

The Schmooze

Stories with a Yiddish Twist

ESS. ESS. BUT SILENCE YOUR “TSELULARER TELEFON”*

*The Yiddish words for cell phone are “tselularer telefon.”

by
Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe



Syosset, New York

This Mother’s Day my family took me to a lovely restaurant on Long Island. The scenario: At practically every table, all of the diners were staring at their phones. What a uber-connected world we live in.

Much has been said about restaurants and food:

- . “The other night I ate at a real nice family restaurant. Every table had an argument going.”
George Carlin
- . “In a restaurant choose a table near a waiter.” (Jewish proverb)
- . “Some people ask the secret of our long marriage. We take time to go to a restaurant two times a week. A little candlelight, dinner, soft music and dancing. She goes Thursdays, I go Fridays.”
Henny Youngman
- . “I’m going to marry a Jewish woman because I like the idea of getting up Sunday morning and going to the deli.”
Michael J. Fox
- . “Anytime a person goes into a delicatessen and orders a pastrami on white bread, somewhere a Jew dies.”
Milton Berle

- . A kvetch: A whiner. The food's salty, the place is chilly, eating out. Who needs it?

Marnie Winston-Macauley, *The Yiddish Dictionary of Fools*

- . "washdown": (As in "Take a little bread to WASH DOWN the sponge-cake"). To keep it company in your stomach.

"Irving, wait. Take a little bread with that."

"Bread? With strawberry ice cream?"

"Just a little piece. To help wash it down."

Dan Greenberg, "How To Be A Jewish Mother"

- . Check those restaurant ads carefully. The Jupiter Crab Co. on Singer Island, FL, advertised their Sunday Brunch, which included snow crab legs and a raw bar...All this for \$19.95--after the coupon! That's "bupkes" for this feast.
- . Remember that in 1903, the Jewish Daily Forward, which always closely scrutinized these trends, reported that a new word had entered the Yiddish language: 'OYSESN" or "eating out." To dine out--not at a friend's or relative's house, but at an actual restaurant--had been unheard-of in the old country (and up until that point, even in the new), but the Forward noted that this stylish habit was "spreading every day, especially in New York."
- . "Ess gezunterhait." (Eat in good health.)

Chick-fil-A wants us to strike up a conversation. They have a new marketing idea. The company is trying to get families to put down the telephone and talk/shmooz with each other. Customers surrender their cell phones to a cardbox coop, covered with instructions and a promise of a reward ("skhar").

What are the rules?

1. Turn all family cell phones to silent ("shtil") and place them in cell phone coop.
2. Enjoy your Chick-fil-A meal. (Note: "hanoe hobn fun" means "to enjoy.")

- When the meal is over, if successful in the challenge, let the staff know and everyone (“yeder eyner”) gets a FREE ice cream (“ayzkrem”) cone.

The idea was created by franchise owner, Brad Williams. “Er hot a kop oyf di pleytses.” (He has a (good) head on his shoulders.)

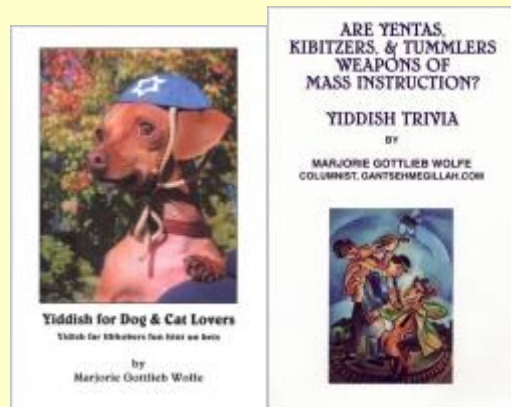
In a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, only 38% of people think using cell phones at restaurants is OK. And Los Angeles Eva Restaurant takes 5% off the bill of customers who are willing to leave their phone at the host stand during dining. And in New York some chefs have started to ban customers from taking photos of their food.

MARJORIE WOLFE is “ambifresstic”--she has the ability to eat hors d’ouvres with both hands while maintaining a conversation.
(Source: “Drek, The Real Yiddish Your Bubbe Never Taught You” by Yetta Emmes.)

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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her

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