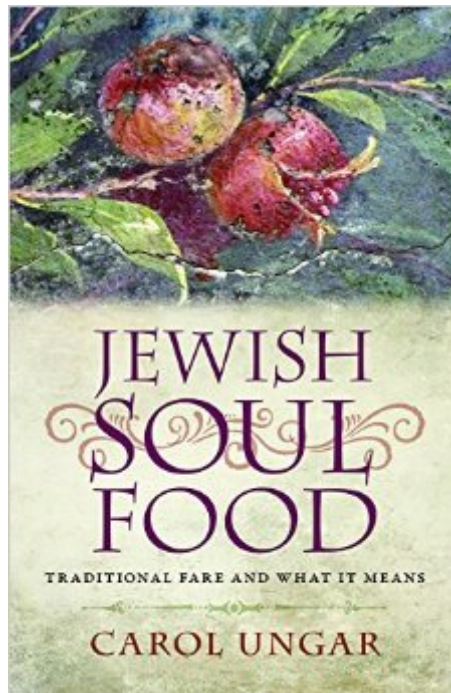


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Jewish Soul Food: Traditional Fare And What It Means



Synopsis

Jewish traditional foods often have symbolic meanings. A Passover matzo is a taste of Egyptian slavery. The Hanukkah latke reminds us of the little jug of oil that burned, miraculously, for eight nights. Noshing hamentaschen at Purim, we remember the villain Haman, and his thwarted plan to destroy the Jews. Even more than in the synagogue, Jewish life takes place around the dining table. Jewish sages compare the dining table to an altar, and that isn't an exaggeration. Jewish meals are ceremonies and celebrations that forge a pathway between body and soul. In this unique cookbook, Carol Ungar links the cultural and religious symbolism of Jewish foods to more than one hundred recipes drawn from international Jewish cultures and traditions. She offers easy-to-follow recipes for Shabbat meals and all the Jewish holidays, from Rosh Hashana to the nine days before Tisha b'Av, along with fascinating briefs on how many Jewish foods—challah, kreplach, farfel, and more—express core Jewish beliefs. With ingredients that can be found in any supermarket, and recipes adapted for the time- and health-conscious cook, this volume is for anyone who wishes to flavor Shabbat and holiday meals with Jewish soul.

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Customer Reviews

I have a friend who worked as a food stylist. He taught me that the pictures of food you see in magazine ads, blogs, infomercials and cookbooks are professionally designed to look spectacular in photos. In real life, they are as likely as not to be inedible. Photographs of cereal often use glue in place of milk. Sesame seed buns might have the sesame seeds placed individually, using a tweezer. Motor oil is sometimes used in place of pancake syrup and meat in ads is generally

to be cooked with a blowtorch or hairdryer and then painted with shoe polish to give it the right color. These tricks are a small part of the clever art form known as food styling and it's in evidence in many contemporary cookbooks, whose oversized, full color pictures on glossy paper have been referred to as food porn. By contrast, the new cookbook *Jewish Soul Food: Traditional Fare and What it Means* by Carol Ungar, looks like a paperback novel that you'd bring on a beach vacation. It's filled with hand-drawn illustrations and the photographs are black and white. At first glance, you might be tempted to dismiss this book as a low quality publication. And that would be a mistake. Instead of publishing yet another upscale cookbook, Ungar wrote a cookbook that could only be produced by a cross between a Jewish grandmother and an adult Jewish educator. By eschewing stylized, color photos and writing extensive descriptions about the background of why Jews eat what we eat when we eat it, Ungar connects her readers to Jewish history. One of Ungar's themes is how the physical, spiritual and cultural aspects of Jewish life merge in food. Her understated, occasionally humorous prose reminds readers, and prospective Jewish cooks, that there's cultural depth and a measure of Jewish literacy involved in making cabbage soup, teiglach and kreplach. Ungar divides the book into three main sections, corresponding to times when Jews eat ceremonial foods – Shabbat, Jewish holidays and life cycle events. In the modest, 200-page book, she's included well over 100 recipes. Ungar includes recipes (and explanations) for many familiar dishes like chopped liver and cucumber salad, and for not so familiar dishes, like etrog confit (a sweet-tart jam) and Ruota di Faraone (a meat and pasta casserole from Tuscany). Even if you end up never taking a single pot out from the cabinet, reading *Jewish Soul Food* is like stepping into a complex, colorful Jewish cultural story. It's a cookbook, yes. But it's also a short course in adult Jewish literacy. <http://jewishvaluescenter.org/jvoblog/jewish-soul-food>

I must admit I never actually sat and read a cookbook cover to cover before this one. This little book is an intro to Judaism via food. It includes recipes from Jewish communities around the world, and the how, what and why of each dish. The writing style is engaging and recipes I have tried so far have been easy to follow and successful. The author has an incredible breadth of knowledge, a sense of humor and a huge variety of recipes! I'm sending a copy to my mom!

Who ever thought a cook book would fall into the category of "books I couldn't put down" ? For a person who's been eating for over eight decades, and cooking for about seven decades, this book is a treat. It's chock full of fun and facts. It will make a wonderful gift for the newly-wed, who hasn't

cooked yet, as well as for the experienced kitchen maven.

Reading Carol's book is like meeting an old "heimish" friend, someone you are comfortable with yet smart enough to surprise you again and again. Perusing the pages of these easy recipes is like a tasting in your grandmother's kitchen with some Asian, Sephardic, and fusion additions. It's traditional Jewish fare made simple with family additions, valuable tips, and sources. It's fun to learn about how some of our familiar foods evolved from Talmudic and geographic origins and to follow the diagrams for the multiple challa themes and variations. Some surprises included familiar names with unfamiliar recipes like Rabbi Freifeld's pickled herring; I pictured the jovial sage donning his apron and in a booming voice with his signature wit, concocting and directing preparation of a Shabbat delicacy.

This book is an absolute masterpiece! This is not my desert island cookbook since its scope is very focused, but it's a book that every Jewish cook must have in their collection. It's much more than the delicious traditional recipes that make this book a must have. To steal a word from the author, it turns good ole delectable Jewish recipes into a meaningful adventure. The meticulous research is phenomenal. I thought I knew a lot but this book is of a different magnitude. Kudos to Carol for an amazing job! I have never seen any book of its kind before. Thanks!

I thought I was pretty well versed in knowing the origins of many Jewish foods, but I found so many new and interesting insights from this book! It brought back many memories of my home growing up- a great book with a real "Yiddishe Ta'am"! A great bridal shower gift!

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I wanted to send it to secular family members as it contains a lot of information that I think they would appreciate. It's full of great recipes and great Jewish trivia. I have already prepared my Yom Tov menus and simply cannot wait to try them out. I strongly recommend you buy this book.

Picture an authentic old-time-Jewish-grandmother who wishes to impart to her children, grandchildren and beyond with her fail-proof recipes, experience, guidance, tradition and love. A lot of us don't have a grandmother with all that, and this cookbook fills that gap. It covers a wide range of traditional Jewish foods, gives the meaning behind them and provides detailed instructions with care including freezing. Make no mistake this is no ordinary

cookbook. Its sections are not divided by courses or types of dishes. The three main sections are: Shabbat, Holidays and Life Cycle Events. Then each section is structured according to the meals and dishes eaten at each time and the story and background for each recipe. It's fascinating and fun to read. Some of the recipes I always thought were beyond me, but now they are in reach: Homemade sweet wine, Kichels (that I remember fondly as a child), Taiglach (that I never tasted, but my great-grandmother whom I never met was renowned for hers) and many more. I can't wait to try them out!

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