

Traveling with Jewish Taste[®] Montreal: A Cultural Feast, Plus Kosher

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



I've been to Montreal four times – three times in summer and once in winter. Summer is better. Much better!

Montreal is a sophisticated, cosmopolitan city, but, after all, it is in Canada, with frigid winters that can discourage all but the hardiest souls – however, Montrealers have cleverly designed an underground city to help them cope. Apartment buildings, shopping malls, hotels, banks, offices, museums, theaters, universities, train and metro stations are all

accessible from this underground warren that extends over five square miles of the city. Theoretically, a person could both live and work downtown and never come up for fresh air all winter long.

In its very earliest years, Canada wasn't the friendliest place for Jews. While the French were in power, non-Catholics were not allowed into the country. However, with Britain's defeat of France in the "Seven Years War," ended 1763, Jews began to arrive, establishing a vibrant community that has contributed significantly to the economic, artistic, and political life of the country.

Today's Canadian Jewish population is about 375,000, one fourth living in Montreal.

Famous Jewish Montrealers include government official/law professor Irwin Cotler, singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen, and, both now deceased, author Mordecai Richler and entrepreneur-philanthropist Samuel Bronfman.

The title "oldest synagogue in Canada" belongs to the "Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue," which traces its roots to 1760. Congregation Shaar Hashomayim, founded in 1846 is Canada's oldest and largest Ashkenazic synagogue. The former's build-



Inside Congregation Shaar Hashom



Montreal's Botanical Gardens

ing is reminiscent of classical architecture, its impressive pediment full of detailing that echoes ancient Egyptian styling. Shaar Hashomayim's intricately detailed stone craftsmanship also shows Byzantine influences. Shaar Hashomayim's sanctuary features beautiful stained glass windows, one illustrating the burning bush.

The stained glass you see there, however, is not that originally intended for the synagogue. Philanthropist Nathan Cummings had offered the synagogue a set of stained glass murals by his friend, the artist Marc Chagall – however the congregation argued over the appropriateness of placing murals in the sanctuary. Even when the eminent Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik ruled in favor of the murals, his flock balked.

Chagall, in turn, would not agree to have his works displayed in an outdoor courtyard. In the end, the Chagall murals would become the iconic stained glass windows depicting the twelve tribes prominently displayed at the Abell Chapel at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

A jewel in the crown of Montreal Jewish life is the Jewish Public Library. Established in 1914, the library provides a variety of recreational, educational, and cultural programs. Its holdings include a rare 16th century Bible, books in five languages, Canadian Jewish archives, a computer center, and a children's library.

A visit to the Botanical Gardens, among the world's largest, is a must-see with its significant collection of bonsai and its beautiful Japanese tea garden. If you want to participate in a real tea ceremony, make your reservations many months in advance as they fill up quickly.

Since Montreal means "royal mountain" in French, a visit to Mount Royal Park is worthwhile for its magnificent view of the city. The park was designed by the famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, best known for his landscaping of New York's Central Park.



Waterhouse's 'The Lady of Shalott' at the Musée des Beaux-Arts

musicians from over twenty countries. Also, twice each summer, a street fair closes an area stretching from Sherbrooke Street to Mount Royal Avenue.

After all the touring, you will be hungry. Canadian cuisine tends to vary by province and reflects the traditions of its immigrants as well as its native population. English and French traditions are popular in the east, but many other ethnic traditions, including Scandinavian, Ukrainian, Inuit, and Chinese, are also reflected. Schwartz's deli, a "kosher style" eatery, is a Montreal focal point. For those who want kosher-certified food, the city boasts more than a dozen kosher restaurants.

A popular French Canadian luncheon dish available all over Canada is pea soup.

It is most often served with floating dumplings called "doughboys." Wild salmon, Atlantic cod, and haddock – accompanied by fiddlehead ferns and wild rice – are among the native foods that will make dining a delicious experience.

For dessert, try a delectable pudding *au chomeur*, an upside down cake with a caramel base, or perhaps a creamy sugar pie, made with brown sugar, vanilla, and maple syrup.

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Montreal's International Jazz Festival

Paté Chinois

A French Canadian casserole similar to a Shepherd's Pie, this dish is not Chinese at all. It was probably prepared by Chinese cooks under the direction of their English bosses to serve to the French Canadian workers building the railroads during the late nineteenth century. It is believed that these workers brought the beloved dish back to their home communities and on to New England where they found jobs in the textile mills in the early twentieth century.

The original recipes I have seen result in a rather bland product, so I have taken the liberty of adding a few extra ingredients to provide some "zip."

6 Yukon Gold potatoes	1 teaspoon salt
2 pounds lean ground beef	1 tablespoon olive oil
Chicken broth	2 onions, chopped
1 cup ketchup	4 celery stalks, peeled and chopped
2 tablespoon pareve margarine	Paprika
1 pound bag frozen corn kernels	One-half teaspoon fresh ground pepper
1 tablespoon minced garlic	

- Boil the potatoes for about 25 minutes, or until soft enough to mash. Peel them when cool enough to handle.
- While the potatoes are boiling, sauté garlic until brown.
- In the meantime, sauté onions and celery in oil on low-medium flame until they are almost tender and then add ground beef. Cook until the meat has browned.
- Add salt and pepper. Remove from heat; drain. Add ketchup to mixture. Place on the side.
- Mash the potatoes with garlic, margarine, broth as needed to make them creamy.
- Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- In the bottom of a 9"x13" Pyrex pan layer first the meat mixture, then the corn, and finally the mashed potatoes. Sprinkle the top with paprika.
- Bake in oven at 350 degrees approximately 30 minutes or until hot.
- The Paté Chinois dish is traditionally served with pickled eggs or beets.

