

BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Traveling with Jewish Taste

Making a Big Tzimmes

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



My kids love to choose among my various eccentricities and foibles when looking for a topic on which to tease me. And one of the things that cracks them up is my habit of annotating every recipe I try in the dozens of cookbooks that line my bookshelves. I even keep a special pen with red ink for that express purpose, and heaven help the person who touches that pen. It's just another source of joshing.

Now, some years ago, middle son Avi gifted me with a vegetarian cookbook because he was, coincidentally, a vegetarian. So, when daughter Elana and husband Adam came to stay at the

house with some friends they, also being veggies, pulled out that same cookbook and found what to this day is a source of hilarity for the entire family: On every single recipe I had written, "This is delicious, but a real patchke."

For those unfamiliar with the Yiddish language, the late, great Leo Rosten in his classic book *The Joys of Yiddish*, defined the word 'patchke' to mean "to fuss or mess around inefficiently or ineptly."

Well, I'm not sure if I was that inept or inefficient, but I certainly did fuss over all the slicing, dicing, chopping, sautéing, simmering, etc. involved in preparing those recipes. But it was worth the effort every time. The recipes in that book were uniformly excellent.

Although not etymologically related, the word *patchke* is emotionally connected to another word in the Yiddish lexicon. Again according to Rosten, the word *tzimmes* has its origins in German, from the words *zum*, meaning "to the" and *essen*, "eating." Due to the effort involved in preparing the many ingredients in the carrot-based dish (e.g., peeling, slicing, chopping) and the very long cooking time required, the word has come to mean "a prolonged procedure, an involved business, trouble."

In other words, a fuss. A *patchke*.

But the casserole known as *tzimmes* is one of the most traditional dishes that Ashkenazim enjoy at Rosh Hashanah, and it is definitely worth the *patchke*. The dish is traditional in great part due to the symbolism of its ingredients, top among which is the carrot. The Yiddish word for carrot is *mern*, meaning "to multiply," and it embodies the hopes for the multiple blessings of health, productivity, and joy we have for the new year. By the way, the fruits and vegetables used in a traditional *tzimmes* tend to be sweet, just as we wish for a sweet and abundant New Year. Mine uses sweet potatoes, winter squash, and prunes in addition to the carrots.

But for me, *tzimmes* is much more than a holiday tradition. It's a comfort food that reminds me both of the many meals I enjoyed at my Bubbie Fannie's, and the excitement my mother exhibited when I promised her that it would be on the table. Even son Avi fell off the vegetarian wagon for a short teenage minute to partake of it. (My *tzimmes* features a brisket.) It really is that good.

Of course, you can always do as the old ad used to say, "Skip the fuss, leave the *tzimmes* to us," and call a caterer. Either way, I wish you a healthy, sweet and abundant New Year.

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.



Tzimmes

While this recipe does require some peeling and chopping, and a long cooking time, but for the holiday, don't we like to make a *patchke*? Serves 12.

Ingredients:

- 5 lbs. brisket
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 3 cups hot water
- 1 cup orange juice
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 3 tablespoons light brown sugar, packed
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ginger
- 6 carrots, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 3 sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 2-inch chunks
- 1 butternut squash, peeled and cut into 2-inch chunks
- 8 oz pitted prunes
- Cornstarch and cold water

Directions:

In a large Dutch oven with lid, heat oil over medium heat; brown meat well and drain off excess grease.

Combine water, juice, honey, brown sugar, cinnamon, and ginger; pour over meat.

Cover and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat and simmer for about 1-1/2 hours.

Preheat oven to 325°F.

Arrange carrots, sweet potatoes, squash, and prunes around the meat.*

Cover pot and place in hot oven.

Bake for 1-1/2 hours. Uncover and bake for 1 to 2 hours more, or until the meat is fork tender.

Remove the vegetables and fruit to a serving dish. Remove meat to a carving board and slice against the grain.

If the sauce in the pan is too thin, combine a tablespoon of cornstarch and cold water and whisk it into the sauce to thicken. Simmer until it reaches the desired consistency, or about 15 minutes to cook the cornstarch.

Serve sliced meat topped with sauce and surrounded by fruit and vegetables.

* If you don't have a Dutch oven large enough, you can simply transfer the ingredients at this point to a large pan, covering it tightly with aluminum foil.

MAZEL TOV!

Carol Goodman Kaufman, our Traveling With Jewish Taste columnist, on her new podcast "Murder We Write," conversations with crime writers whose short stories and novels run the gamut from cozy mysteries to domestic thrillers. Her other podcast "Skygazing with Carolinda," is about the night sky, and goes along with her children's book, *Once in a Full Moon*. Both are available on popular services: Apple, iHeart Radio, Spotify, and Stitcher.

Roberta Silman on the publication of her new novel, *Summer Lightning*.

Amy Lindner-Lesser on the arrival of her granddaughter.

Hannah Wohl, Ph.D., Pittsfield native and assistant professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who won the university-wide Chancellor's Faculty Award for Undergraduate Research Mentoring in recognition of her exemplary instruction and advising of undergraduate students. Proud parents are **Alba Passerini** and **Charles Wohl**. Hannah's book about the contemporary art scene, *Bound by Creativity*, was featured in the September 2021 Berkshire Jewish Voice.

The Harold Grinspoon Foundation on celebrating shipping its 50-millionth children's book as part of the PJ Library initiative, launched in 2005 to deliver Jewish children's books to families and encourage Jewish education and identity-building around the world. Mazel tov, too, to the members of our community who have worked in key roles at HGF, helping the organization achieve this and other milestones.

Ethel and Jeff Kramer on renewing their marriage vows on their 44th anniversary. The ceremony took place at their current residence of Summit at Mill Hill Senior Independent Living in Guilderland, NY.

Lou and Susan Zaidman on the bat mitzvah of granddaughter **Orly Steiger**.

Noah Cook-Dubin, principal at KANO Consulting, on being recognized by Berkshire Community College's 40 Under Forty honoring local professionals "who have shown their support for the region through leadership, community service and a deep dedication to improving the quality of life for those living and working in the community."



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