

Traveling with Jewish Taste®

Nashville: Music, Music, Music

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



Whenever I hear the name Nashville, I hear it with a twang in the voice and heartbreak in the soul. That could very well be because Nashville is the home of the country music industry.

The city of Nashville dates its beginnings all the way back to 1780, but Jews were not to arrive in any substantial numbers until the 1840s, when enough immigrants from Eastern Europe had come and were able to form a minyan for worship. As is traditional in Jewish communities, the first thing this group of twenty-eight families did in 1851 was to establish a cemetery, the Hebrew Benevolent Burial Society. Today, 8,000 Jews live in the Nashville-Davidson County area.

The orthodox congregation, chartered in 1854 as the first in the Tennessee, took the name Kahl Kodesh Mogen David in honor of Davidson County – later, in 1874, this same Moorish Revival building, demolished 1954, becoming known as “the Vine Street Temple, and would house Ohabai Sholom, a still extant Reform congregation – more congregations followed, feuding, splitting, and merging over time, giving to Nashville the reputation as a particularly divisive Jewish community. History records a scolding from the eminent Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati, who decried Nashville’s “unfortunate spirit of quarrel and small ambition.”

However, Nashville Jews did manage to organize themselves enough to conduct charitable works. By the end of the nineteenth century they had founded a Young Men’s Hebrew Benevolent Society, a Ladies’ Hebrew Benevolent Society, and a local chapter of B’nai B’rith.

Many Nashville Jews supported the Confederacy during the Civil War, though only a few – less than seven percent – owned slaves. Congregation Ohavai Emes issued a proclamation in 1861 praising the Confederacy and called on its members to raise money for sick and injured Confederate soldiers stationed in the city.

But, despite their support for the Confederacy, Nashville Jews mourned the death of Abraham Lincoln, who had come to their rescue during the war.

On December 17, 1862, in Oxford, Mississippi, General Ulysses S. Grant issued “Wartime Order No. 11” expelling Jews from the area, as his response to an alleged

security threat posed by Jews. Lincoln rescinded the order, but the bad taste never left their mouths, and when Grant ran for President in 1869, they organized, protested, and issued proclamations.

Grant wrote, “The Jews, as a class, violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department and also department orders, are hereby expelled from the department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order.”

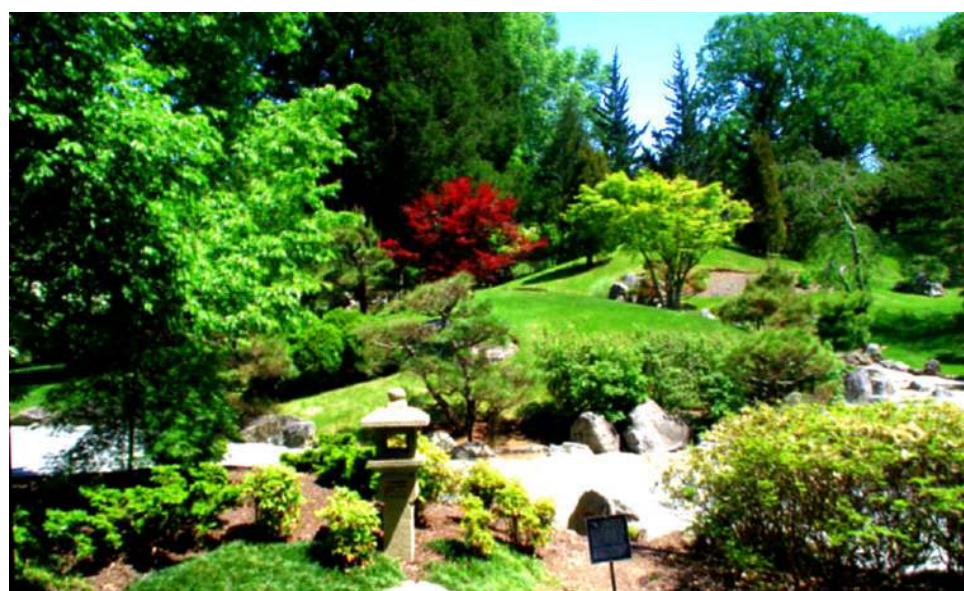
This event proved to be a seminal one in fostering political activism among the Jews, as witnessed a few years later, when they organized a protest against General W. G. Harding’s ranting against immigrants.

Nashville is a re-

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Rabbi Wise scolded Nashville’s Jews



The Japanese Garden at Cheekwood



Grin’s Café Nashville’s oldest vegetarian and only kosher eatery



From 1874, until it was demolished in 1954, this Moorish Revival building housed first the orthodox Kahl Kodesh Mogen David congregation and later the Reform’s Congregation Ohabai Sholom

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ally fun city to visit. First among its attractions is, of course, the country music scene, and the jewel in its crown, the Grand Ole Opry. Begun as a radio broadcast in 1925, "country's most famous stage" today continues broadcasting live from an entertainment complex that showcases both legendary country singers, current stars – such as Kellie Pickler and Keith Urban – and up-and-coming acts. The crowd in the audience of 2,000 is energetic, the atmosphere electric.

Another great place to hear live music in "Music City" is the Ryman Auditorium – Nashville's premier performance hall was, from 1943 to 1974, the original home of the Grand Ole Opry featuring such country music legends as Elvis Presley, Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, Marty Robbins, Minnie Pearl, Patsy Cline, and Roy Acuff. Restored, the facility is still in use as a concert venue.

Continuing on the music scene is Music Row, an area southwest of downtown that is home to hundreds of businesses related to the music industry, where streets bear the names of famous country singers, such as Roy Acuff and Chet Atkins.

Also on Music Row are historical sites, such as RCA's Studio B, where hundreds of musicians have recorded their songs. The Country Music Hall of Fame, while no longer on Music Row, is still only eleven blocks away, and is well worth a visit to see artifacts ranging from classic guitars to costumes worn by famous artists.

If classical music is more to your taste, the Schermerhorn Symphony Center will be your destination, where Music Director Giancarlo Guerrero conducts the Nashville Symphony. Guerrero is a champion of new music and contemporary composers, so you might find yourself listening to Jennifer Higdon rather than Franz Joseph Haydn on any given night.

If the weather is fine, be sure to visit Centennial Park, Nashville's urban oasis, and its centerpiece, the Parthenon, Nashville's art museum. This Parthenon, and its accompanying forty-two foot statue of Athena, recall Greece as they are full-scale replicas, originally constructed for the 1897 Centennial Exposition.

Also on view are plaster reproductions of the Parthenon Marbles, cast from the originals at London's British Museum. The museum's permanent collection focuses on nineteenth and twentieth century American artists.

For more Greek-inspired architecture, visit the Tennessee State Capitol building. Seated high above downtown Nashville, its distinctive tower is designed after the monument of Lysicrates in Athens.

Also on the art scene is the Frist Center for the Visual Arts. Opened in 2001, the Center features new exhibitions every six to eight weeks.

If the weather holds, don't miss Cheekwood, a fifty-five-acre expanse that features a botanical garden and a museum of art centered on contemporary art. The Cheekwood mansion, on the National Register of Historic Place, boasts its original boxwood gardens.

Sports aficionados may need a break from all the music and art, so please note that the Tennessee Titans football team and the Nashville Predators hockey team both call the city home.

You are bound to get hungry at some point during your visit. If you are strictly kosher, you will be pleased to note that Nashville's oldest vegetarian restaurant also happens to be Nashville's only kosher one. Grin's Café, on the campus of Vanderbilt University, has been rated as Nashville's "best vegetarian food" and "best café," "best cookie," and "best for going green." Be forewarned: it is only open for lunch and dinner.

Nashville Sweet Barbecue Sauce

Shalom, y'all. This finger-lickin'-good sauce recipe, from chef, cookbook author, and fellow tribesman Steven Raichlen, will make you want to pull out the grill on that first warm spring day. I have chosen to use it on chicken, but you can brush it onto any meat or fish you desire.



Ingredients:

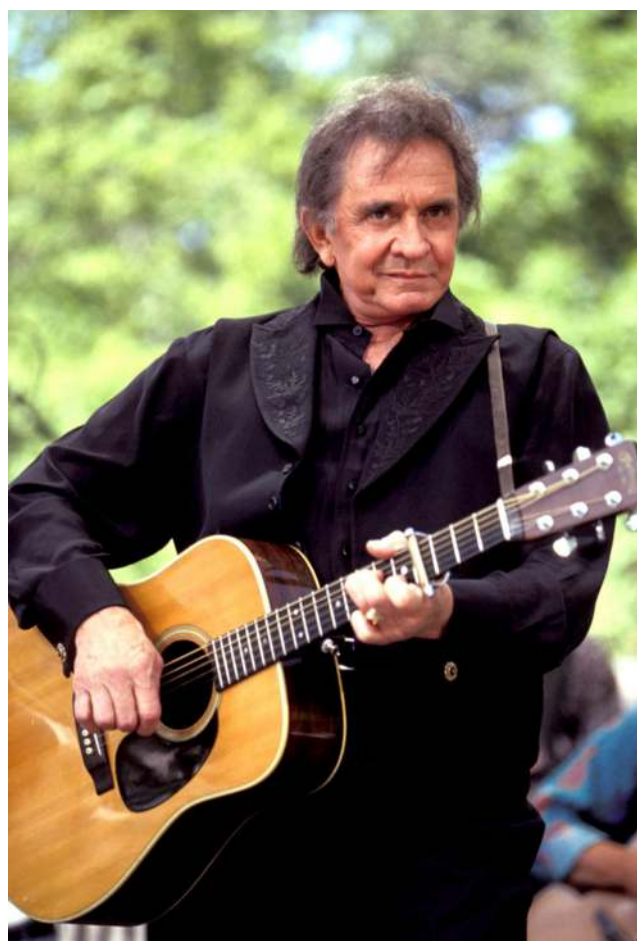
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|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2 cups ketchup | 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce |
| 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar | 1-1/2 teaspoons liquid smoke |
| 6 to 8 tablespoons fresh lemon juice | 2 teaspoons dry mustard |
| 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest | 1 teaspoon onion powder |
| 2 tablespoons molasses | 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper |

Directions:

- Combine ketchup, brown sugar, lemon juice, zest, molasses, Worcestershire sauce, liquid smoke, mustard, onion powder, and pepper in a nonreactive saucepan. Whisk to mix.
- Let the sauce gradually come to a simmer over medium heat and simmer until thick and flavorful, eight to ten minutes.
- If not serving the sauce immediately, let cool to room temperature, transfer to air tight jars, and refrigerate until serving.
- Spray grill rack with nonstick spray.
- Turn barbecue to medium-high heat.
- Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper.
- Place chicken on grill, skin side down, and cook until skin browns, about eight minutes.
- Turn chicken over and continue grilling until cooked through, about eight minutes longer.
- Transfer one cup barbecue sauce to small dish.
- Brush skin side of chicken with sauce from dish.
- Turn skin side down and cook two minutes.
- Brush chicken with more sauce.
- Turn skin side up and grill two minutes.
- Arrange chicken on platter, and serve with remaining sauce.



Forty-two foot statue of Athena commands the attention of visitors to the Parthenon, Nashville's art museum



The legendary Johnny Cash



Giancarlo Guerrero conducts the Nashville Symphony



Kellie Pickler performing at the Grand Ole Opry

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Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She recently launched the blog "Food for Thought," on her website at carolgoodmankaufman.com. She invites visits and comments.

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