

The Schmooze **Stories with a Yiddish Twist**

COOKBOOKS and Advice FROM 1955 TO 2015

by
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Syosset, New York

In 1955, the Molly Goldberg Jewish Cookbook was published; it sold for \$1.25 (paperback). In 1963, Ruth & Bob Grossman published, "The Chinese-Kosher Cookbook" (\$3.95.) In 1964, the Grossman's wrote two books: "The French-Kosher Cookbook." and "The Italian-Kosher Cookbook." Price: \$3.95 at A&S.

F-a-s-t forward to 2015. Mimi Sheraton, 90, has a new book, "1,000 Foods To Eat Before You Die - A Food Lover's Life List" (\$25.82 at Walmart). Mimi is the veteran food writer and former Times restaurant critic.

Let's compare some the recipes/comments from the four books:

Gertrude Berg (Molly Goldberg) wrote in the introduction to her book, "So my Rosie [daughter] had an idea. "Ma," she said, "I'll stand on your shoulder while you cook and I'll write you down. Only in better English she said it. And that's what happened. I cooked and she wrote. For an instance, when I made my pudding I let it bake for a jitney. How long is a jitney? Rosie timed me, and jitney is never twice the same. It's from when it begins to boil until it's finished baking. And if I say, 'Throw an eye every however,' My Rosie says that means 'stir occasionally.' I didn't know that."

Myra Waldo--the co-author--adds a P.S.: “Molly cooks effortlessly and the “Molly cooks effortlessly and the results are always good. Of course, she had always measured her ingredients by the pinch, the sprinkle, and the handful. But not everyone’s pinch, sprinkle, and handful are the same.” In other words, she cooks using the “shit-arein” method.

Mimi Sheraton’s book covers recipes from schmaltz and dan dan noodles to frozen (“farfoyrn”) Milky Way candy (“tsukerl) bars. She writes about street foods like the Charlotte Russe, which was a customary street sweet for children during the first half of the 20th century. It’s special container is essential to its existence: a small, stiff white paper cuff with scalloped edges and, for a bottom, a paper disc that can be gently pushed up. A tiny round of yellow sponge cake goes into the cuff as a base, followed by swirling cloudlets of sweetened whipped cream topped with a bright red maraschino cherry.”

The Grossman’s share their recipes for “Chicken Goy Yim,” “Chicken Hah Dah Sah,” and “Lamb Stew Gezundheit,” all tested, all kosher, given by the authors in their grandmother’s somewhat individual language--which will both tickle the palate and touch the heart of the reader.

Mimi Sheraton lists the following Jewish foods:

- . Matzo and Matzo Brei

The Molly Goldberg cookbook includes a recipe for Mrs. Kerrigan’s Matzo Brie (fried matzo):

4 matzos, 4 eggs, 1 1/2 teaspoon salt, 3 tablespoons shortening

You soak the matzos in cold water for 2 minutes. Drain and crumble.

Beat the eggs and salt together in a bowl. Add the matzos, mixing until well coated. Heat the shortening in a large skillet. Pour the mixture into it. Fry until browned on both sides. Serve with a little (“a bisl”) sugar sprinkled on top, or with a little jelly (“garalet”).

So, who is Mrs. Kerrigan? Mrs. Kerrigan dropped in one day for lunch when Molly was having matzo brie. It sounded wonderful for her to serve for Lent, and she said her husband sent the recipe to Ireland so his folks would have it for the Lenten season.

The Grossman’s shared a recipe for “Um gepahtch Kid Matzoh Brei Parmigiana.” “Um Gepahtch Kid”: those snazzy new cars from Detroit with everything from gold plated hub caps to “his” and “her” safety belts. A second recipe: “Matzoh Brei Foo Yong.” And what’s

their definition of “matzo”: that new Jewish diet bread all the goyim are buying.

Mimi Sheraton says that “latkes” (fried potato pancakes) are one of the 1,000 foods we should eat. And if you’re in Boynton Beach, FL, visit Flakowitz. Their latkes are “batamt” (delicious).

Molly Goldberg’s recipe for “latkes” includes:

4 potatoes, peeled, grated, and drained

1 onion, grated

1 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 egg, beaten

3 tablespoons potato starch

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 cup shortening

You know what to do next!

Ms. Sheraton then adds “cheese blintzes” to her list of 1,000 foods to eat before you die. She reminds her readers: “Don’t forget the sour cream.”

Note: The Yiddish word for sour cream is “smitteneh”/“smetteneh.”

Ruth and Bob Grossman define a “blintz” as follows: A crepe with a superiority complex. Molly Goldberg says, “Blintzes! What can I say? If I told you that my life was wrapped in a blintze would you believe me? Some people have family crests, lions, tigers, unicorns, elephants--a whole menagerie--and if my family had a crest, you know what would be on it?

A blintze. I mean it. All the good things in my life are measured in blintzes because by us it’s not a party if there isn’t a blintze, and who ever heard of a sad party?”

On Nov. 17, 2003, the New York Times Metro published the following latkes story:

DEAR DIARY:

Even 16 years after moving away, this native New Yorker still thinks it’s possible that the hinterlands will eventually come to appreciate the culinary delights found within the five boroughs. As more evidence that hope springs eternal, a sign in the window of a pink-themed megachain doughnut emporium in Watertown, Mass. seemed to announce: “LATKES ARE HERE.”

Wow! Those greasy Hanukkah potato pancakes are soon going to be available everywhere, and year-round, no less. They’ll probably give you the choice of a little individual serving of applesauce or sour cream to go with your order. And why not?

The same chain had transformed the bagel and cream cheese into an all-American food, available from coast to coast.

Alas, it took only a second trip past the store to realize that what the sign actually said was “LATTES ARE HERE.”

Well, today the latte, tomorrow the latke.
Susan Mayer

And, speaking of latkes, Isaac Mizrahi was asked, “Who was your biggest influence?” The reply: “My mother was THE influence on me--my father was absent. He was a diamond dealer; he was doing wonderful things in the background, and women were left at home. So my mother was really in charge of everything--the ballet, dance lessons, piano lessons, and latkes.”

Mimi Sheraton discusses knishes...and recommends Yonah Schimmel Knish Bakery. She says, “The best knish experience in the U. S. is Brooklyn’s Coney Island boardwalk in winter, when a hot knish in the hand is worth two pairs of woolen gloves as protection from the damp seaside chill. Just watch out for the hungry seagulls.”

No list of Jewish foods would be complete without “gefilte fish.” Ruth and Bob Grossman (“The Italian-Kosher Cookbook”) share a recipe for “Gefillte Fish Fra Diavolo.” They say that “Nobody makes gefilte fish like a bubba does. If you’re not so lucky, or if bubba is in Florida when you decide to make this, you’ll find the kind that comes in a jar is almost as good, and lot less trouble.” They also remind the reader that “Nobody ever serves gefilte fish as a main dish, so you be different. Spaghetti would be very nice with this to cover with some of that good, hot sauce.”

The Grossman’s definition of “GEFILLTE FISH” (No, it’s not a typo!)
GEFILLTE FISH: in every Jewish home there’s a mezuzah on the door-post and this in the refrigerator.

Ms. Sheraton includes salted chickpeas to her list. In Yiddish, we call it “arbus.” She says that the best brand of canned chickpeas is Goya. Molly Goldberg’s cookbook has a recipe for “Nahit” (chick-peas).

She says, “For such a little thing to have four names is a little beyond me, but it only goes to prove that when I always called it nahit, my grocer calls it chick-peas. For instance, Maggi upstairs calls it cecci and Mrs. Flores from the Parents and Teachers calls it garbanzos. So there you are. Four names for one little bean and the translation of each is--delicious.”

Ms. Sheraton discusses the Passover essential, “horseradish.” She says, “Shed a tear for flavor.” She explains, “This ancient herbal root yields a sinus-clearing hot and spicy essence when cut open or grated. Valued for its medicinal properties as well as its taste, horseradish is considered a cholagogue an agent that stimulates the release of bile from the gallbladder and aids in healthy digestion. 60% of the horseradish in America grows in Collinsville, IL.”

Speaking of Passover foods, The Metropolitan Diary, April 10, 1996, contained a letter by Janice Temple:

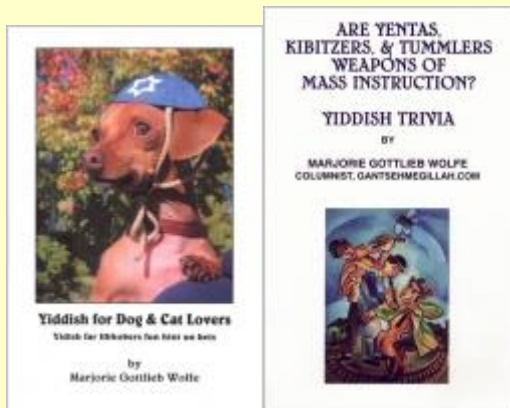
DEAR DIARY:

Trying to fit holiday food shopping into my tax season schedule I rushed into my supermarket in Bayside, Queens, and asked the first clerk I spotted, “Where is your Passover aisle?”

She thought for a moment, then answered, “I’m sorry, but in this store we just mark down.”

MARJORIE WOLFE wonders what Mimi Sheraton would have to say about the fact that Disney World’s new restaurant, “The Boathouse” charges \$17 for a side of mac and cheese, and \$115 for a 32-oz. Tomahawk Long Bone Rib Chop for two

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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