

Easter & Passover Dining

by Clint Hamlin

Every holiday has a source and a tradition. Many we know and commemorate even if we don't belong to that particular culture or religion. Christmas is celebrated worldwide, perhaps with a turkey or a goose and not necessarily just by Christians. Everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day with corned beef and cabbage, the real crowd



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pleaser. Even Easter, with colored eggs and candy, is celebrated by many and not necessarily for religious purposes.

My family's Easter dinner featured a gigantic picnic shoulder cooked in ginger ale with pineapple rings, maraschino cherries and cloves. Side dishes included peas and carrots, whipped potatoes, turnips and jellied cranberry, all spread out on a lace tablecloth on mom's golden Limoges china.

My godmother baked her delicious Portuguese Easter bread, a round, sweet bread with a cooked egg still in its shell

peaking through the top. Her enormous handmade Easter baskets were legendary, and there was always a \$5 bill hidden somewhere amongst the colored boiled eggs and chocolate bunnies. Desserts included too many pies and cakes, and everything seemed to last for weeks until every trace of the holiday had

been devoured.

When I was a kid, my Jewish school friends invited me to join their family in a very exotic holiday experience called a Seder. It has taken me years and several Seders to better understand the tradition and meaning of this Passover dinner. While the tradition of Easter is celebrating the resurrection of Christ, my family's Easter dinner was more about getting together with relatives and enjoying the feast. The Passover dinner, as I soon learned, was more symbolic of the mean-



Seder class at Boston Synagogue

ing of the holiday.

Wanting to know more, I contacted Susan Schreiner Weingarten, chairperson of the Board of the Boston Synagogue, also known as the Charles River Park Synagogue, located at 55 Martha Road in the West End.

"The Passover Seder is the retelling of the story of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Every aspect of the dinner has a meaning or reference to this event," Weingarten explained.

The Boston Synagogue offers an educational experience available to parents and their children who want to better understand the meaning of the Seder.

"We read from the Haggadah," the instructor said as the parents and children all listened. "And the various foods that are served all have meaning."

The bitter herbs on the table include horseradish representing the bitterness and harshness of slavery. Charoset is traditionally made from chopped nuts, grated apples, cinnamon and sweet red wine, symbolizing the mortar that was used by the Jewish slaves to build the storehouses of Egypt.

Karpas is a vegetable that you dip into salt water at the beginning of the Seder. Parsley is often used symbolizing the tears and pain felt by the Jewish slaves of Egypt.

A shank bone, usually a chicken wing or something similar, represents the sacrifice that was made in the temple and has been part of the Jewish history since the destruction of the temple. You don't eat it - it's just there.

The last item is a hardboiled egg, which symbolizes mourning, loss of the Temple and the hope that it will be rebuilt.

Bread is not served, rather flat sheets of matzo, an unleavened cracker, is on every



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table. The Jews left Egypt in a hurry and didn't have time to let the bread rise.

A more familiar menu accompanies the dinner, with dishes such as oven-roasted chicken, chopped liver and brisket. Tsimis, a tasty mixture of carrots and sweet potatoes, is often served, as is potato kugel, another favorite of the historic Seder dinner.

As America continues to be the melting pot of the world, the wealth of religious and culinary traditions offer us great insight to its people, the past and the great food of different cultures. Holiday dining often represents the history of our ancestors and who we are today.

As Henny Youngman said, "I once wanted to become an atheist, but I gave up - they have no holidays."

Shalom!

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Palm Sunday, March 28
11:00 a.m. Morning Prayer, *The Rev. Dianne Arakawa will preach.*

Maundy Thursday, April 1
5:30 p.m. Holy Communion, *The Rev. Dianne Arakawa will preach.*

Good Friday, April 2
12:15 p.m. Midday Service, *The Rev. Joseph A. Bassett will preach.*
8:00 p.m. The Office of Tenebrae

Holy Saturday, April 3
8:00 p.m. Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday
11:00 a.m. Morning Prayer, *The Rev. Dianne Arakawa will preach.*

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