

BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Traveling with Jewish Taste

A Super Buffet for Super Sunday

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



While not an official holiday – after all, we already have so many of them – Super Sunday is on the calendar for virtually every Jewish community in America. Volunteers from all segments of Jewish life gather not in front of a wide-screen television to watch football, but around a bank of telephones. They come together in a herculean effort to call every individual in the area serviced by their local Jewish Federation. Their mission: to raise the funds necessary for the miraculous work accomplished by the many local, national, and international agencies that work on behalf of the Tribe.

Many of our fellow Jews in Eastern Europe live in poverty, dependent on aid from the Joint Distribution Committee – funded by our donations.

As a result of resurgent anti-Semitic violence in Europe, parents are sending their children to Israel, much as parents in the 1930s sent theirs to relative safety in pre-State Israel. Federation dollars support the Youth Aliyah villages that house, educate, and counsel these refugees.

And Federation dollars support hundreds of programs here in the United States, from JCCs to day schools to nursing homes.

As on Super Bowl Sunday, there must be food, but since this is a Jewish event we're talking about, there must be FOOD, right? I've been thinking about what an appropriate spread might be for this special day, and I've come to the realization that we must represent every single Diaspora community that receives aid via the generosity of our donors.

"What has she been smoking?" you may rightfully ask. Every single community? Jews are scattered around the globe, from Austin to Azerbaijan, Vilna to Venezuela. How could we possibly do that?

Being exiled and dispersed to the four corners of the earth wasn't great, but it did come with a silver lining: a treasure chest of amazing culinary diversity. No, we won't have a buffet table that could run from South Street to Jerusalem, but wouldn't it be fun to consider the menu options? After making dozens of phone calls, hungry volunteers could dive right into the array of:

A variety of eggplant salads
Hummus with tahini
Sabich
Borekas
Soft, fluffy pita bread
Bagels, lox, and cream cheese
Herring in sour cream
Smoked whitefish
Variety of olives and pickled vegetables

Potato kugel
Noodle kugel

And for dessert:
Rugelach
Strudel
Mandelbrot
Persian halvah
Coconut macaroons
Flan

Coconut macaroons

Yield 3 dozen

At a recent dinner meeting of the Latino-Jewish Roundtable, a community dialogue group, one of my Latina colleagues expressed surprise when I served macaroons as one of the Jewish dessert offerings. Deborah, who just happened to have written her doctoral dissertation on the foods of Latin American women, told me that macaroons are also an iconic Latino dessert. And, here I had thought the coconut treats were the property of Ashkenazic tradition! Deborah's revelation made this recipe a natural for our Super Sunday Buffet, as you will see from its worldly roots.

The name macaroon comes from the Italian *maccarone*, meaning "paste," referring to the almond paste that formed the basis of the original, flourless cookie recipe. Culinary historians tell us that they have their genesis in a 9th century Italian monastery. When a later generation of these monks came to France in the early 16th century, they joined forces with the chefs of Catherine de Medici and King Henri II to produce the delicacy there, but those bakers used almond flour and thus created the delicate macaron. When almonds became difficult to obtain, creative bakers substituted coconut.

Italian Jews adopted the recipe because it has no flour or leavening other than egg whites, making macaroons perfect for Passover dessert. Jews across Europe learned of the delicacy, and it became popular as a year-round treat.

Cocadas are the South American version of the coconut macaroon, often made with the addition of either condensed milk or dulce de leche, making the results denser and sweeter than others. Of course, these would not be appropriate for a meat table.

Coconut macaroons are super easy to make, and so very much better than those in the preservative-filled store-bought cans that can sit on the shelf for a year without spoiling. (I inadvertently tried this at home, Grandson #1 having recently found an open can in the back of a cabinet. He actually put a macaroon in his mouth, and I am relieved to say that he is miraculously healthy.)

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups dried unsweetened shredded coconut
1 1/2 T. potato starch
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 t. salt
4 large egg whites
1 t. vanilla
1 package semisweet chocolate chips



Instructions:

In a large mixing bowl, use a fork to stir together the shredded coconut, potato starch, and sugar till well blended. Break up any chunks of potato starch with the fork.

Whip the egg whites and salt on high speed in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment until they make medium-firm peaks.

Carefully fold the egg whites into the coconut mixture, making sure that the egg whites are evenly distributed throughout the coconut.

While mixture sits for 20-30 minutes, preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Stir the batter again with a fork.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Scoop up the batter in a tablespoon and drop onto the baking sheet, leaving about an inch between scoops.

You can then use wet fingers to shape your macaroons if you wish. Cocadas are often made into pyramid shapes.

Bake for 20-25 minutes until the bottom edges turn golden and the tips of the coconut shreds start to brown.

Remove from the oven.

Let the macaroons *cool completely* on the baking sheet.

When the macaroons have *cooled completely*, put the chocolate into a bowl and microwave it, starting with 35 seconds, stir, then continue for 10-second bursts until the chocolate is smooth.

With a pair of small tongs, dip the base of each macaroon into the melted chocolate, twisting and coating it about halfway up the sides.

Pull macaroon up and let excess chocolate drip back into the bowl, then place the dipped macaroon onto the flat parchment. Repeat for remaining macaroons.

Once the macaroons are completely dry, store them in a *sealed* container in layers divided by parchment or wax paper.

These will stay fresh at room temperature for up to 4 days – if they last that long!

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Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She is currently at work on a food history/cookbook, tracing the paths that some of our favorite foods have taken from their origins to appear on dinner plates and in cultural rites and artifacts around the world. She invites readers to read her blog at carolgoodmankaufman.com and to follow her on Twitter @goodmankaufman.