knowledge, warmth, sympathy, and commitment to exploring the needs of both Christian and Jewish partners make him an indispensable support to couples throughout the country and abroad. For details, call (312) 913-9193 or e-mail sech1@aol.com.

Rabbi Secher's counseling services are independent of the Dovetail Institute and do not necessarily reflect its policies.

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Bulletin Board

Interfaith Support Around the Nation

To be listed as a contact person for a group, or if you are seeking to join or form a group, please send information to:

Dan Josephs
1175 S. Euclid Avenue, Oak Park IL 60304
Tel: (708) 660-9503; Fax: (630) 574-8089
EMail: JosephsDA@aol.com

Dan is one of the founders and coordinators of the Chicago Jewish Catholic Couples Group. We look forward to hearing from you.

Interfaith Discussion Group

Dale Kasler & Twila Morris (916) 492-2815

California, San Francisco Bay Area*

Alicia Torre (650) 474-0644

California, San Francisco Bay Area

Interfaith Connection, Groups.
Roseanne Levitt, Director (415) 292-1252

Colorado, Denver

Stepping Stones: Jewish identification.
Stacey Delcau (303) 554-5854

Connecticut, Hamden

Stepping Stones to a Jewish Me.
(203) 288-3877

District of Columbia, Greater Washington*

Interfaith Families Project
Susan Ryder (301) 270-6337

District of Columbia, Greater Washington *

Jewish Catholic Family Network.
Eve Edwards (703) 893-4447
Brenda Benesch (703) 528-2016
Patrice Thomas (301) 299-6821
Jcfamilynetwork@comcast.net
<http://mywebpages.comcast.net/jcfamilynetwork/>

Illinois, Chicago Metropolitan area*

Jewish Catholic Couples' Dialogue Group
Abbe & Dan Josephs (708) 660-9503
Patty & David Kovacs (773) 275-5689

Indiana, Bloomington*

Multifaith couples group. Bill & Diana Harwood, (812) 323-7519,
or wharwood@indiana.edu

Louisiana, New Orleans

Cortney Nathan, Jewish Family Services
(504) 831-8475

Maryland, Baltimore

Jacqui Ashkin, Jewish Family Services
6 Park Center Court, Suite 203
Owings, Mills, MD 21117
(410) 356-8383 ext. 351

Maryland, Rockville

JCC of Greater Washington, DC
Tracey Dorfman, Director
(301) 881-0100, ext. 6762

Massachusetts, Boston*

Adina Davidson & Joel Nitzberg
(617) 776-3235

Michigan, Ann Arbor

Jewbilation: Jewish Roots with Interfaith
Wings, Lauren Zinn (734) 996-3524
<http://www.jewbilation.org>

Minnesota, Minneapolis*

Joan Cleary and Jerry Helfand (651) 698-7987

Minnesota, Minneapolis

Jewish FCS of Minneapolis, Barbara Rudnick

Missouri, St. Louis area*

Joanne & Larry Eisenman (314) 918-7992

New Jersey, West Orange

Jewish Community Center
Lynne Wolfe (973) 736-3200 ext. 233

New Mexico, Albuquerque

Archdiocese of Santa Fe Ecumenical Office
Fr. Michael Damkovich or Heddy Long
Family Life Office

New York, Albany Area*

Marie or Rob Dropkin (518) 439-3732

New York, Long Island

Long Island Havurah for Humanistic Judaism
Leonard Cherlin (516) 889-8337

New York, Long Island/Suffolk County*

Eileen Horowitz (516) 345-0095

New York, New York City

Temple of Universal Judaism
<http://www.tuj.org>, (212) 535-0187

New York, NY Greater Metropolitan area*

InterfaithCommunity, Inc.
Manhattan, Westchester, Orange/Rockland.
Sheila Gordon (212) 870-2544
info@interfaithcommunity.org
www.interfaithcommunity.org

New York, Rochester

Interfaith Connection, JCC
Michele Ruda Leve, C.S.W.
(585) 461-2000 ext. 232

Ohio, Columbus

Gateways: The Jewish Interfaith Connection
Carol Folkerth (614) 231-2731

Ohio, Dayton

Jewish Interfaith Network: Interfaith group
David Knapp (937) 853-0372

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Faithways, JFCS of Greater Philadelphia
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Tennessee, Memphis*

Jan and David Kaplan (901) 767-4267

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Cong. Beth Emeth
Judi Cloutier, Outreach Coordinator
(703) 860-4515 ext. 142

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Prina Goldfarb (414) 964-4444

Israel*

Call 800-530-1596 for contact info.

United Kingdom*

Rosalind Birtwistle (44) 01234 261 775

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Indianapolis, IN
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Oklahoma City, OK
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To network, please contact us at DI-IFR@Bardstown.com or 800-530-1596.

* Group not sponsored by a religious institution.

Please note: Dovetail does not interview or investigate groups listed here.

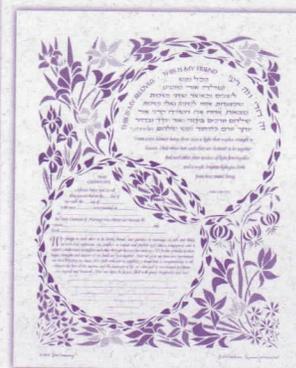
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