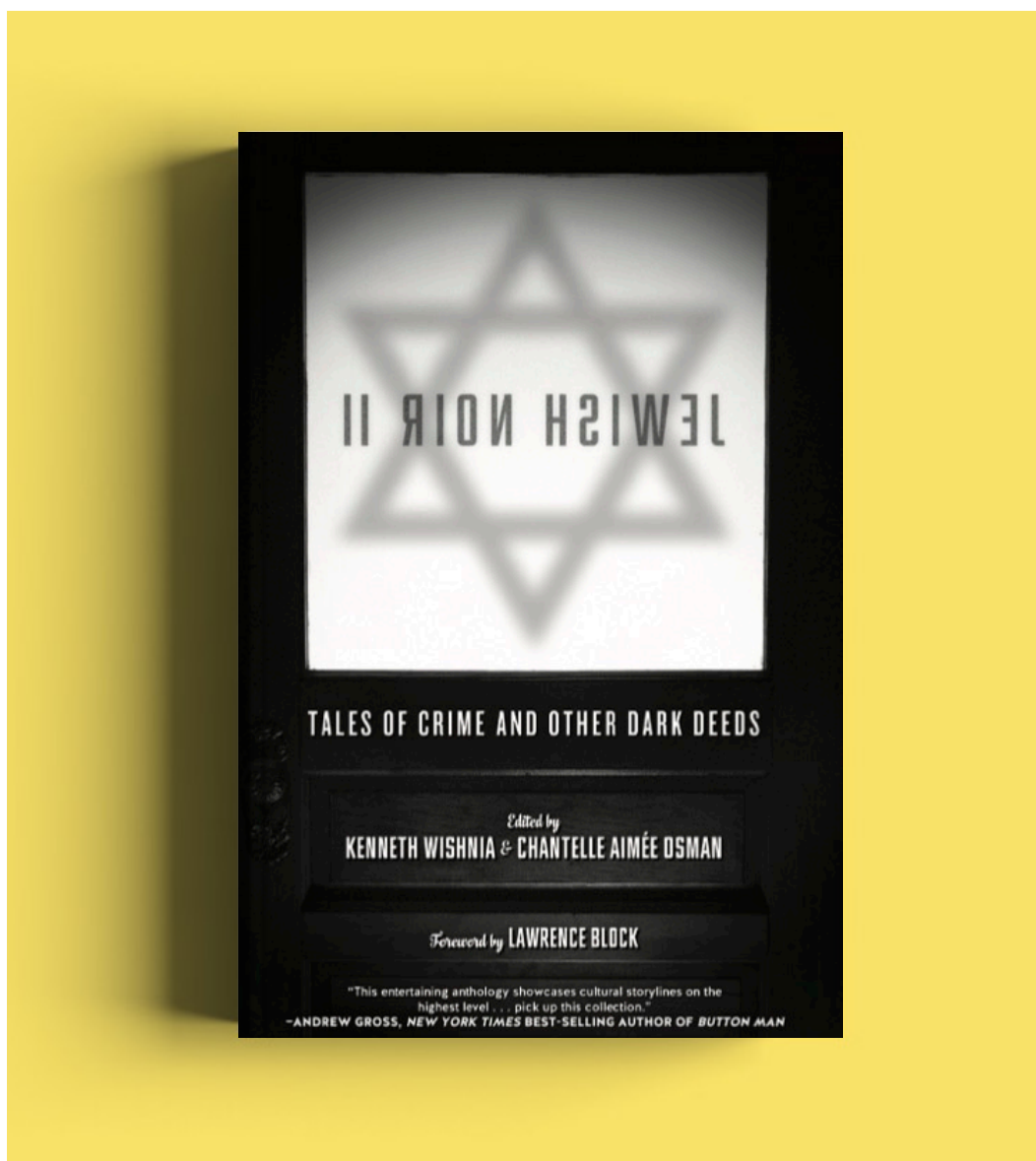


JBC Book Clubs Discussion Guide

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Jewish and Noir

A Few Words on Both from Kenneth Wishnia

So, what's the deal with Jews and noir, you ask? What do we even mean by the term *noir* itself? Most definitions typically include something about a pervading atmosphere of despair, born from a sense that the universe is either indifferent (at best) or actively hostile to our puny human endeavors. (Sounds pretty Jewish to me already, but let's keep going.)

When the underworld figure played by John Garfield in the 1946 film noir, *Nobody Lives Forever*, decides to work a con on a rich widow ("One more break and he'd be back in the big money" touts the cover of the 1951 Bantam edition), he is placing his hopes in a delusion--a key element of noir. Garfield himself (b. Jacob Julius Garfinkle) was basically hounded to death during the anti-Communist hysteria of the McCarthy era.

Another key noir motif is that of the "little man" who fears that he is being randomly persecuted. Think of Josef K. in Kafka's *The Trial*, who never learns what crime he is being accused of, and punished for. The actor Edward G. Robinson played several "little man" types, modest and unassuming folk whose biggest sin is to cling to a dream, yearning for something that colors their drab existence, in classic noirs like *The Woman in the Window* (1944) and *Scarlet Street* (1945), before being persecuted himself. Robinson (b. Emanuel Goldenberg) was "graylisted" during the Hollywood Red Scare, not "blacklisted," meaning he was banished from the big studios for a few years, but was able to work with smaller studios.

Other elements of the noir universe include the displaced person who doesn't feel at home in the world, who feels like an exile or a stranger in his or her own land. (That *definitely* sounds like a Jewish motif to me.)

In the immediate post-WW II era when film noir was flourishing, the displaced type was frequently represented by an amnesiac or otherwise damaged war veteran, or even an honorably-discharged hero, returning to a society he doesn't quite recognize, a society that takes advantage of his initial disorientation, with its associated innocence or naiveté, even his basic trust in others.

While the noir protagonist of the 1940s is more likely to be betrayed by a femme fatale—an unfortunate symptom of the era's misogyny--the noir protagonist of the 1950s is more likely to be ground down by the gears of society or some other relentless, faceless force--like the media circus that springs up at the site of a mine cave-in in *Ace in the Hole* (1951), directed by Billy Wilder and starring Kirk Douglas (both Jewish), or the bureaucratic system (and unspoken anti-Semitism) that torments the literal "displaced person" played by Hedy Lamarr in the rather bland 1950 film, *A Lady Without Passport*. Too bad. That film could have hit much harder. (Lamarr was born Hedvig Kiesler, an Austrian Jew who left Vienna to flee her abusive, Nazi-sympathizer first husband.)

Since a bunch of pushy Jewish businessmen largely invented Hollywood, significant Jewish involvement in any film genre is pretty much a given, but unlike other genres, the Left-leaning Jewish writers who flooded Hollywood with socially conscious screenplays during the Great Depression were drawn to film noir precisely because it shines a light on the seamy side of American society, the underbelly of our system, revealing its ugliness, its cruelty, its injustices.

Of course, there was considerable tension between the business-minded, politically conservative Jewish studio heads and the engaged left-wing Jewish screenwriters, which finally came to a head in 1947 with the blacklisting of the Hollywood Ten, six of whom were Jewish, along with hundreds of others through the late 1950s.

This clash led to Jews persecuting Jews, which is about as noir as it gets if you ask me.

Our first volume did so well, we knew we had to do another: *Jewish Noir* was named Best Anthology of the Year by *Suspense Magazine* and was nominated for an Anthony Award for Best Anthology. Two stories, by Jedidiah Ayres and R.S. Brenner, were chosen for the *Year's Best Crime Stories* (2016), and another by "Moe Prager" (a.k.a. Reed Farrel Coleman) was nominated for the Thriller Award for Best Short Story, among other accolades. We also had very enthusiastic audiences all over the country for group discussions. What's not to like? So *nu*, let's do it again!

Books Q&A :

Deborah Kalb in conversation with Kenneth Wishnia

This conversation originally appeared on <https://deborahkalbbooks.blogspot.com/2022/08/q-with-kenneth-wishnia.html>

Deborah Kalb: What inspired you to edit this second volume of *Jewish Noir*--and how would you define “*Jewish Noir*”?

Kenneth Wishnia: Authors began asking me about a second volume of *Jewish Noir* as soon as the first volume appeared, and the publisher liked the idea as well, so the seed was already planted. Then Chantelle came along and offered to co-edit the volume, which made it a lot easier to say yes.

As for a definition of “*Jewish Noir*,” one story in the first volume, “*Your Judaism*” by Tasha Kaminsky, includes the following line: “I’m opening myself to the idea that maybe the universe isn’t indifferent and it’s actively against me,” which is as close to a definition of “*Jewish Noir*” as you can fit into a single sentence. But of course I’ll take it further: According to Catholic doctrine, Adam and Eve brought death into the world, but Jesus gave us the gift of eternal life. So thanks to Jesus, everyone gets a shot at living happily ever after. Traditional rabbinic Judaism says: Don’t ask what’s above and below. Judaism is a religion of this world, and this world is hopelessly messed up, and it’s our job to fix it—even though that’s impossible. And you are not free to walk away from the impossible task of healing the world. It’s a fundamentally different view of human agency, and it’s pretty darn noir.

A famous example instructs us that if you’re planting a tree and someone announces that the Messiah has arrived, finish planting your tree first, then go meet this Messiah guy. It’s hard to imagine a Christian responding to such news in this manner. (Source: 1st century CE Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, cited in Avot

de-Rabbi Nathan 31b, compiled c. 700–900 CE.)

DK: How did you choose the stories to include, and how did you decide on the order in which they’d appear in the book?

KW: Chantelle brought a bunch of literary authors to the project, and with a solid base of crime writers on board, I was free to seek out authors who were not the “usual suspects” as well, like Gabriela Alemán of Ecuador, whose story I translated from Spanish.

Our editorial collaboration was positive, fruitful and respectful, and there were only a handful of instances where I basically said, “Yeah, that’s a great idea, but we’re doing it my way.” The order of the stories was one of those instances. Chantelle suggested dividing the stories into three main sections, representing three central tenets of Judaism: “First, that there is one God, incorporeal and eternal. Second, that people are to act with justice and mercy. And last, but perhaps most importantly, that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.” I liked her idea enough to use two of the divisions, which we called “The God of Mercy” and “The God of Vengeance,” but there was such a variety of stories that we went with six divisions, and Chantelle was nice enough to let me get away with that.

DK: The writer Jesse Kellerman said of the book, “*Jewish Noir II* is a fun, eclectic, globetrotting collection unified by its embrace of classic Jewish themes; love of language, passion for justice, and the

irresistible charm of a good story.” What do you think of that description?

KW: I’ll respond in classic presidential debate style by answering a different question. Crime writer Lawrence Sanders, a living legend who has won the Edgar Allan Poe Award four times in addition to numerous other prestigious awards, has kept to an ironclad policy of not giving out blurbs, period. Somehow Chantelle convinced him to write the Foreword for *Jewish Noir II*, in which he describes the book as “a rich collection of wonderful tales wonderfully told.” So we got our blurb from Lawrence Sanders! It’s just inside on page xiv, instead of the front cover.

I’ll respond to the issue of justice in the next question.

DK: What do you hope readers take away from the collection?

KW: That you don’t have to be Jewish to write *Jewish Noir*. (But it helps.)

One constant in the collection is that violence rarely solves anything. A couple of tales feature arguably justifiable homicide, but they are the exception.

There’s a common misconception about crime and punishment in the Bible, based on passages about “an eye for an eye” (Deut. 19:21), when no such case of legally sanctioned mutilation is recorded in the Bible. The standard rabbinic interpretation is that these passages refer to monetary compensation, “the value of an eye for the loss of an eye; the value of a limb for its loss” (Plaut 263). There is little evidence that the many offenses requiring the death penalty listed in the Torah (like the one for disobeying your parents) ever led to judicial executions during the Hellenic and Roman eras of late antiquity. In fact, in the Mishnah (compiled c. 200 CE), Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah says a court that imposes the death penalty “once in seventy years” may be considered “murderous.” Two other rabbis add that if they were on the high court, “no one would ever be put

to death,” prompting a fourth rabbi to note that their actions would lead to an increase in murders (Neusner 612), thus demonstrating that the death penalty remains controversial after more than 18 centuries.

Instead of a literal eye for an eye, the Israelites are instructed: “Justice, justice shalt thou pursue” (Deut. 16:20). In my own story, “Bride of Torches,” one aim is to show how the legacy of violence in ancient Israel, especially during the time of the Judges, does not necessarily lead to lasting peace.

DK: What are you working on now?

KW: Finally, a question about me! (ha ha) I just completed a Jewish-themed historical novel set in Iron Age Israel and modern day NYC. It’s a radical revision of a biblical story featuring my favorite type of protagonist: a seriously kickass woman whose abilities are undervalued by society. I first got the idea in graduate school in the early 1990s, while working as a Teaching Assistant for a prominent feminist Hebrew Bible scholar. I’m hoping it will be out within a year or so. I’ll just leave you with that teaser.

DK: Anything else we should know?

KW: Although you don’t have to be Jewish to write *Jewish Noir*, some expertise was required. One author’s submission included the line, “she lit and blessed the candles, and he sang the psalm *Eyshet khayil* praising a woman of valor.” Something didn’t sound right about that, and I confirmed that the passage in question is not a psalm, but a 22-line poem in the book of Proverbs (31: 10-31). I also had to correct the transliteration of some of the Yiddish (e.g., *nisht gefeyle*, which should be *nisht gefערlekh*), and, in the final stage of page proofs, I was the only member of the production team to spot an error in the printing of two phrases in Hebrew. So it was nice to know my expertise had some value and I can’t be

replaced by a machine just yet.

Works cited:

Jacob Neusner. *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988.

W. Gunter Plaut. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary, Vol II*. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1983.

Discussion Questions

Here you will find discussion questions from each contributing author on their story.

“The Black and White Cookie,” Jeff Markowitz

What is the significance of the black-and-white cookie in the story?

“Datura,” Joy Mahabir

What do you think of Sophie?

“Rhododendrons,” Xu Xi

How does ignorance shape the perception of what it means to be Jewish, or for that matter any minority, visible or otherwise?

“Mosquitos Over Bamako,” Yigal Zur

1. Israel’s security issues go far beyond her actual borders today. For example, Iran. Does Israel have the right to act in faraway lands in the name of security?
2. Past grudges bring up emotions, history, and hidden hatred when people on opposing sides meet. How can we overcome this?

Wishboned, Jill Block

At its core, Wishboned is about aggressive generosity. The grandmothers’ love for Solly, mixed with loneliness and their competitive nature, becomes

less about giving and more about winning, a weapon driven by their own selfishness. What do you think about their motivations?

“The Shabbes Goy,” Craig Faustus Buck

1. The role of women in the traditional Orthodox Jewish family seems incompatible with modern First World expectations of gender equality. What are your thoughts on that? How do you think modern Orthodox women resolve that paradox?
2. The rules of Shabbes are both complex and riddled with exceptions. When ancient rules make little sense in the modern world, how should they be re-interpreted?

“Inheritance,” Terry Shames

I’ve known three 80+ year-old women who were adored by younger men. What do you think attracts young men to much older women? Is it their history, wit, active minds? Or perhaps, their wisdom?

“Brother’s Keeper,” Eileen Rendahl

There are a number of sibling or sibling-like relationships in “Brother’s Keeper.” How much do we owe our siblings? How much do we sacrifice? Where do we draw the line on who we consider a sibling and who we don’t?

“Bride of Torches,” Kenneth Wishnia

What do we do with the legacy of violence in the land of Israel since the biblical era? (Think “shibboleth,” Judges 12:6.)

“Paying the Ferryman,” E. J. Wagner

How much weight should be given to extreme emotional distress in homicide case?

“The Just Men of Bennett Avenue,” A. J. Sidransky

Who is (are) the Just Men of Bennett Avenue? Why?

“Triangle,” Rabbi Eileen Schneider

Is there such a thing as collective guilt?

Questions for the whole collection

1. Why do you think each group of stories was grouped together? What are their themes? Does grouping stories together help the flow of the collection?
2. Not all the authors are Jewish. Is being Jewish a necessary component for writing Jewish Noir? Or why not?
3. After reading the collection, what do you think is the essence of Jewish Noir and are ‘Jewish’ and ‘Noir’ a natural combination?

The Story Behind the Story:

What Inspired My Jewish Noir

Each contributing author was asked the question, “What inspired your Jewish noir story?”. Here are their answers.

“Taking Names,” Steven Wishnia

Our existence in the morass of the 21st-century United States. More specifically, my experiences working as a labor reporter in New York City. I have written a number of stories about both the annual Triangle Fire memorial and the numerous on-the-job deaths of nonunion construction workers. Two plot details are from juicy stories that I was not able to write because few or no people were able to talk on the record.

“The Black and White Cookie,” Jeff Markowitz

I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah in 1965. Although my birthday was in August, my Bar Mitzvah was not scheduled until October because our Rabbi spent his summers working for social justice across the country and around the world. Rabbi and his wife spent the summer of 1965 in Lowndes County, Alabama doing voter registration work with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. The lesson of that summer informs my short story, The Black and White Cookie.

“Datura,” Joy Mahabir

Many ideas came together to inspire this story: finding a way out of an abusive situation, deciding what to take and what to leave behind, and the inevitable reach of the past into the present.

“Rhododendrons,” Xu Xi

My story is based partially on a real incident involving neighbors in my late mother’s Hong Kong apartment building - a mixed race couple, the Japanese wife was known to be a hoarder. A ‘true-life’ factor, the death of Bruce Lee, that did take place in our building. Finally, I considered police procedures involving any death at home in Hong Kong, which was the case for both my parents.

“Mosquitos Over Bamako,” Yigal Zur

In my days as a correspondent in war zones and other troubled areas I have been asked many times: “Are you a Mossad agent?” One time, actually in Bamako, Mali, I was sitting in a bar and having a beer. The bartender was from Lebanon. So, we started a chat. It was friendly, with smiles and jokes. But slowly, as the conversation went deeper, it became clear that we were on opposite sides with past grudges. He became sour and I thought should I pay for my beers and leave or.... Should I shoot the mother fucker!” This story is an homage to the “Killers” by Ernest Hemingway.

“Wishboned,” Jill D. Block

The characters in Wishboned were real to me before I knew their story.. They are made up of bits and pieces of countless people I know and have known in real life. I saw what they looked like, I could hear their voices, I knew what they were thinking. All I had to

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do was plan a bar mitzvah and let them do their thing

“The Shabbes Goy,” Craig Faustus Buck

When I was in high school I had an Orthodox Jewish friend who would set up a schedule for Friday nights. He'd organize his friends to come over at specific times to change the channel on his television--which he would turn on before sundown--so that he could watch the shows he wanted to see. I always thought this arrangement was a bit weird, with the potential for trouble, and I wanted to explore that in my story.

“Inheritance,” Terry Shames

My husband's grandmother was a force of nature. She was always well-dressed. She also always insisted on getting her way, a diva of sorts. She drove my poor mother-in-law crazy. I have a photo of her at a night-club in the 50s, where she was dressed to the nines, looking regal. There's another woman in the photo who looked less sure of herself. I thought, What if those two women were in the same nursing home? Grandma Dora also had a nephew whom she worshipped. He's a really good guy, but in the story, not so good.

“Brother's Keeper,” Eileen Rendahl

I spent seven years working for a private detective agency that specialized in workers' compensation cases. Most of those seven years were spent in the office editing reports. Every morning, we'd have a meeting where our Field Manager would go over what had happened out in the field the day before so we would know what the highlights were that we should emphasize in our reports and videos. We'd also get a bit of a preview of cases that were being worked that day. And, of course, we'd take a look at anything particularly funny/shocking/embarrassing that our detectives caught on tape. There were lots of minor drug deals, the occasional solicitation of a prostitute, public urination, and, um, well, a few other things that people really shouldn't do in public. There's a reason we call those parts private, people! I always wondered, though, what would happen if one of our detectives caught something on tape, something that would look like nothing to most people, but turned out to be something after all. That was where my idea for “Brother's Keeper” began.

“The Almost Sisters,” Ellen Kirschman

Many things inspired my story. Here they are in no particular order. A) After Trump was elected, anti-Semitism was on the rise in the U.S. I could feel danger all around me. B) As a police psychologist my fiction and non-fiction writing often focuses on the hazards of being married to someone who does important work, like police work, making the family

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play second fiddle to the job. I could see this same theme occurring in the fight against anti-Semitism. C) Lastly, I wanted to write something a bit lighter than my current series. The Almost Sisters, Nomi and Sofi, appeared out of nowhere to answer the call.

“Bride of Torches,” Kenneth Wishnia

I’ve always been drawn to stories with strong female protagonists, and the tantalizingly brief biblical narrative of Ya’el has been stuck in my mind since I first read about her in Judges 4-5, a scant four verses that include an astonishing act of violence. I’d always wondered what her motive was since it isn’t spelled out in the source material. Her story is told twice, once in relatively unadorned prose, then more vividly in the Song of Deborah. This poem, and the Song of the Sea, led by Miriam, are believed to be among the oldest texts in the Hebrew Bible. Scholars believe that these two examples of lyric poetry celebrating victory in war, both attributed to women, date from circa 1000 BCE, not too long after the events depicted in the Song of Deborah.

These women must have held pretty important positions among the Israelites. The Torah calls Miriam a prophetess; the text of Judges calls Deborah a chief-tain. Hmm...Something’s been cut from our history.... Something’s missing.... And that’s why I wrote this story.

“Paying the Ferryman,” E.J. Wagner

Having a cup of coffee in a Port Jefferson Long Island pub, very close to the ferry slip, I overheard conversation between two women in booth to my right. They were speaking of a close friend who had carefully cared for by her longtime husband during a serious illness. As the friend grew stronger and recovered, her husband informed her he was glad she was strong enough to hear that he was leaving her for a younger woman. I could hear the ferry just pulling out .. I had my story.

“The Just Men of Bennett Avenue,” A. J. Sidransky

I have been intrigued by the legend of the Lamed-Vov-nicks, the 36 Just Men, since reading *The Last of the Just*, by Andre Schwartz-Bart, when I was thirteen years old. It is one of our most heart-wrenching and heart-warming stories. In every generation there are thirty-six men (I can’t be held responsible for sexism in Jewish texts) who are so pure of heart that God rests the fate of the world on their shoulders. They suffer for us in silence but are always there to defend us. The legend suggests that the Messiah will emerge from among them.

My grandfather, to whom I owe my love and appreciation of our history and culture was a quiet man of deep faith. He lost his entire family in the Shoah. Yet he continued to believe. From the moment I closed

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the cover of *The Last of the Just* I believed he was one of them. This story is for him. Of course, being from Washington Heights in Upper Manhattan, I had to toss in some Dominican stuff and an evil real estate guy.

“Triangle,” Rabbi Eileen Schneider

I was chatting with writer friends about a possible topic for the book and one of them mentioned the Triangle Shirt Waist Company fire. The more I thought about it, the more intrigued I became about the idea and how to bring it into the present.

Recipes

Each author was asked to contribute a recipe to go along with their story. Since Ken Wishnia, both a writer and a comedian, is the man responsible for bringing us all together here for this great anthology, it's only fitting that his recipe go first, and it comes with a story! Here we go!

“Bride of Torches,” Ken Wishnia

I was going to go with my mother's recipe for Oysters Louisiana, which is as follows: “What's the big idea, making fancy oysters? Boil some chicken!” Therefore, I will share a story featuring that most Jewish of delicacies:

When I was 11 years old, my mom was doing research for her Ph.D. in French labor history, so we spent six weeks in Paris. After the sabbatical year we spent in the UK eating cold gravel (if memory serves), the food in Paris was, naturally, amazing. One evening, we went to the Auberge du Vert Galant, a classy restaurant near the Palace of Justice on the western tip of the Ile de la Cité, practically overlooking the statue of the gallant in green himself, Henry IV (1553-1610), a popular king who worked to quell the religious antagonism of the era, and who was assassinated by a Catholic zealot in 1610. Talk about legacies.

So, I order the “Poule au Pot Henri IV,” figuring it's a chicken dish fit for a king, right? That's what it says on the label, anyway. So, it arrives, I take one taste and announce: “Grandma's in the kitchen!” It tastes exactly like Grandma's chicken soup. It's got the carrots, the herbs, the boiled chicken with the skin on, everything, and my parents confirm it. Then they look around the room and chuckle at the sight of tables full of sober-looking judges, dressed in black, discussing law as they tuck into Grandma's chicken soup from Brighton Fifth Street, Brooklyn, third floor, front. My Grandma was thrilled to hear that I thought of her cooking while sitting in a fancy French

restaurant.

Anyway, here are a couple of links to recipes for Poule Au Pot Henri IV. Note *The New York Times* recipe, where one of the first comments as of this writing says that this is the family's go-to recipe for treating a cold. Sound familiar?

<https://www.nouvelle-aquitaine-tourisme.com/en-us/news/traditional-recipe-authentic-poule-au-pot>

<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/851-henri-soules-poule-au-pot>

Incidentally, my dad has never liked boiled chicken, at least within my lifetime. His mother used to call him an “anti-Semite” because of it.

“Taking Names,” Steven Wishnia

Kasha-and-Vegetables Concoction

Stir-fry one chopped-up large onion and about 5 oz. sliced baby portobello mushrooms in olive oil with dill weed. Add 2 to 2-1/2 cups of water and boil. Add 1 cup kasha and around 4 decent-size carrots (cut up) and turn heat down. Simmer until done (15-20 minutes) and let sit for 10 minutes. Season with kosher salt and sour cream. (A brand I like is a Brooklyn Russian one called Smetana Zhidkaya. I'm not sure if the name means “Jewish style” or is an ethnic slur.)

Recipes

“The Cost of Something Priceless,” Elizabeth Zelvin

Moroccan Charoset

Here’s a recipe—given to me by a friend—in honor of my characters, the Mendoza Family, from the 15th century to the present.

Ingredients

1 lb pitted and chopped dates (or dates and other dried fruit, eg apricots, figs, raisins)

1 1/2 cups sweet red Passover wine

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 cup chopped almonds

Put the dried fruit into a pan with the wine and cinnamon. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until it becomes a soft paste. When it has cooled, stir in the chopped almonds.

Note: Recipes give these proportions, but my friend prefers more dates to fewer nuts, so the nuts “just add a bit of crunch.” You can also add 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves; my friend does not. Recipes call for walnuts; she uses almonds. Her version was scrumptious.

“The Black and White Cookie,” Jeff Markowitz

This recipe is, of course, for a black and white cookie.

[How to Make Black and White Cookies | The Noshers
\(myjewishlearning.com\)](https://myjewishlearning.com)

[Why Does This Middling Cookie Endure? | by
Gabriella Gershenson | Heated \(medium.com\)](https://medium.com)

“Mosquitos Over Bamako,” Yigal Zur

Okra Bean Soup

Adapted from *Zainabu’s African Cookbook: With Food and Stories*, by Zainabu Kpaka Kallon (Citadel, 2004)

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef 1 pound black-eyed peas, fresh or canned, rinsed 1 large onion, chopped 2 large fresh tomatoes, chopped 3-4 red hot chili peppers, chopped ground black pepper to taste 2 gloves garlic, crushed salt to taste 2 lb. okra, washed, end removed, and sliced

Put the meat in a large, heavy cooking pot, brown lightly. Add the beans and all the other ingredients except for the okra. Add enough water to cover everything, cover, and bring to a boil. Cook over a reduced heat, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes, then add the okra, and cook over low heat an additional 10 minutes. Serve hot.

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“The Shabbes Goy,” Craig Faustus Buck

Chocolate Rosemary Brisket

Note: The first time I made this I added chocolate/cocoa/rosemary in when I added the broth. It worked out just fine. I added a little more at the end, but I don't think it made much difference. For the trayf version of the recipe, substitute 1/4-1/2 cup of pancetta or bacon.

Ingredients

6 lb. brisket

Vegetable oil (enough to thinly coat bottom of pan)

1 1/2 cup onion; finely chopped

1/4 cup shallots; finely chopped

1/4 cup celery; finely chopped

1/4 cup carrot; peeled

3 clove garlic; minced

2 cup red wine

3 cup chicken broth

2 cup canned diced tomatoes

2 tablespoon parsley; chopped

1 large sprig fresh thyme sprig

1 bay leaf

3 tablespoon bittersweet chocolate; grated or shaved

2 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder; preferably Dutch process

1 teaspoon fresh rosemary; finely chopped

Heat heavy large pot over medium heat. Add oil to pan.

Salt and pepper brisket. When oil begins to shimmer, brown the brisket, turning as needed. Remove.

Add onions, shallots, celery, carrots to pan. Reduce heat and cover until vegies are soft, about 10 minutes.

Uncover pan and add garlic, sauteing until you can smell it.

Add wine and boil down until liquid is reduced by half, scraping up brown bits. Add broth, tomatoes, parsley, thyme, and bay leaf.

Return brisket to pot, cover and simmer 1 1/2 hours.

Remove brisket and allow to cool. Skim or scrape the fat off the top. (This step may not be necessary if you're cooking a flat cut as opposed to a point cut, which has much more fat (and flavor)). Return to pot.

Simmer uncovered until meat is tender, about another 1 1/2 hours.

Transfer meat to platter, discard bay leaf. Boil sauce until beginning to thicken. Reduce heat to medium and add chocolate, cocoa and rosemary. Stir until

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chocolate melts.

At this point you can return the brisket to the pot, reheat and serve. But if you have the time, cool the brisket overnight in the fridge, then slice and nap the sauce between the slices before reheating to serve.

“Inheritance,” Terry Shames

Grandma Dora’s Noodle Kugel

Ingredients:

1/2 lb package medium-wide noodles

Boil noodles 10 minutes, wash in cold water, put into bowl with:

1 quart milk

1 pound cottage cheese

1/2 pint sour cream

2 tsp vanilla

1/2 c. sugar

5 beaten eggs

1/2 box gold raisins

Pour into greased baking dish. Melt 1/4 pound butter and drizzle over the top.

Sprinkle with cinnamon

Bake 1 hour at 350 degrees.

“Brother’s Keeper,” Eileen Rendahl

My mother’s Hamantashen, as featured at South Street Temple, Lincoln, Nebraska

Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter (softened)

1 cup sugar

2 cups flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

2 tablespoons milk

1 teaspoon vanilla

Filling

Cream butter and sugar together until fluffy in the bowl of a stand mixer. Add in egg and mix until incorporated.

Combine flour and baking powder. Add approximately half of the mixture to the butter/sugar/egg combo and mix to combine. Add the milk and then the rest of the flour mixture and finally the vanilla, mixing to combine after each addition.

On a well-floured surface (like really really well-floured), roll out the dough. I recommend flouring the rolling pin as well. Cut into rounds approximately

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3 inches in diameter. There was this one drinking glass in my mother's kitchen that was the perfect size. I've used jar lids and any number of other things in its stead. Place a dollop of filling (we always used strawberry or apricot jam) and then pinch the rounds on three sides to form a triangle.

Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

Take the remaining dough, form it into a ball, roll it out again. Cut out more rounds, fill, and place on the baking sheets. Repeat until there's no dough left.

Bake at 375 degrees for 11 minutes.

“Paying the Ferryman,” E.J. Wagner

Sauteed Sweet Peppers with Saffron Rice

Two cups sliced assorted sweet peppers -red, green, yellow.

Sauté in olive oil with one sliced Vidalia onion and one sliced garlic clove.

Deglaze with dry sherry, then add two sliced Roma tomatoes. Season with julienned basil and sprinkle with cumin.

Serve over saffron rice.

“Triangle,” Rabbi Eileen Schneider

Ingberlach, traditional Lithuanian Ginger-Carrot Candies

Slightly adapted from *The New International Goodwill Recipe Book*, published by the Women's Zionist League of South Africa (1981).

6 cups peeled and grated carrots (from about 2 pounds of carrots)

3 1/2 cups sugar

juice and zest of 1 lemon (or 2 tbsp juice, 2 tsp zest)

juice and zest of 1 orange (or 1/3 cup oj, 2 tbsp zest)

2 teaspoons ginger, or more to taste

Place the carrots and sugar in a medium saucepan set over medium-high heat.

Bring to a boil, then lower heat to medium-low and cook, stirring often, until mixture turns thick and jammy, about 40 minutes.

Stir in the lemon and orange zests and juices, and the ginger, and continue cooking, stirring frequently, until mixture turns very thick and all of the liquid has evaporated, approximately 20 more minutes.

Mist a baking sheet lightly with water, then spoon the carrot mixture on top; gently smooth with a rubber spatula to a 1/2-inch thickness (if candy is sticking to the spatula, wet it with a little water).

Recipes

Allow the candy to set, uncovered, in the fridge, then cut into rectangle or diamond-shapes. Store in an airtight container at room temperature.

Links for Further Study

For additional learning or explanations based on stories in the collection, authors have provided articles that address issues in their stories.

“Taking Names,” Steven Wishnia

<https://www.laborpress.org/remembering-the-triangle-fire-from-generation-to-generation-the-struggle-continues/>

<https://www.laborpress.org/nyc-construction-workers-mourn-father-of-3-killed-on-non-union-job-site/>

“The Black and White Cookie,” Jeff Markowitz

[Freedom Rides \(1961\) • \(blackpast.org\)](#)

[Jews in the Civil Rights Movement | My Jewish Learning](#)

“Datura,” Joy Mahabir

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2001/aug/11/socialsciences.highereducation>

“Mosquitos Over Bamako,” Yigal Zur

<https://www.africom.mil/topic/mali>

<https://strategicassessment.inss.org.il/en/articles/the-security-element-in-israel-africa-relations/>

“The Shabbes Goy,” Craig Faustus Buck

[Shabbat: D-E - Doors, Elevators, Exercise - Halacha L'Maaseh - OU Torah](#)

[Shabbat: F - Food Preparation \(part 1\) - Halacha L'Maaseh - OU Torah](#)

[Shabbat Rest - The Don'ts of Shabbat - Shabbat \(chabad.org\)](#)

[The Myth of the “Shabbos Goy” - Parshat Ki Tisa - Mitzvahs & Traditions \(chabad.org\)](#)

“The Just Men of Bennett Avenue,” A. J. Sidransky

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tzadikim_Nistarim

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/lilith-lady-flying-in-darkness/>

“Triangle,” Rabbi Eileen Schneider

<https://www.famous-trials.com/triangle-fire/964-home>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/no-history-was-not-unfair-to-the-triangle-shirtwaist-factory-owners/2018/12/20/10fb050e-046a-11e9-9122-82e98f91ee6f_story.html

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