

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.



(continued)

With the holidays fast approaching,

we'd like to give you a timely taste of the possibilities.

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

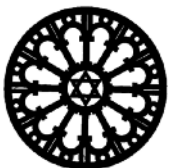
Serves 8 as a side dish

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

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.

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.



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EMANU-EL EATS is a labor of love undertaken by a dedicated group of Temple members and staff.

Food always has been an important part of Jewish life and culture, nourishing the soul as well as the body. In recognition of this and of the diversity that is the Emanu-El community today, work has begun on a cookbook that will pay tribute to the comforting foods of our varied past traditions and the excitement of modern Jewish cooking. We hope that as many of you as possible will volunteer to share favorite recipes, be recipe testers and contribute in other ways as this exciting project evolves. We will keep you apprised of developments in the monthly Bulletin and on the Temple website.

Mail your favorite family and original recipes to Emanu-El Eats, Temple Emanu-El, One East 65th Street, NY, NY 10065, or submit them by e-mail to emanueleats@emanuelnyc.org.

Please include your name, contact information, and a brief explanation of how you devised or came to the recipe and why it is special to you. If it is based on a recipe you found in a cookbook or magazine but you have tinkered with it to make it your own, then please include the original source of the recipe, and tell us how you've changed it. We look forward to hearing from you!