

The Schmooze **Stories with a Yiddish Twist**

SCHMALTZ - MORE THAN A HEART ATTACK ON A PLATE

by
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Syosset, New York

SCHMALTZ--TWO MEANINGS:

1. INFORMAL, EXAGGERATED SENTIMENTALISM, AS IN MUSIC OR SOAP OPERAS. Ex. "Oy, was that movie pure schmaltz."
2. FAT OR GREASE, ESPECIALLY OF A CHICKEN ("HUN")

2015: The Muscular Dystrophy Association telethon is ending its annual ("yerlekh") Labor Day telethon. The telethon was a relic from a different age. Yes, Jerry Lewis oozed show business "SCHMALTZ" when he hosted stars from Frank Sinatra to Jennifer Lopez over 45 years. The tote board rung up "milyons" of dollars in donations.

Lewis pushed through his exhaustion while singing "You'll Never Walk Alone." Today, at 89, Lewis declined to comment on why he is exiting.

2014: In a movie review of "The Judge," Lou Lumenick wrote, "Just watching snarky Chicago lawyer Robert Downey, Jr. spar with the crotchety father, Robert Duval as he tries to defend the small-town Indiana jurist on a murder rap is worth the admission to the overlong and sometimes SCHMALTZY--but still hugely

engaging comedy-drama.

2006 This headline appeared in The Washington Times on Oct. 2:

SCHMALTZ GETS THE LAST LAUGH AT FADING CATSKILLS RESORTS

“The Catskills gave American comedy its sprinkle of kosher salt: schmuck, kvetch, schmaltz, klutz, schmooze.

Yes, The Penultimate Word wrote, “One of the Yiddish characteristics of Catskill humor is that of SCHMALTZ. It is good, old-fashioned sentimentality taken to an extreme (“ekstrem”). Originating from a Yiddish word for chicken fat, the term came to be known as a pejorative for something that was dripping with sentimentality. Exaggerated dramatics, voice, and other expressions brought forth catcalls from the audience (“der oylem”) who actually loved it...It would not be at all uncommon for a 21st film critic to decry a film as being overly SCHMALTZY...Even film productions of The Great Gasby and Chicago might lend themselves to this criticism, although the SCHMALTZ is intentional.

Source: The Penultimate Word, Aug. 25, 2014

Jack Helbig (“Love in the Catskills”) wrote about the play: “Even more damaging is the play’s minimal humor and honest sentiment. There isn’t enough SCHMALTZ (a Catskills specialty) to make us care about the romantic plot.” (Jan. 14, 1999)

The late Joel Siegel (“Lessons for Dylan”) shares all the things he wants his son to know. One of the “sh” words is “shmaltz.” He writes, “Fat, especially chicken fat. Used in place of butter in kosher homes when a meat meal is served. The cracklings left after chicken fat is rendered are gribbenes or greev. My mother made her own chicken fat and kept it in the refrigerator in a Skippy’s Peanut Butter jar.”

Siegel continues,

“There’s a Romanian-Jewish restaurant on the old Lower East Side, Sammy the Waiter’s, that has one of those glass pitchers other restaurants use for cream or maple syrup, filled with SCHMALTZ on every table. Marvin Hamlisch’s dad used to play accordian at this restaurant. It was during one of his breaks that Zero Mostel stood up and shouted at the

top of his lungs, “This food killed more Jews than Hitler!”

“The Joy of Jewish Humor, 2013 Calendar by Marnie Winston-Macauley, contains the following comment for November 12:

THE REAL BALABUSTAS OF SCARSDALE

Season Opening:

Saloma (born Sadie), a stunning, raven-haired woman in an Isaac Mizrahi suit, twirls in her fully-equipped, sub-zero, integrated module kitchen, purring, ‘Gelt is nice. But I still like to get my hands in a bissel schmaltz.’”

And Rabbi Marc Howard Wilson wrote, “SCHMALTZ, that mystifying alchemy of onion-fused rendered chicken fat, is Jewish pornography. It corrupts one’s brain and heart. We hide it from our children at the back of the shelf, where only the adult hand may reach. It tempts us...”

Jewsweek, 12/14/03

MARJORIE WOLFE’S FAVORITE RECIPE:

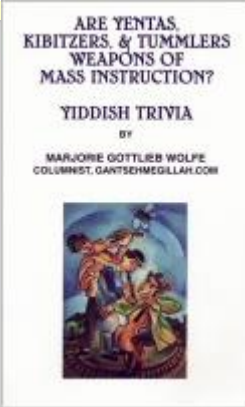
PATE DE FOIE SCHMALTZ

Directions: Boil first the livers. While they’re boiling, you can fry in the schmaltz until golden and soft, the onion. Now add a little of the broiled livers and a little of the onion into the blender and blend. Blend a small batch at a time until it’s done. If you don’t have a blender, chop up the whole works in a chopping bowl and then push it through a sieve. Now you can add the spices and the sherry, and mix yourself up good. Pour this into an ovenware bowl and cover it up tight. (If there’s no cover, use foil.) Now stand this in a large pan with a few inches of water in it. Put the whole thing into a 400 degree oven and let it cook for 2 hours. Then you can chill and garnish with parsley and shredded carrots for a forshpeis, canape, or just plain nosh.

Note the author’s definition of SCHMALTZ: the Jewish answer to the 70 cents spread.

Source: “The French-Kosher Cookbook” by Ruth & Bob Grossman, Copyright 1964.

**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 website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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