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Dipping Into Holiday Culinary Traditions From Around the World

Many foods serve a symbolic as well as nutritious role at festive holiday meals, and never more so than during the High Holy Days. Our desire for a sweet New Year, for example, starts before we even sit down to the main meal, whether at the festive Rosh Hashanah dinner or before a restorative break-fast meal at the conclusion of Yom Kippur services. One of the most common traditions is to dip apple slices or pieces from a round holiday challah into honey, although some Hungarian and other Eastern European Jews prefer to dip their challah into sugar rather than honey.

But the custom of dipping foods into something sweet before the meal has many variations. Some Middle Eastern Jews sprinkle apple slices with lemon juice and orange blossom water and then dip the fruit in sugar, while others start with quince sprinkled with cinnamon, and then dipped in honey or powdered sugar. Plums, figs and dates replace quince in some homes.

Moroccan Jews traditionally dip dates in anise and sesame seeds, the symbolic sweetness of the fruit enhanced by a wish for fruitfulness and good fortune represented by the numerous seeds. Others view all those seeds as representative of the hope that they will perform many worthy deeds in the coming year.

But lest you think that sweet dipping is the only way to start off the New Year, consider that many Italian Jews choose to break their fast by eating fried doughnuts coated with sugar, while Greek and Turkish Jews often get the New Year off to a sweet start by drinking a melon seed “milk” made by steeping ground melon seeds in water that is then mixed with sugar and rose water.

And so it goes around the world. Whatever your tradition, here’s to a sweet, blessed New Year to you all.

The following recipes are from our forthcoming Emanu-El community cookbook, *Emanu-El Eats*. Questions? Contact the Women’s Auxiliary at (212) 744-1400, ext. 235 or womaux@emanuelnyc.org.



With the holidays fast approaching, we'd like to give you a timely taste of the possibilities.

Rottenberg Family Apple Cake

From **Cantor Emerita Lori Corrsin**: This recipe was passed down from my aunt, Betty Fishman, to her daughter, Beth Orshalimy, and then to me.

Serves 20 to 24

- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
 - 2 cups sugar
 - 1 cup vegetable oil
 - 3 cups flour
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla
 - 3 cups apples (peeled, cored and sliced)
 - ½ to ¾ cup raisins, or to taste
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease and flour a 9-inch by 13-inch baking pan.
 2. In a bowl, mix together flour, baking soda, salt and cinnamon. Set aside.
 3. In a large mixing bowl, combine eggs, sugar and oil. When well blended, add flour, baking soda, salt and cinnamon; mix well. Stir in vanilla, apples and raisins.
 4. Pour batter into prepared pan; bake until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean, about one hour.
 5. Cool cake in pan; slice and serve.

Honey Cake From the Warsaw Bakery

From **Cantor Emerita Lori Corrsin**: My mother's family owned the Warsaw Bakery in Hamtramck, Michigan. This is their recipe.

Makes two loaves (one large, one small)

- 2¼ cups flour
 - 1 teaspoon baking powder
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda
 - ½ teaspoon cinnamon
 - ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
 - Pinch of salt
 - ¾ cup honey
 - 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
 - ¾ cup coffee, warm
 - ½ to ¾ cup raisins, or to taste
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease and flour two loaf pans: one 8-inches by 4-inches and one smaller.
 2. In a bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger and salt; set aside.
 3. In a large mixing bowl, combine sugar, oil, eggs, honey and lemon juice. Gradually add flour mixture, alternating with the warm coffee, beating thoroughly for 3 to 4 minutes. Stir raisins into batter.
 4. Pour batter into prepared loaf pans and bake until a cake tester inserted in the center of each pan comes out clean, about 50 minutes.

Note: Do not overbake the cake. It is best when moist.

The following recipe is from temple member **Nancy Aeschbach Gold**. Although her brother-in-law **Neil Gladstone** improvised the dish one Thanksgiving while searching for something different to do with sweet potatoes, it since has become a Rosh Hashanah favorite as well.

Neil's Honeyed Sweet Potato-Apple Puree

Serves 8 as a side dish

- 6 sweet potatoes, baked, then peeled
- 24-ounce jar unsweetened applesauce
- Penzey's Apple Pie Spice or ground cinnamon, to taste
- Honey, to taste

Notes:

1. Poached or canned pears can be substituted for the applesauce. If using canned pears, rinse off the syrup first.
2. For a coarser texture, mash the sweet potatoes and applesauce by hand; for a more silken texture, after pureeing the mixture in a food processor, push it through a chinois.
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a food processor, puree baked potato flesh, applesauce, and pie spice or cinnamon.
3. Place the mixture in a greased, ovenproof casserole and bake until hot, about 30 minutes.
4. Drizzle with honey and serve.