

## FRENCH WAITERS SMELLED OF TRUFFLE, AND THE JEWISH WAITERS OF SCHMALTZ

The Yiddish word for “waiter” is “kelner.”

A “waitress” is a “kelnerin.”

“Schmaltz” is cooking fat (usually chicken), rendered, used in frying or as a spread on bread. Leo Rosten wrote, “Among poor Jews, shmaltz [alternate spelling] on a piece of bread was equivalent to caviar.” The Yiddish word for “tragedy” is “tragedye.”

by

MARJORIE GOTTLIEB WOLFE

“I want to be an actor. I’ve already started taking steps. I applied to be a waiter.”

Jarod Kintz

Comedian (“komiker”), Brad Zimmerman, is taking his production of “My Son, the Waiter: A Jewish Tragedy” to New York City. This non-nonsense New Jersey native tells a life story about his overbearing Jewish mother, his nonexistent love life, and career waiting tables as an out-of-work New York actor. The perfect word to describe his life prior to doing stand-up for George Carlin, Joan Rivers and Brad Garrett: “omnishambles”--n. A situation or person that is a mess in every possible way.

Zimmerman had an idyllic childhood (“kindhayt”)--summercamp, college, (where he discovered acting). His family followed the Jewish traditions and he loves being a Jew. However, he experienced many hard times before he made it big. There were strikeouts with romance and his career had highs and many lows.

Brad is able to make fun of his difficult (“shver”) time working as a waiter, and his endless conversations with his disappointed mother. He will touch your heart (“harts”) with his lighthearted sense of humor. He tells the audience he has no opening act, so he will do it himself. The audience hears him say, “I don’t like 2013, it’s too high-tech. I liked 1971, the only problems I had were a gearshift and Amy Saperstein’s bra.”

Brad Zimmerman’s favorite quote: “Be yourself. Everyone else is taken.” (originally said by Oscar Wilde)

Zimmerman talks about customers who dawdle, arrive at closing time and are overly demanding. Jewish waiters, however, are unique.

According to Alan Richman (“Oldest Living,” Oct. 2000), “the first commandment of conversing with an elderly (“alt”) Jewish waiter: Watch your words, because what the customer says is seldom what the waiter hears. I was speaking English, the language of the happy-go-lucky Pilgrims, and he was listening in Yiddish, the language of the long-oppressed Jews of Eastern Europe.”

Richman continues, “Ratner’s waiters, many of them on the job for most of their lives, become legendary, more famous (“barimt”) than Ratner’s cuisine...I forgot that a Jewish waiter without thin skin is like a blintz without sour cream.”

That reminds me of the story of when British actress, Dame Edith Evans, was taken to lunch at Ratner’s. She was in her seventies and asked for pancakes.

“Blintzes,” the waiter replied. “What kind?”

“What kind do you have?” Dame Edith asked.

“If I told you, would you remember?” the waiter snapped back.

David Manheim has been described as a “foul-mouthed waiter at Katz’s deli by day, and aspiring TV host by night.” He chronicles his life on his blog, “The Last Jewish Waiter.” Wait until you read his comedic take on Jews and gentiles “enlekh” (alike). There are customers who think that a square knish from Katz’s will finally open the dormant Jewish gene in their half-Jew “tokhter” (daughter).

Manheim chronicles his struggles as a dissatisfied waiter/aspiring talk show host at Katz’s Deli. What disturbs him?

- . Customers who want more pickles, and they still have some on their plate
- . The guys who say I want a “brisket of beef” (instead of a brisket

sandwich)

- . The old married couple (di por”) who share a can of soda. The husband orders a diet cream soda, and the wife says, “I’ll have a sip of yours.”
- . Everyone who order hot dogs as a meal
- . Old women who want their soup ‘extra’ “heys” (hot)
- . People who want their kishka grilled on “beyde” (both) sides
- . People who tell me ‘they’re going to take care of me’
- . People who want mayonnaise on one side of “dos broyt” (the bread), and “zенеft” (mustard) on the other.

And, finally, Sean Curry, “21 Things Waiters Dread,” Buzz Feed, writes:

“Yes, I’ll have the cheeseburger, but can you replace the patty with four mozzarella sticks?”

“No dessert, but another round of water, please. We’ll be here a while.”

“21.32 on the VISA, \$25.64 on the Amex, \$17 out of this twenty, \$8.23 out of this twenty, and can you make change for a fifty?”

-----  
If you’re going to be in New York in October, get tickets to see Zimmerman in “My Son, The Waiter” A Jewish Tragedy.” The show opens off-B’way on October 19, at Stage 72, 158 W. 72 Street. It’s a story well worth a listen.