

MOONLIGHT

The UK's Quarterly Rosh Hodesh e-Newsletter

Contents	Page
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Affairs The True Face of Islamic Charity - Naomi Ragen (4 January 2005) 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts The Face of an Angel - Debby French To Dance or Not to Dance - Amanda Lando 	3 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community The Magical X Factor - Leonie Lewis 	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purim The Costume Drama - Sandy Lipman Food is a four letter word - Doreen Samuels Purim Around the World 	6 7 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pesach Women in the Exodus Story - Elaine Sacks 	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pesach Cookery Section Why is this Pesach different from other Pesachs - Denise Phillips 	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dates for your Diary 	13

The True Face of Islamic Charity by Naomi Ragen (4 January 2005)

Where are the Arab Moslems when Moslems really are refugees?

I have been watching with growing amazement how the Americans are being criticized for the disaster in the Indian Ocean. First,

the UN (Americans are the largest financial contributor to the UN, with 3 billion dollars in 2003 alone) called America "stingy." Then President Bush, who made a policy statement 72 hours after the disaster, while Kofi Anan was still on Christmas vacation, and the Swedes, who had thousands of citizens feared dead, had nothing to say. But no one has said a word about Saudi

Arabia's \$10 million dollar aid package.

Wow! Considering the billions they have funneled into terror groups, that's really big of them.

Almost exactly a year ago, on Jan 1 2004, Americans also went to Iran to help when an earthquake killed 30,000. According to CBS news, one Iranian cleric greeted the help with the

following statement: "We hate the arrogance of the Americans and we are sure that they haven't come for humanitarian reasons, but for other things like spying," said Abdullah Irani, a mullah from Qum, the main center for Shia Muslim clerics in Iran.

And just try to Google Syrian aid for tsunami victims... See what you come up with. Zero.

Given the fact that Indonesia is 78% Moslem, and has lost more than 100,000 people, Sri Lanka is 8% Moslem, and India is 11% Moslem, one would think that Arab nations would now show an outpouring of support and sympathy. After all, isn't that the excuse they always use for backing the "poor Palestinians" -- that they are fellow Moslems and their solidarity is a given? And doesn't the West tip-toe around Muslim sensibilities whether it be the Americans who are terrified of entering a mosque (even one being used as a shelter for terrorists), or Parisians who dare to ask girls not to wear Islamic head coverings to class, or British, who allow local Imams to give hate sermons in London mosques? Isn't the Western belief that that to hurt or offend one Moslem is to hurt and offend them all?

So, how is it, that the great solidarity of the Islamic world when it comes to

their "pride" or their touchy religious sensibilities doesn't extend to humanitarian aid when thousands of Moslems lay dead in the streets? Where are the much touted "Moslem Benevolent Funds" when you really need them for something other than guns to kill Israelis and blow up planes?

Makes one think, doesn't it, that perhaps all these years their concern for the plight of the Palestinian "refugees" wasn't based on purely humanitarian grounds. Let's just see how charitable Moslems will be to the millions of Moslem refugees in Asia now, people who, unlike the Palestinians, really don't have a roof over their heads or a way to earn a living. Let's just see.

Six weeks after publishing this article on her website the US criticized the Muslim Aid to tsunami victims, which prompted Naomi Ragen to write the following comment.

Friends,
US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz has criticized the stinginess Arabs in helping Muslim tsunami victims.

Ah, the wonders of the internet. I wonder if you remember the article I sent out on January 3 entitled: "Where are the Arabs when the Moslems really are refugees?" At that time, not a single media source had picked up on this.

So, late one night, I did a web search for "Saudi Arabia Tsunami Aid" and came up with a tiny article in an obscure little paper (in Iran? Don't remember) which stated that the Saudis were donating \$10 million (the year before they'd raised over \$100 million in a telethon for Palestinians suicide bombers.) This item got picked up by Little Green Footballs; then Fox News mentioned it. The Saudis then forked over another \$20 million. At the end of my article I wrote:
" Makes one think, doesn't it, that perhaps all these years their concern for the plight of the Palestinian "refugees" wasn't based on purely humanitarian grounds.

Let's just see how charitable Moslems will be to the millions of Moslem refugees in Asia now, people who, unlike the Palestinians, really don't have a roof over their heads or a way to earn a living. Let's just see."

Guess we have the answer, huh?
Naomi Ragen (February 13, 2005)

Naomi Ragen is an American-born novelist and playwright who has lived in Jerusalem since 1971. She has published six best-selling novels in the US, UK and Israel, and is the author of a hit play in Israel's National Theatre.

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Smiles of an Angel – Deborah French

But it must not be,
I cannot see what I see,
But I know that I do.

A petrifying sensation
A stomach churn..
That day was a daze
My head in a daze of thought and question.

Am I right?
Could it possibly be?
I simply cannot see what I see,
But I know, deep down in my heart, that I do.

“Yes, I’m sorry” they say,
“We believe she is what you think”
My daughter, Down’s syndrome?
In a state of shock, I’m on the brink as the tears roll down my cheeks I think..
No, it mustn’t be..
Now I know, that really
I did, and could always see.

The first few weeks
Past by in a freeze
A time I won’t ever forget...for as long as I live.

Many months it took,
To go back to that time
Moments to repeat again in my mind.
The tears come again and the churn sets in...
But gradually it passes, quicker ..each time, I recollect
Those frozen moments of mine.

And now I look at the daughter I have,
The smiler, the giggler,
The special, unique soul.

I find myself saying “Hashem thanks to you”
I have a bracha, a girl to who
I look to when I’m sad and blue.

A girl who looks back deep into my eyes,
An angel I feel talks through her and sighs,
“Its ok Mummy to feel sad and glum,
“But you’ll see I’m your blessing for years to come”
So smile with me she giggles whilst I cry

I think to myself, how lucky am I ?

Debbie French is the mother of two children. This moving poem was written after the birth of her second child, who has Down’s syndrome.

To Dance or Not to Dance by Amanda Lando

In Kohelet it says: Everything has its season and there is a time for every purpose under heaven. The time for all of you to come and dance is a Wednesday evening in the Shul Hall at Wembley Synagogue.

I thought it might be of interest to look briefly at dance in and the roots of modern day Israeli Folk Dance - Dance has been a deep rooted part of our tradition since ancient times. There are numerous references to dance and dance festivities throughout. It is interesting to note that 11 Hebrew verbs are used in to describe dancing activity and to highlight early choreography: dance, rotated, jumped, skipped and to jump, to go around, to skip and to go around in a circle.

- After the triumphant crossing of Yam Suf, Miriam took a timbrel and the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances (Shemot15:20)
- David dances before the Ark. In tehilim, the people are exhorted to praise HaShem's name with dance.
- Am Yisrael celebrated the

harvests with dancing.

- Dancing in honour of the bride at a wedding was considered an act of religious devotion.
- From earliest times it was customary to welcome Shabbat before sunset with dancing and to dance a farewell to the departing Queen on Motzei Shabbat.
- In many eastern communities, dances accompanied the ritual of circumcision.
- In the eighteenth century with the rise of Hassidism in Eastern Europe dance was used to attain religious enthusiasm and communion with HaShem. Hassidic dance assumed the form of a circle symbolising that everyone is equal, each one being a link in the chain.

New Israel Folk Dance style emerged as an amalgam of Jewish and secular folk dance forms from many parts of the world. Folk dances were brought to Israel from other countries, particularly Rumania(the hora), Poland(krakoviak and polka) and Russia (cherkessia and kutzatsky). Two groups developed dance forms of their own Hassidim and Yemenites.

For several decades the Hora typified Jewish new life in Eretz Yisrael. The tightly closed circle gave equal status to all participants. Simple movements such as walking, running, jumping, hopping and stamping enabled everyone to take part. Oriental influence came from the Arab debka, a dance linked to strength and self confidence.

On a Wednesday night I teach a broad spectrum of dances encompassing all different dance styles. When there is a simcha in the group the emphasis will be on simcha dances. When it is a chag, I will find music and dances linked to chagim. The class has been running for three years and its success is due to the enthusiasm of a great bunch of ladies. Everyone is warmly welcomed and encouraged to have fun and get fit in a warm social atmosphere. Come and find out for yourselves.

I am passionate about teaching and about dance, a good combination to lead a group. My pleasure has been in seeing the group gain confidence and skill and enjoy their dancing. I feel that is a privilege to teach them and I would like to thank them for being such a great class.

A message in Megilat Esther is that events that were expected to turn out one way in fact turned out the opposite. Why not

come and try something new that you do not normally do. For all those of you who up until now have said "I can't dance" Let us prove the opposite. We'd love to see you!

Amanda (Mandy) Lando has been teaching in Jewish Primary schools for 23 years and has been head of the Independent Jewish Day School in Hendon for two years. She has taught Israeli Dancing for 18 years and is the lead teacher for children's Israeli folk dance in England. She teaches a class for women at Wembley Synagogue on a Wednesday evening – all are welcome.

The Magical X Factor by Leonie Lewis

I am not sure if I am supposed to say this, but I don't always get a spiritual and religious high from attending Shul services, in fact they often have an adverse effect on me. It might be that prayer and shul are incongruous for me, or it might be that I am more in tune with the Beit Knesset and Beit Midrashic elements of shul life rather than the Beit Tefillah aspect. Whatever, it is a cathartic experience for me to say that I don't always get a spiritual high from my engagement in prayer at shul..... However, and you probably knew this was coming, there are certain moments and events that do give me this magical 'X' factor. I have also seen

that these moments are not unique to me, that other women too feel something that is quite often indefinable. Let's look and explore these moments. What are these moments?

Pinner's Youth Rabbi, Rav Beni Fleisher, said recently in a Dvar Torah that such moments are rare but are connected with the Shechina, the Divine Presence. That sometimes when community comes together or when individuals are engaged in Jewish deeds the Shechina is very much present. So although we may not recognise it and although it is intangible, occasionally we can almost touch it and then we become aware of something greater than ourselves. That is when the Divine Presence is around and in us.

For me some of these moments are centred around a Shabbat Rosh Hodesh women's discussion group in Pinner shul held after leynung. Here a structured discussion takes place around the New month, themes such as Shabbat, prayer, women's responsibilities etc are presented. Texts distributed, songs sung and frequently a sense of something special occurs. Women come to shul just for these groups!! I can't describe the inspiration that I feel when I sit amongst this group. Women of all ages, levels of Orthodoxy and learning,

participate, listen and simply raise the level of yiddishkeit creating this magical X factor.

Other moments when I experienced this magical 'X' factor have been at 2am in the morning by the Kottel, under the Chupah at my son's wedding and at the Israel Solidarity Demonstration in Trafalgar Square a couple of years ago.

Occasionally I get a spiritual high at Kol Nidre when the traditional tunes transport me some place else but most recently I evidenced this sensation at Pinner shul's Friday night dinner held as part of the United Synagogue Shabbat...and I was again not alone!!!

Most recently, my shul, Pinner, participated in the US Shabbaton, 'Spend US with US'. The level of participation and engagement of the young families organising the event was only surpassed by the 300 individuals who shared in the unique Friday night experience. The Shechina was certainly evident that Friday night as we sat together and lifted our voices together to sing zemirot.

The atmosphere was electric and that magical 'X' filled the hall in abundance. I know that I was not alone experiencing this and that is why it made sense to think and believe that as Sidra Terumah suggested

the Shechina was dwelling amongst us.

As we celebrate Purim and the forthcoming month of Nissan and its key Festival Pesach, we can all try to experience this 'X' factor by letting the Shechina dwell within us and our community; through attempting to give a 'wow' factor to our communal and individual religious experiences.

I know you are going to say if only it were that easy!! But I believe we all need to strive to continually see and touch this 'X' factor or spark and let this spark touch us. As spring approaches and nature's rebirth occurs, let's look at ourselves and remember that the Shechina will dwell amongst us but only if we let it.

Leonie Lewis is the Director of United Synagogue's Community Development Group and a member of Pinner Synagogue.

The Costume Drama by Sandy Lipman

The reversal of fortunes is a major theme in the story of Purim: Haman rises in importance and then falls (and then rises again when he's strung up on the gallows). Mordechai rises and rises – perhaps because he refuses to fall on his face before Haman. The Jews of Shushan begin the story as ordinary citizens of a powerful empire; then face

annihilation just for being a 'different' dispersed and thus despised people. And then, when given the upper hand, they find everyone wants to join them ('many of the people of the land professed to be Jews' 8.17 - notice how this verse is a virtual opposite of an earlier one 4.3 reflecting the great sadness and mourning of the Jewish people).

Threaded through this narrative of the Persian court are episodes of feasting, particularly of drinking wine, with the pivot being the fasting undertaken by the community before Esther went in to the king. Three of the four mitzvot of Purim – mishteh (feast), mishloach manot (sending gifts of food) and matanot l'evyonim (gifts to the poor) involve food and drink (the fourth is reading the Megillah) – reflect the centrality of not just food, but food shared with friends and community. Perhaps less obvious is the theme of clothing, woven through the narrative as the feasting theme reflecting too the rise and fall of fortune.

Megillat Esther opens with a luscious description of the Persian court, colours and textures reflecting the richness of the destroyed Beit HaMikdash from whose looted vessels the King and cronies were drinking. Then the importance of clothing is highlighted: Achashverosh commands his queen Vashti to appear in her crown (and only

her crown). Her refusal paves the way for Esther to be raised to royal heights, given Vashti's crown; you are what you wear. Similarly when Haman is elevated to Grand Vizier status, he is given the king's signet ring and the way is clear for his plot against the Jews to law of the land.

With this disaster impending, Mordechai and the rest of the Jews of Shushan don sack-cloth and ashes, mourning, fasting, praying. Esther dons Majesty, the queen must dress the part to appear before the King. And thus she issues her invitation to her little drinks party. The next clothes in the tale are royal robes: Haman advises the king that the proper way to express honour is to dress the recipient in the king's own garments and be paraded publicly on the king's horse. With this, Mordechai is taken out of his sackcloth of mourning, displayed in the streets of Shushan in the king's clothes on the king's horse, led by Haman whose demeanour suggests the very mourning that Mordechai just discarded.

The cocktail party was a nice little party as cocktail parties go, and as cocktail parties go, it went - according to plan. Haman's plan was revealed and thwarted, and he was hanged as he had planned to hang Mordechai. The king's signet ring was taken from Haman and given to

Mordechai (much as Vashti's crown was taken from her and given to Esther). Mordechai took on Haman's role of Grand Vizier, and wore royal robes of blue and white, with a gold crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple wool (8:13). This was an important man who together with his kinswoman Esther had saved their people.

Clothes thus thread their way through the Purim story, reflecting the moods and attitudes of the various characters. We respond to this detail: Purim is the time for fancy dress, for pretending to be someone else, for hiding who we are. As people were not what they seemed in Megillat Esther and were cloaked in other garments, so we wrap ourselves differently for one day a year. And as the miracle of Purim was not overt, as the hand of God was hidden, so we remind ourselves every year that Hashem's power is present even when we think it cloaked in invisibility.

Sandy Littman, from London School of Jewish Studies, is the well known quizmaster of the Ladies Guilds' Annual Quiz at Raleigh Close.

Food is a four letter word

Doreen Samuels

Following the runaway success of Lynne Truss's book, I have been encouraged to produce my own, on the subject of Jewish Male Customs of the Chaggim. The title? 'Eats Food and Sleeps....' Also, I'm conducting a survey on how women cope with food for the Chaggim.

Hands up all those readers who:

- a. Never worry about whether they have bought / made enough food for the Chaggim;
- b. Never run down to the deli / supermarket an hour before Yomtov, just to get in an extra punnet of strawberries / carton of chopped liver / tub of ice-cream 'just in case';
- c. Never worry about how much they have eaten.

If you put your hand up to all three – are you Jewish???

It's clear that Shakespeare was not Jewish, as we all know that the food of love is NOT music, but.... FOOD! How else do Jewish mothers and grandmothers show their family how much trouble they are prepared to take to fulfil our every whim? One of my favourite

childhood Pesach memories invokes my mother and her friend staying up 'til 2am just before Pesach one year, trying to make eingemacht (beetroot jam) and ingber (carrot candy) to old family recipes

I don't remember them producing anything remotely edible, but boy! how hard they tried! Ever speculate as to why all Jewish religious events revolve around food – too much / a certain type / none at all?

I suppose we could not fill up at a petrol station or connect up to an electricity supply, but look how straightforward it was when the Bnei Yisrael in the desert only had Manna to eat.

Just think, if there was still only one type of 'human fuel', such as Manna, we should have no problems with kashrut, no problems with overweight, no frantic pre-Pesach phone calls as to what Uncle Herman will eat, as he's a vegetarian but doesn't eat vegetables, or cousin Freda, who's allergic to wheat, eggs, nuts, milk, oranges, cucumbers, white fish

To say nothing of all the different choices of fillings just for hamantaschen – once only poppy-seed, we now have jam, chocolate, almond – how about peanut butter? And food defines our religious status – do we drink only 'shomered' milk (with a hechsher), or 'ordinary' milk? Eat Cadbury's chocolate or

only that with a hechsher?
Do we eat matzo-meal products, such as kneidlach, on Pesach, or are we a strictly Shemura (guarded) matzo (and only at the Sedarim) family?

I could go on about food for hours – ask my family! And diets – you name it, I've done it!
However, there is nothing to beat the Feast and Fast Diet. This was passed on to me by a good friend. Enjoy!

As a general principle, Jewish holidays are divided between those days on which you must starve and those on which you must overeat. There are many fasts and feasts, but there are no holidays requiring light snacking ...

The Diet:

Rosh Hashanah – Feast
Tzom Gedalia – Fast
Yom Kippur – More fasting
Sukkot – Feast
Hoshannah Rabbah – More feasting
Simchat Torah – Keep feasting
Month of Cheshvan – no feasts or fasts for a whole month – you could try the liquid diet
Chanukah – Feast - eat potato latkes
Tenth of Tevet – Fast - do not eat potato latkes
Tu b'Shevat – Feast
Ta'anit Esther – Fast
Purim – Feast - eat pastries
Pesach – Feast but do not eat pastries
Shavuot – Dairy feast – cheesecake, blintzes, etc
17th Tammuz – Fast – definitely no cheesecake or blintzes

Tisha b'Av – Very strict fast – don't even think about cheesecake or blintzes
Month of Elul – End of cycle. Enrol in a Centre for eating disorders before Rosh Hashanah comes round again

Doreen Samuels is a Jewish Educator - teaching Bat Mitzvah girls; running learning and discussion groups for women and girls; Jewish Studies Curriculum Writer and Teacher Trainer; author of books, stories and articles on Jewish subjects; sometime wife, mother, daughter, sister (etc!), founder member of Stanmore Women's Tefillah Group; a founder member of the first English cross-communal Women's Rosh Chodesh Group and founder member of Pinner Women's Rosh Chodesh Group.

Purim Around the World

Yemen: Haman was a lifesized scarecrow dressed in brightly coloured shmatters and paraded through the streets on a horse.

Tunisia: Just as we have Guy Fawkes, in Tunisia Haman was constructed from straw and old clothes and burnt on a bonfire.

Afghanistan: Large pictures of Haman were drawn on cardboard and wooden boards and when the Megilla was ready they

were put on the floor of the Synagogue and when the name Haman was pronounced they would be jumped on.

Bukhara: The ground would usually be covered with snow at Purim time. A large snow-Haman was built next to the synagogue. This Haman had a funny-shaped torso, long thick legs, like an elephant's, a large head, eyes of charcoal, a carrot for a nose, and a piece of beetroot for the mouth. A "gold chain" made out of water melon peel was hung over the stomach as a symbol of office, and a broken pot was placed on the head. After the meal, the whole community gathered round the Haman. A large fire was made around it of wood, rags and paper, and they stood and watched until Haman melted in the heat and disappeared, singing until it was completely melted.

Germany: On Purim eve, torches containing gunpowder would be ignited. During the Megillah reading, the gunpowder exploded with a deafening noise. Doll-shaped cakes, called "Haman", were also prepared. The children would cut off the doll's head and eat it with great glee.

Italy: The youngsters would divide into two camps and throw nuts at each other. The adults rode through the streets of the town on horseback, with cypress branches in

their hands. They also placed an effigy of Haman in a high place, and encircled

France: Children used to take smooth stones, write or engrave Haman's name on them, and strike them together during the Megillah reading whenever Haman's name was mentioned, in order to erase it, in compliance with the verse: "I shall surely wipe out the memory of Amalek".

Salonika: "Haman-shaped" cakes were baked on the eve of "Shabbat Zakhor", and placed on the window ledges until the festive Purim meal. During the meal, the cakes were sliced so that participants could fulfill the precept "And they shall devour Haman with open mouth".

Egypt: The young men rode through the Jewish street on horsebacks, camels and asses, in memory of the verse "and they brought him on horseback through the street of the city".

Source: [The Department for Jewish Education and Culture in the Diaspora](#)

Women in the Exodus Story Elaine Sachs

We all know the story of the exodus from Egypt; every year we read it over the seder table. But how often do we stop and think of the underlying stories of the brave women who

refused to accept fate as it was presented to them? These extraordinary women took destiny into their own hands, and fought against the future that lay before them.

The absence of women from the narrative of the book of Exodus is quite striking, in contrast with the various sagas in Genesis. This could be seen, not as an omission, but simply that women were included in the larger body of 'the children of Israel'. However, in a Midrash, Rashi comments differently: on the final census of the people before entering the Holy Land, it says 'In this census, no **man** survived from the original census of Moses and Aaron, when they had counted the Israelites in the wilderness of the Sinai'. But says Rashi the women were not subjected to the same decree against the spies, because they loved the Holy Land. 'The men said, let us appoint a leader to return to Egypt'.

So who were these outstanding women? Ahifrah and Puah, the midwives instructed by Pharaoh to kill the baby boys, claimed that Israelite women were very 'lively', they gave birth and hid the babies before the midwives could arrive. Very little is known about Shifra and Puah: whether they were Hebrews or Egyptians, but either way they took it upon themselves to disobey the king's orders, saving many

lives and risking their own. It is interesting to note that Shifra and Puah were considered by Ibn Ezra to represent a large group of working midwives; perhaps not just two midwives but many more, acted in this way to save Jewish children.

Yocheved, Moses' mother, risked her own life and that of her son, by keeping the baby with her for the first three months. With extraordinary faith, she set the baby off in a basket along the river, for surely the baby would die by itself, or else be found by an Egyptian who would kill it.

And then Pharaoh's daughter, who saw the basket floating among the reeds, and sent her maid to fetch it. Pharaoh's daughter knew that this was a Hebrew child, and acted against her own father's decree, in order to save an innocent life. She is known to have kept it a secret.....and yet her maids were there.....they could easily have betrayed her.

Miriam, a young girl watching her baby brother from the river bank, had the bravery and presence of mind to approach this grand Egyptian princess, and offer to find a wet nurse. And so Moses was returned temporarily to his mother where he remained until weaned. What a wrench it must have been several months later, for Yocheved and for Miriam to take the baby to the Egyptian princess....., and

the princess, after all this time, could easily have had second thoughts and not taken such a risk. But they did, and she did, as we know.

The sixth of our brave women, defying their fate, is Zipporah, Moses' wife. Moses was returning to Egypt, for G-d said, 'all the men are dead who sought life'. Moses moved hastily, with his wife and baby son. But on the way, the Lord met Moses and tried to kill him. Moses was in a rush. He had a new born son but thought that the circumcision could wait until they arrived. Zipporah knew why G-d was angry. There and then she took a flint from the side of the path and circumcised her son. Moses was intent on the larger issues of saving the Jewish people. Zipporah knew that saving the Jewish people depended on the destiny of each Jewish child.

Here we find women, both Egyptians and Israelites, quietly acting with bravery and humanity, to save human life and to change the destiny of their people. Destiny is not something that just happens. It is something that we can influence and change from the details of our own lives.

Elaine Sacks is the wife of the Chief Rabbi.

Why is this Pesach different from all other Pesachs? – Denise Phillips

Pesach is divided into two very different parts. The days of Yom Tov with their Seder nights which often involve formal entertaining and many guests. The middle days Chol Hamo'ed are less formal and less busy. Both however are ideal opportunities to produce some modern stylish Jewish food.

Most people's seder's are family gatherings. Whether large or small, religious or less religious, tradition tends to be the order of the day (or night!). Along with the familiar traditional ritual of the service goes the familiar traditional food. Family favourites are great and this is the perfect time for them. However, we can make a stylish improvement with a few small changes.

Creative sophisticated presentation can include; garnishes, colour co-ordinating crockery and food, matching and contrasting table linens and napkins. Sliced meats look more appetising fanned on a plate. Fish balls look more inviting in baskets lined with lettuce or piled up high. Cinnamon balls and coconut pyramids arranged in rows or diagonals appeal more because of their contrasting colour and shape.

If you are planning to buy new cutlery, crockery or kitchenware why not buy it for Pesach and then use for the rest of the year. This way you can justify

stylish Pesach kitchenware at more stylish prices! If you are buying just for Pesach visit modern stores like IKEA and Habitat for affordable fashionable household equipment.

The second part of Pesach – Chol Hamo'ed - is when we are faced with the challenge of what to make with Pesach permitted ingredients. Personally, I find that provided your guests are not fussy it is not a problem. Most vegetables and salad ingredients are permitted so add some variety with your fish and meat dishes! Grilled red pepper salad with toasted pine nuts, crispy lemon chicken on a bed of wild mushrooms and spinach and rich chocolate cake are some examples of modern Jewish Pesach food with style!

The other problem people tend to have is when Pesach is over, - what do you do with the excess of ground almonds, nuts, dried fruit and plava that you have accumulated? Ice creams using your preference of the left over biscuits, meringues, dried fruit and nuts work very well and will be popular with the whole family. Add ground almonds to your soup recipes or use the nuts (toast them in an oven to enhance their flavour) as a garnish. Make trifles with the left over plava. Use your food processor to crush remaining biscuits. Freeze the crumbs and use as a topping by adding to

crumble mixtures, sprinkling on to ice creams, or with custard and fruit to produce a really delicious dessert!

So now you know why this Pesach will be different from all other Pesachs – it will be stylish!!

Moroccan Shepherd's Pie

It is great to have a Pesach recipe that does not contain matzah, ground almonds and eggs! As much as one loves these traditional ingredients it is comforting on the stomach to find something that is not only very tasty but healthy too! The addition of the dried apricots sweetens the meat, which makes it more child friendly. If you are allergic to nuts just omit the pine kernels and add some chopped spinach as a substitute.

To serve this in a more stylish way make in individual ramekins. It may also be easier for serving and freezing.

Can be made in advance

Will freeze

Preparation Time: 35 minutes Cooking Time: 1 hour

Serves: 6 people

Ingredients

2 tablespoons – olive oil
675g minced lamb
1 onion peeled and roughly chopped

2 cloves garlic – finely chopped
2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons tomato paste
150ml chicken soup strained/ stock
150g dried apricots – roughly chopped
3 tablespoons pine kernels
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the Topping

1.5kg potatoes – peeled and roughly chopped
3 tablespoons margarine
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

- 1) Pre-heat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas mark 6.
- 2) Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan.
- 3) Sauté the onion until just soft; add the minced lamb, garlic, tomato paste, stock or chicken soup and cinnamon.
- 4) Stir and cook until the meat is completely brown. This will take about 10 minutes.
- 5) Add the apricots and pine nuts. Season well.
- 6) Place the potatoes in a saucepan and cook until they are very soft.
- 7) Drain and mash. Add the margarine, olive oil

and season to taste.

- 8) Place the cooked meat mixture in a large ovenware dish. Spoon on the mashed potato, level with a knife and make lines on the top with a fork.
- 9) Bake for 35 minutes.

To serve the Stylish way:

Serve with a selection of green vegetables or a green salad.
A last minute Pesach dessert is always welcome especially when there is still a long list of jobs to do before Yom Tov.

When it comes to Pesach cooking, think positively about what you can have rather than what you can't. You will find the list and variations are endless!

Dates are the fruit of the date palm tree. They have firm sweet flesh and a long inedible stone. They are mainly cultivated in the deserts of Israel and other hot countries.

Fresh dates should be plump and shiny with smooth golden brown skins. Remove the skin if tough, then slit open the date and remove the stone with the point of a knife.

Dates can be eaten raw, used in salads, or sweets or they may be stuffed with cream cheese, pates or pastes.

Pesach Friendly

Parev Friendly
Must be made in advance

Chocolate and Date Delight

Preparation Time: 20 minutes plus soaking
Cooking Time: 5 minutes plus 2 hours chilling
Serves:4

Ingredients

100g (4 oz) Chopped dates or apricots if preferred
3 tablespoons – kosher for Pesach Brandy
125g (4 ½ oz) Plain dark chocolate
1 large egg – separated
30g caster sugar
200ml (7 fl oz) whipping cream or Rich's non –dairy cream
50g (2 oz) Grated chocolate – for dusting

Method

- 1) Put the dates in a small bowl and cover with the brandy. Leave to soak for a minimum of 2 hours.
- 2) Transfer the dates and the brandy to a food processor and whizz together until a paste has formed.
- 3) Melt the chocolate in a double- boiler or microwave. Remove from the heat and set aside.
- 4) Beat in the egg yolk and sugar. Stir in the melted chocolate and date mixture.
- 5) Whip the cream until it holds its shape. Add to the chocolate mixture.
- 6) In a separate clean bowl, whisk the egg white until firm peaks form. Carefully fold into the chocolate delight.

- 7) Spoon into individual glasses or one large bowl.
- 8) Place in the refrigerator to chill for a minimum of 2 hours or overnight.

To Serve the Stylish Way

Dust with grated chocolate and serve with your favourite plain Pesach biscuits.

For further detail about my recipes or my new book 'The Book of Jewish Cooking' published by Salamander books, £8.99 and 'Modern Jewish Cooking with Style', £16.95, please click into www.jewishcookery.com.

It is hard for a poor man to get what he needs for Pesach; on the other hand it is easy for him to burn his leaven

LEARN TO COOK THE STYLISH WAY

Denise's popular Cookery Demonstrations are the ideal, yet informal way of adding to your cookery skills. These comprehensive "hands-on" classes, presented in her trademark simple but stylish manner, will enhance your love of food and add to your cooking repertoire. Pick a theme and see the difference it will make.

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Wednesday 21 September 2005 Jewish Mama's Cooking, The Classics Made Easy!
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Thursday 10 November 2005 Divine Italian

Wednesday 23 November 2005 Before and Afters
Thursday 24 November 2005 Before and Afters

Wednesday 7 December 2005 Quick and Stylish Entertaining
Thursday 8 December 2005 Quick and Stylish Entertaining

Venue: Northwood, Middlesex
Time: 7.30 – 11.00 pm
Cost: £50 bookings require payment in advance

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**Know any Singles keen to improve their culinary skills and to enjoy a dinner party with a difference?
Get them to try
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Denise Phillips, International chef and renowned expert on stylish cooking, has created a new concept in dating. Within an informal setting, a group of 6 men and 6 women will have fun learning to cook a three course meal from scratch.

The evening starts with a glass of Champagne and a "get to know your fellow guests". Then the preparation and cooking commences before you relax and enjoy the meal you have created, together with fine wines and quality company! All ingredients and equipment are provided.

Sunday 27 March 2005
Sunday 17 April 2005

Age: Mid 30s to late 40s
Venue: Northwood,
Middlesex
Time: 7.30 – 11.00 pm
Cost: £50 bookings
require payment in
advance

Bookings / Information:
01923 836 456 or
denise@jewishcookery.com

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**23 May - Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis will be speaking for Ezer Leyoldos, Stamford Hill, London.
Contact 020-8800 3850 for further details.**

4 July - "Women are from Venus, Men are from Ma's"

**A Rosh Hodesh Celebration of the relationship between men and women
Guest Speaker:
Rebbetzin Joanne Dove**

**With thoughts, readings and laughter from the 'Moonlighters'.
Wembley Synagogue
at 8.15pm
Donation £5**