




Chic and Casual

Guests glide from the seder table to the buffet.



BY *adeena sussman*

a simply sumptuous *seder*

Why is this night different from all other nights?

For one thing, this mouthwatering menu takes your busy pre-Passover schedule into account, allowing you to prepare elements of the meal in advance. For another, we've done away with the old seder standbys—there's not a piece of gefilte fish in the house

PHOTOGRAPHY BY *colin faulkner*





For many of us, Passover is

the favorite childhood holiday. It's the stuff of songs and stories and traditions surrounding that oh-so-familiar 4,000-year-old tale. But while the ritual is timeless—how often have we heard the Four Questions and sung “Dayenu”?—the seder is actually a celebration of the new. It falls at the beginning of spring, so comes with the promise of seasonal change. The narration recounts a new beginning for our people. True, we wandered for 40 years in the desert, but once we arrived, we were born anew in Israel. In keeping with this spirit, we offer some fresh twists on the conventional seder meal. Conducted in a modern, art-filled home in Forest Hill, one of Toronto's tonier Jewish enclaves, the goal was to create contemporary versions of many Pesach staples, such as brisket, haroset, even matzo ball soup. We hope our stylish seder will be the beginning of some new traditions at your table.



planning ahead

TWO DAYS AHEAD

- Steam quinoa for salad
- Make cookies
- Make Sephardic haroset
- Make chicken soup

ONE DAY AHEAD

- Make brisket
- Microwave sweet potatoes
- Make hazelnut haroset
- Begin poached pears
- Shred chicken for soup

DAY OF SEDER

- Reduce sauce for pears and chill
- Roast onions
- Finish quinoa salad
- Make matzo ball gnocchi
- Finish sauce for brisket
- Whip sweet potatoes



All Hail
Guests throw balls of hail into the air during the repetition of the 10 Plagues.



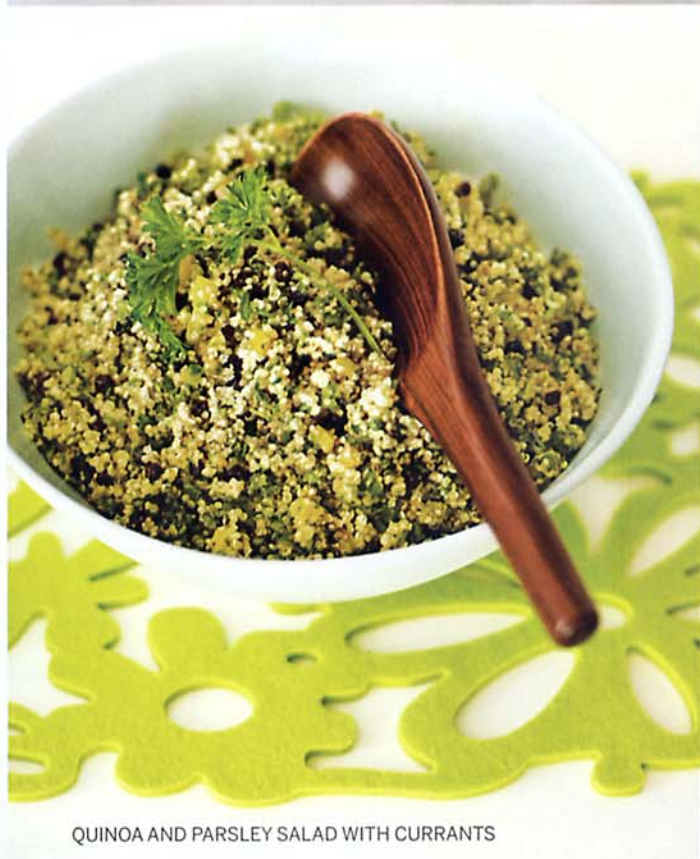
menu • dried apple and toasted hazelnut haroset
sephardic haroset • dill-infused chicken soup with herbed matzo ball "gnocchi"
horseradish-crusted salmon with roasted brussels sprouts • brown sugar and chile braised brisket
honey-whipped sweet potatoes • thyme-roasted vidalia onions
quinoa and parsley salad with currants • red wine poached pears • chocolate wafer cookies



HORSERADISH-CRUSTED SALMON
WITH ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS



DILL-INFUSED CHICKEN SOUP
WITH HERBED MATZO BALL "GNOCCHI"



QUINOA AND PARSLEY SALAD WITH CURRANTS



a word about QUINOA

Quinoa, with its grainlike tendencies, seems like a guilty Passover pleasure. Cultivated for thousands of years in Peru but brought stateside only about 20 years ago, quinoa is actually a member of the beet family and is therefore permissible for all Jews during this holiday, as long as the grain is purchased in its pure form and not in a pilaf mix or ground into flour.

the seder plate: WHAT'S WHAT

EGG

Often roasted and presented brown on the seder plate (but not eaten), the egg represents a sacrifice brought to the Holy Temple. Eggs are a food symbolic of mourning and are thought to represent sorrow over the destruction of the temple. Eggs also represent fertility and the promise of spring, and their roundness echoes the ongoing cycle of the Jewish calendar.

VEGETABLE

Typically parsley (or sometimes potatoes) dipped into salt water, the *karpas* is meant to remind us of springtime. The accompanying salt water represents the tears cried by the Jewish slaves.

HAROSET

Typically made with apples and nuts by Ashkenazi Jews, or incorporating dates and honey by Sephardic Jews, *haroset* represents the mortar Jewish slaves used to build structures for their Egyptian masters.

(*Karpas*)

(*Beitzah*)

(*Maror*)

(*Zeroa*)

MATZO

This flat bread symbolizes the rush with which the Jewish people fled Egypt. They were so hurried that they did not have time to properly leaven their bread. Therefore we eat flat, unleavened matzo.

BITTER HERBS

Typically the root of a horseradish plant, the *maror* symbolizes the bitterness experienced by the Jewish people during their slavery in Egypt. Some families use romaine lettuce.

SHANKBONE

Symbolizing the sacrifice of a Paschal Lamb brought to the Holy Temple in ancient times, the shankbone is roasted for the seder plate.



wine pairings FOR PASSOVER

The richness of the salmon begs for a wine with assertive acidity, and the dish's woody flavor accent dictates an off-dry wine with limited oakiness. Try **Tishbi 2006 Chenin Blanc** (\$11).

To offset the spice and highlight the savory elements of the brisket, opt for a dry wine that projects some serious fruit, such as **Herzog Special Reserve Cabernet, Zinfandel, or Syrah** (\$34).

The perfect foil for the warm spices and deep chocolate flavors that dominate our dessert? A refreshing, palate-brightening sparkling wine from Italy. Try **Bartenura's Asti Spumante** (\$15).
—A.S.

Dried Apple and Toasted Hazelnut Haroset

MAKES 2 CUPS

Bartenura makes a kosher-for-Passover hazelnut liqueur.

PREP TIME 10 MINUTES

- 20 dried apple rings
- 1 cup lightly toasted hazelnuts, brown skins removed
- ¼ cup hazelnut liqueur
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

Place apple rings and hazelnuts in a food processor and pulse until fine but not pasty, about 1 minute. Remove to a bowl and add liqueur, honey, lemon juice, and zest, and stir to combine.

Sephardic Haroset

MAKES 2 CUPS

PREP TIME 10 MINUTES

- 10 pitted Medjool dates
- 1 large banana
- ½ cup golden raisins
- ½ cup walnut halves, toasted
- ½ cup unsalted, shelled pistachios, toasted, plus more for garnish

- ¼ cup unsweetened shredded dried coconut, plus more for garnish
- ⅓ cup sweet red wine, such as Manischewitz Malaga
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves

Place dates, banana, raisins, and wine in food processor and process until smooth, about 20 seconds. Add walnuts, pistachios, coconut, and spices and continue processing until smooth, another 15–20 seconds. Transfer to a bowl and garnish with coconut and chopped pistachios.

Dill-Infused Chicken Soup With Herbed Matzo Ball "Gnocchi"

MAKES 7 QUARTS OF SOUP

AND 50 GNOCCHI

The fluffy emerald dumplings in this elegant soup are a far cry from the "sinkers" of yore.

PREP TIME 45 MINUTES

COOK TIME 2¼ HOURS

CHILL TIME 8 HOURS

FOR THE SOUP

- 1 4-pound chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 pound chicken wings
- 6 large celery stalks, trimmed
- 6 large or 8 medium carrots (about 2 pounds), peeled and trimmed
- 1 bunch leeks, green parts removed, whites cleaned carefully
- 2 parsnips (about ¾ pound), trimmed
- 1 turnip, peeled
- 1 bunch dill, tied into a bunch with kitchen twine
- 1½ tablespoons salt

FOR THE "GNOCCHI"

- 4 cups (2 ounces) spinach leaves
- ¼ cup flat-leaf parsley leaves
- ¼ cup dill sprigs
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup matzo meal

1. FOR THE SOUP: Rinse chicken parts and tie into a bundle in a triple layer of cheesecloth. Place in an 8- to 10-quart stockpot and cover with water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a vigorous simmer, and cook 10 minutes, skimming foam and scum from top of soup as it cooks.
2. Add celery, carrots, leeks, parsnips, and turnip to pot. Fill pot with cold water, leaving 2 inches at top. Bring soup back to a boil, and skim an additional 5 minutes. Reduce to a simmer, place tied dill on top of soup, cover with lid, and cook soup until broth is a light golden color, 2–3 hours.
3. Uncover soup and discard dill. Remove chicken parts in cheesecloth, place in a bowl, and drain liquid back into soup pot. Strain broth, reserving vegetables and broth in separate containers. Chill broth 8 hours or overnight. Let chicken come to room temperature.
4. Open cheesecloth and discard wings and all chicken skin. Remove meat from bones, discard bones, and shred chicken for soup. Refrigerate until ready to serve. When ready to serve soup, remove fat from top of broth and reheat over medium heat. Slice vegetables, discarding any that are too mushy. Reheat vegetables and chicken in broth for about 10 minutes.
5. FOR THE "GNOCCHI": Place spinach, parsley, and dill in a food processor and process until very finely minced and almost liquefied, scraping down sides of processor once if necessary, about 20–30 seconds. Add eggs and oil; process until all ingredients are combined,



BROWN SUGAR AND CHILE BRAISED BRISKET, HONEY-WHIPPED SWEET POTATOES, AND THYME-ROASTED VIDALIA ONIONS

about 30 seconds. Remove mixture to a bowl and add salt and matzo meal; stir until all ingredients are incorporated, then chill in refrigerator, covered, about 20 minutes.

6. Using lightly moistened hands, take 1 tablespoon mixture at a time and roll into 3-inch-by-½-inch logs. Using a bench scraper or a knife, cut logs into 1-inch lengths. Bring 1 large pot of salted water to a boil. Working in three batches, lower "gnocchi" into water. Return water to a boil, reduce heat to a vigorous simmer, and cook until gnocchi are tender and cooked through, 13–15 minutes. Remove from water using a slotted spoon.

7. To serve, ladle soup and vegetables into bowls and float 5–6 gnocchi on top.

Horseradish-Crusted Salmon With Roasted Brussels Sprouts

SERVES 8 (APPETIZER PORTIONS)

Serve in lieu of gefilte fish. If you don't have a cedar plank, roast salmon in a lightly oiled baking dish.

PREP TIME 20 MINUTES

COOK TIME 20–35 MINUTES

FOR SALMON

- 1 1¼-pound center-cut salmon fillet, 1½ inches thick, skin on, pin bones removed
- 1 cedar plank, soaked for 30 minutes in water
- 1½ tablespoons prepared white horseradish, squeezed of excess juice
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper

FOR BRUSSELS SPROUTS

- 1½ pounds Brussels sprouts, cleaned and quartered
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 16 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced in half

1. Heat oven to 400°F. Combine horseradish, olive oil, salt, and pepper and rub onto salmon.

2. Combine Brussels sprouts with olive oil, salt, pepper, and garlic on a baking sheet. Toss well.

3. Ten minutes before baking, place cedar plank directly onto rack in top third of oven and close door. After 10 minutes, place salmon, skin down, directly onto cedar plank and place the Brussels sprouts on a lower rack. Bake until salmon is just cooked through, Brussels sprouts are browned, and garlic cloves are softened, about 20 minutes.

4. Divide roasted sprouts among 8 appetizer plates. Cut salmon into 8 pieces and top Brussels sprouts with salmon. Serve warm.

Brown Sugar and Chile Braised Brisket

SERVES 8

You can use Anaheim chiles or, if you prefer a smokier flavor, Anchos.

PREP TIME 40 MINUTES, PLUS COOLING

COOK TIME 3 HOURS

CHILL TIME 8 HOURS

- 1 5- to 5½-pound first-cut brisket
- 2 teaspoons salt, divided
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 2 cups beef broth or stock
- 1 15-ounce can tomato sauce, or 2 cups strained tomatoes
- ½ cup brown sugar, plus 1 tablespoon
- 6 large shallots (6 ounces), sliced
- 4 whole garlic cloves
- 2 dried chile peppers
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Pat brisket dry and sprinkle with 1½ teaspoons of the salt and the pepper. Heat oil in a roasting pan set over 2 burners until very hot but not smoking. Sear brisket on both sides until a brown crust has formed, about 5 minutes per side.

2. While brisket is searing, combine beef stock, tomato sauce, ½ cup of the brown sugar, shallots, garlic, dried chiles, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and keep warm. Discard all but 2 tablespoons oil from roasting pan, then pour sauce over brisket. Cover tightly with heavy-duty aluminum foil and place in oven. Braise until brisket is very tender, about three hours.

3. Remove from oven, loosen foil, and cool for 2 hours. Reseal foil and place in refrigerator for at least 8 hours. Remove



RED WINE
POACHED
PEARS WITH
CHOCOLATE
WAFER
COOKIES

brisket from refrigerator and spoon off any solidified fat.

4. To serve: Heat oven to 350°F. Transfer brisket to a separate dish, cover with foil and warm, about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, place roasting pan over two burners at medium-high heat. Stir in vinegar and remaining tablespoon brown sugar. Lower heat and simmer until sauce has reduced and thickened slightly, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes (makes about 1½ cups gravy). Discard chiles and any large pieces of garlic or shallots. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Slice brisket across the grain into ¼-inch-thick slices. Serve with gravy.

Honey-Whipped Sweet Potatoes

SERVES 8

PREP TIME 5 MINUTES, PLUS COOLING

COOK TIME 15–25 MINUTES

- 4 large or 6 medium sweet potatoes (about 4½ pounds)
- 2 tablespoons to ½ cup hot chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ½ teaspoon salt

1. Pierce sweet potatoes several times with a fork and wrap in slightly moistened paper towels. Microwave on high according to microwave instructions until potatoes are tender, about 15–25

(Continued on page 94)

A SIMPLY SUMPTUOUS SEDER

(Continued from page 65)

minutes, being careful not to overcook. Cool until potatoes are easy to handle, about 30 minutes; remove skin from sweet potatoes and discard.

2. Place potatoes in a large bowl and add 2 tablespoons chicken broth, olive oil, honey, and salt, and whip with a hand mixer until fluffy, about 45 seconds to 1 minute, adding more stock as necessary. Serve with brisket and gravy.

Thyme-Roasted Vidalia Onions

SERVES 8

Sweet onions vary widely in size. Vidalias tend to be larger than Mauis.

PREP TIME 10 MINUTES, PLUS COOLING

COOK TIME 1 HOUR

- 6 pounds of large sweet onions, such as Vidalia or Maui
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 bunch thyme sprigs

1. Heat oven to 425°F. Peel onions and slice into 1/2-inch-thick rounds. Arrange on cookie sheets in a single layer and brush with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Flip onions and repeat.

2. Cook onions until undersides are browned and slightly caramelized, about 35–40 minutes. Turn onions over and brush with olive oil. Roast an additional 15–20 minutes, then place one or two thyme sprigs on top of each onion. Return to oven for an additional 12–18 minutes, watching to ensure that onions don't burn. Remove from oven and let cool 15–20 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Quinoa and Parsley Salad With Currants

SERVES 8

Why is this "grain" different from all other grains? See page 60 to find out!

PREP TIME 12 MINUTES

COOK TIME 15–18 MINUTES

- 2 cups quinoa
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 cup olive oil

- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, plus more for seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper, plus more for seasoning
- 3 cups curly parsley leaves, rinsed, dried, and very roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup dried currants
- 1 yellow or orange pepper, seeded and finely diced

1. Rinse quinoa in cold water three times, draining completely. Place 3 cups water in a medium saucepan and add quinoa and 1 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil, cover tightly, and simmer until liquid is absorbed, about 15–18 minutes. Remove lid, let rest 5 minutes, fluff with a fork, and let cool.

2. Meanwhile, whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, sugar, lemon zest, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and pepper in a bowl. Add to quinoa along with parsley, currants, and diced bell pepper. Toss to combine, then season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Red Wine Poached Pears

SERVES 8

Use a zester, a vegetable peeler, or a sharp knife to zest citrus fruit, avoiding the bitter white pith.

PREP TIME 15 MINUTES, PLUS COOLING

COOK TIME 40 MINUTES

- 8 firm but ripe Bosc pears, stems intact
- 1 bottle dry red wine, such as a California zinfandel
- 2 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 cup orange juice
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 4 strips orange zest
- 2 strips lemon zest
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 5 cloves

1. Cut a piece of parchment paper into a circle to fit the top of a wide, high-sided saucepan or stockpot. Reserve. Peel pears, then slice 1/2 inch off bottom of each pear so they stand upright.

2. Place the remaining ingredients in saucepan and heat over medium heat,

stirring, until sugar is dissolved.

3. Place pears, standing up, in liquid, bring to a boil, and reduce heat to a vigorous simmer. Cover pears with parchment paper, cover pot, and cook pears until tender, about 25 minutes, turning as necessary to ensure even cooking.

4. Remove pears from pan. Strain the poaching liquid, return it to the pan, bring to a boil, and cook until liquid is syrupy, 15–25 minutes. Cool syrup. To serve, spoon about 3 tablespoons in a shallow bowl or on a dessert plate and place pear in center. Serve with Chocolate Wafer Cookies (below).

Chocolate Wafer Cookies

MAKES ABOUT 40 COOKIES

PREP TIME 30 MINUTES, PLUS CHILLING

COOK TIME 13 MINUTES

- 1/2 cup matzo cake meal
- 1/2 cup potato starch
- 2 tablespoons cocoa
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 1/2 stick (4 tablespoons) margarine
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Line 2 cookie sheets with parchment paper.

2. Combine and sift cake meal, potato starch, cocoa, and salt into a small bowl.

3. Combine chocolate and margarine in a microwavable bowl and microwave on medium until chocolate is melted, about 2 minutes. Remove from microwave and stir until smooth.

4. Add sugar and dry-ingredient mixture to chocolate and stir until combined. Add egg and vanilla and mix until combined; mixture should form a firm dough. If dough doesn't hold together, add water 1 tablespoon at a time. Refrigerate for 15 minutes.

5. Roll dough one teaspoon at a time between lightly oiled hands and place, 4 inches apart, on lined cookie sheets. Using the palm of your hand, flatten dough into thin discs about 3 inches in diameter. Bake for 13 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool on parchment until hard, then remove to racks and let cool completely. ●