

BERKSHIRE JEWISH VOICES

Traveling with Jewish Taste

We Kid You Not – Kitniyot are Permissible on Pesach

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



From January until just this week, we've been reading the Torah's story of the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt, and now we're coming up to our annual commemoration of that event – Passover.

This festival brings with it so many memories. Among mine is the model Seder we students put on every year in the Pittsfield Community Hebrew School. In the Jewish Community Center gym on East Street, we dipped celery into saltwater, made Hillel sandwiches, and recited the Four Questions. We sang 'Had Gadya' and 'Ehad Mi Yodea,' among other songs, and looked forward to performing

them at our family Seders.

But the Seder at my Bubbie's house wasn't like one of today's more entertaining, er, educational ones with puppet shows, quiz games, and toy frogs atop the children's plates. No, ours consisted of the men — my dad, Uncle Ralph, and Zayde Meyer — whipping through the Haggadah and droning the narrative, stopping only for our well-rehearsed recitations. Regardless, cousin Myla and I had a grand old time mumbling along, guzzling the Mogen David, and giggling.

Of course, many of our memories of Passover have to do with the menu (this is a food column, after all). The flavors and aromas of chicken soup with kneidlach, potent horseradish, cinnamon-tinged haroset, and tzimmes can all conjure up thoughts of loved ones long gone and the beautiful tables they set.

So, given that the holiday spread tends to be vast, isn't there room for a twist on the Passover menu? A small addition? Sure, tradition is important, but how about expanding our repertoire a little to encompass the culinary customs of our extended global Jewish family?

Now, a little detour. One of the guests at the wedding of my son Avi and his wonderful Shira was Rabbi David Golinkin, a close friend of the bride's family. I simply had to meet the man who had written the responsa ruling that certain foods known as *kitniyot* (including corn, rice, and legumes) were permissible on Passover because they were never outlawed in the Torah. (In fact, corn didn't even exist in ancient Israel)

I must have looked like a rock band groupie when I sat myself down next to him to say "thank-you" for the reasoned argument he gave on the subject of *kitniyot*. With a wry smile he replied, "Of all the responsa I've written in my career, that's the one I'll be remembered for."

Rabbi Golinkin may have been droll in his self-assessment, but I for one shout "hurrah" that we Ashkenazi Conservative Jews are finally at one with our Sephardi family. *Am Yisrael Chai* and all that.

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.

And now, with so many Jews practicing vegetarianism, getting all-important protein into the diet practically requires the use of *kitniyot*.

Which brings us back to the food question. What shall we serve for Passover that will add something to the traditional family fare? (I won't say same-old, same-old.) We need something exciting to stimulate our palates while it fosters a connection to our cousins on the other side of the world. So, I give you *gundi*, Persian chicken and chickpea balls. Serve these in your soup this year and see the smiles (happy, not wry) all around the table.

Gundi: Persian Chicken and Chickpea Balls

About 18 meatballs

This recipe is adapted from one in *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Food* by Gil Marks (z"l)



Ingredients:

Meatballs:	¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
½ pound ground chicken or turkey	2 tablespoons water
½ pound ground beef	
2 cups chickpea flour	Soup:
2 medium yellow onions, grated	3 quarts chicken soup
3 tablespoons vegetable oil or 1 large egg, lightly beaten	5 red or Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed
1 teaspoon ground cardamom	1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon ground turmeric	1 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoon ground cumin	Salt to taste
1 teaspoon salt	1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
½ teaspoon ground black pepper	

Instructions:

In a medium bowl, combine all the meatball ingredients, adding enough water to form a mixture that is smooth but not sticky. Refrigerate until firm, at least 3 hours. Using moistened hands, shape into smooth 1-inch balls.

In a large pot, bring the chicken soup to a boil. Add the potatoes, lemon juice, turmeric, and salt and simmer for 30 minutes.

Add the gundi and chickpeas, cover, and simmer until the gundi are tender, about 40 minutes.

Two notes:

You can prepare this dish one or two days ahead of the Seder because the flavors meld and mellow over time. Ideal for the holiday rush!

This recipe is easily doubled or tripled for a really big crowd (or because you just can't get enough of it).



A Note About Prepared Passover Meals

Due to the Crown Market's extremely early delivery schedule, the Federation is unable to safely facilitate kosher Passover meals this year.

For your convenience we are sharing options available. Please contact the locations directly. Advance orders are required and deadlines vary.

CROWN MARKET, WEST HARTFORD, CT

Kosher Passover meal packages are available for individual orders with personal pick up in Springfield, MA on Friday, March 19 between 1:45-2:15 pm or in Albany on Monday, March 22 between 12-12:30 pm. For more info and to order visit www.thecrownmarket.com or call (860) 236-1965.

THE KOSHER STORE – PRICE CHOPPER COLONIE, NY

Kosher Passover meal packages are available for individual orders and pick up at the Price Chopper Colonie, NY store. For more info and to order visit www.pricechopper.com/kosher-store or call (518) 456-9314 (option 8)

CHABAD OF THE BERKSHIRES

Individual kosher Passover meals are available for advance ordering. For more info and to order visit www.jewishberkshires.com or call (413) 499-9899.



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