

Kashrut With Chopsticks

by Rachel Ann Rabinowitz

"FIVE yarmulka'd yeshiva 'bachurim' eating Chinese food with chopsticks!" exclaimed an after-theatre diner in awe-stricken appreciation. "Why, this is simply hilarious. It's better than the show!"

It was a justifiable, if rather extreme, reaction. New York is, after all, a city simmering with gastronomic paradox, a city where "kosher-style" means non-kosher and "trefa"-selling butchers close for the Holy-days wishing their patrons a happy, but presumably unkosher, New Year. So it comes only as a mild surprise to find Chinese kreplach rubbing corners with Rumanian karnatzlach, while moo-goo-gai-pen (slices of breast of chicken cooked with black Chinese mushrooms, sweet snow peas, ripe tomatoes, water chestnuts, bamboo shoots, and bok tsoy, topped with toasted almonds, truly fit for an emperor) star with steak kow, egg foo yung, chow gai kow, fried wontons, chow mein yung, and lo mein Bernstein, on the menu of a restaurant so kosher that it is supervised by two rabbis.

In culinary and cosmography defying terms, Shanghai hits the Stuffed Derma Road at Bernstein's on Essex Street, in Manhattan's Lower East Side, where "West Meets East for a Chinese Feast, and Kashrut is Guaranteed." But how, in the name of Moses and Fu Man-Chu, was this anomalous smorgasbord ever concocted?

"We used to run a regular kosher restaurant and we got the Orthodox young set. I looked at these kids and I was sorry for them," reminisced the un-mandarin-like manager, as we manoeuvred our way through the Sunday shoppers packing the pavements of Rivington Street.

The reason for this mobile mode of interviewing was symbolic enough. As I had stepped into the restaurant, David Garfein had stepped out, and he invited me to accompany him round the corner to the little store of Rabbi ("world's best talis") Lipschutz, where he bought black yarmulkas at 85 cents a dozen and the rabbi-retailer delivered a drosha to a customer complaining about a recently purchased shofar. "The Gemara says that blowing the shofar is not a 'melacha' but a 'chochma', sermonized the storekeeper after a few triumphant 'tekiot.' It does not require strength, but merely 'seichel', sense. There is nothing wanting in the shofar. Maybe there is something wanting in the Baal Tefillah . . . ?"

Slightly derailed from my original line of questioning, I returned to the eaten track and once more pursued my quarry down Rivington Street. This time I managed to find out why he was sorry for his young kashrut-observing clientele. "Just because they were decent and observant and God-fearing and firm in their religious convictions, they were stymied in their efforts to go out to dine in any interesting place and they always had to eat the same garbage. Why shouldn't the Orthodox youngsters have excitement in food?"

On this hot, high note, we entered the delicatessen and passed rapidly from rhetoric to reality. Garfein had trifled with the idea of Italian cuisine, but even theoretically this was

a wash-out. Cheese and meat are integral to many popular Italian dishes. Chinese food, however, seemed to offer an excellent and permissible potential, owing much of its exotism to vegetables. "Chinese-essen' in a kosher restaurant? Bah! How would it look!" was proprietor Solomon

younger folk, in particular, took to chopsticks like sour cream to blintzes, if one may mix a "milchig" metaphor.

Among the customers for this Chinese cheer enough, Chinese Jews, Orthodox Sephardim, whose parents emigrated from Shanghai to Syria. "When they explained that they eat rice in their own homes instead of bread, I couldn't work out how they made 'motze'." But the explanation was simple. "First we make 'motze' over bread, then we eat rice."

Two Chinese chefs, real Chinamen, are supported by a lady cook who cooks up traditional Jewish delicacies, such as combination sandwiches called Schmulka's Choice, Bronx Special, Shlomie's Favorite, Delancy Delight, Williamsburg Extra . . . lavish layerings of pastrami (or salami or chicken livers), dripping with the chicken fat of the land.

So traditionalists can relax. Chow is not replacing cholent. Nor is kow displacing kugel. But plans for expansion of packaged food on an international scale set me pondering on possibilities. If, for instance, England were to import from the "New World" how about putting in an early order for quick-frozen leviathan as a form of pre-Messianic hors d'oeuvre?

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A Middle East Commonwealth

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this to be the official attitude, and certainly not the UAR ruler's opinion. Nevertheless, it is our duty to initiate a new scheme, which though not intended as a final settlement could nevertheless reinforce the old dilapidated armistice agreements by providing for a more effective arrangement.

We have to strive for the replacement of the armistice agreements or their reinforcement by a non-aggression pact. If we could rule out the possibility of a surprise attack we could rule out the possibility of a renewed large-scale war. A non-aggression pact, which would include (a) ending the technical state of war; (b) practical provisions aiming at the reduction and control of armaments; (c) inspection of strategic key-bases by mixed units of observers; and (d) the establishment of direct and permanent contact, not necessarily diplomatic, between the parties in order to iron out on the spot any misunderstandings.

In principle, it could be argued, there is no difference between an armistice agreement and a non-aggression pact. But the proposed new arrangement would be more effective inasmuch as readiness to subscribe to it would serve as a test case distinguishing the warmonger from the peace-lover. We should appeal to the Arab masses in every possible way. Some may listen. Our campaign for peace should be conducted vigorously and consistently, without the fear that it could be interpreted as a sign of weakness. It should be directed to all who are anxious to see peace in the Middle East.

A Wedding Was Arranged . . .

by Lionel Simmonds

I HAD it all figured out: the chazan, the choir, the minister the synagogue, the floral decor, the hall, the caterer. There was only one small detail to be fixed — the bride.

"Why put the cart before the horse?" my friends would jeer at me. "Take a leaf out of our book. Why all the trimmings? It's the end-product that counts. Look at ours."

I often looked, but remained unconvinced. Why should the most momentous day in one's life be such a drab affair? And as for the "end-product," mine would be much more appealing, because I had the means, or at any rate the know-how, to accomplish the means.

First, the chazan. For years I had scoured the London area during the "chuppa" seasons, not so much with a roving eye on the bridal party, but with a discerning ear to the proceedings.

Glass-breaking, wine-sipping, and the tears of joy, sometimes of relief, when the bride was given away, were, for me, mere incidentals. I concentrated principally on the rendering of the chazan's Sheva Brochos.

You may say: "What chazan worth his salt can't do a good Sheva Brochos?"

Unfortunately I had to hear many desalinated renderings of the sevenfold blessings before I found the Wunder Chazan, who, I was sure, could do me proud. One who combined "hitlahavut" with rich tonal quality and impeccable chazanut; one whose performance was not mechanical, but devotional.

He would, of course, have to be matched by a first-class choir, one, initially, which sang, not shouted, Ma Tov. To me, Ma Tov bellowers were a constant irritant. How often have "Thy Goodly Tents, oh Israel," been blown down by Ma Tov bullies?

However, an intensive search at last yielded a choir which could judiciously blend strength with sweetness.

The minister, the "chuppa" keyman if not the kingpin, was an even greater problem. It was essential that his derasha should not fall on deaf ears, that his sweet doctrine and words of wisdom, clearly enunciated, should not only burn with conviction but also leave a lasting impression. What sort of preacher would fill the bill? Not one who was verbose, not an accomplished tear-jerker, not a clever-clever type, cryptic and casuistic, not a Savonarola thundering imprecations at the lax, not an ineffectual word-driveller, whose discourse would water down the wine of "Chuppa Kiddushin."

I wanted a warm, friendly, intelligent sermonizer, who would say something fresh and inspiring. The search was long, but I tracked down the man.

I brushed aside the remonstrations of my poverty-stricken friends that a farmed affair in a sumptuous banquet hall with a Wunder Caterer was both ostentatious and costly, reasoning that it was essential to do merciless justice to the celebrants' appetites. Good food and wine would enable them the better to digest the well-merited laudatory effusions accorded the bride and bridegroom. With my customary thoroughness I had prepared a verbal feast for my guests, brimming with apposite Talmudic quotations and sedulously compiled with the aid of the Masonic speechmakers' handbook, Hazlitt's "Table Talk," and A. A. Green's Anecdotes. And since I was due to bat last I was sure to knock 'em for six.

This was all long ago. The war came to shatter my dreams and illusions. The Wunder Chazan received a "call" to the Dos Passos congregation in New Mexico; the minister, a "call" to the Fundamental-Creative community in Laputa, and the choir were broken up after another "call" — to the Armed Forces.

The banquet hall was bombed out, the Wunder Caterer went mechula. All was lost . . . but not quite all. The bride arrived, and, happily, came to stay.

Bernstein's first freezer-cool response. Still, a man cannot live on breaded cutlets alone. Competition is sharp as horseradish in this epicure's eden of miltz and honey. Needled by the need for novelty, Bernstein finally agreed to experiment with esculent orientalia, and the innovation was literally gobbled up by enthusiastic patrons. The

from the peace-lover. We should appeal to the Arab masses in every possible way. Some may listen. Our campaign for peace should be conducted vigorously and consistently, without the fear that it could be interpreted as a sign of weakness. It should be directed to all who are anxious to see peace in the Middle East.

THE NEW JEWISH STEREOTYPES

by Philip Roth

From AMERICAN JUDAISM, official publication of Union of American Hebrew Congregations

I FIND myself living in a country and in a time in which the Jew has come to be—or is allowed to think he is—a cultural hero. Only recently I heard on the radio a disc-jockey introducing the theme song from the movie, *Exodus*. The words were to be sung by Pat Boone. The disc-jockey made it clear that this was "the only authorized version of the song." Authorized by what? For whom? Why? No further word from the radio. Only a silence drenched in piety, and then Mr. Boone, singing out of something less than a whirlwind—

This land is mine,
God gave this land to me!

I do not know whether I am moving up or down the cultural ladder, or simply sideways, when I recall that there has been the song "Exodus," preceded by the movie, *Exodus*, preceded by the novel, *Exodus*. There does not seem to be much doubt that the image of the Jew as patriot, warrior, and hero is rather satisfying to a large segment of the American public.

In an interview in the *New York Post*, Leon Uris, the author of the novel, claims that his image of the Jewish fighter is a good deal closer to the truth about the Jew than the image presented of him by other Jewish writers. I take it, by the way, that I am one of those writers to whom Mr. Uris is referring—the *Post* clipping was mailed to me by a woman demanding some explanation or apology for "the anti-Semitism and self-hatred" that she saw revealed in a collection of short fiction of mine that had just been published. What Uris told his interviewer, Joseph Wershba, was this:

There is a whole school of Jewish American writers, who spend their time damning their fathers, hating their mothers, wringing their hands and wondering why they were born. This isn't art or literature. It's psychiatry. These writers are professional apologists. Every year you find one of their [sic!] works on the best seller lists. . . . Their work is obnoxious and makes me sick to my stomach.

I wrote *Exodus* because I was just sick of apologizing—or feeling that it was necessary to apologize. The Jewish community of this country has contributed far more greatly than its numbers—in art, medicine, and especially literature.

I set out to tell a story of Israel. I am definitely biased. I am definitely pro-Jewish. An author goes through everything his readers do. It was a revelation to me, too, when

Philip Roth is one of America's most distinguished and widely discussed young authors. His short story collection, "Good-Bye Columbus," was fiction winner in the National Book Awards and has won many other laurels. His stories on Jewish themes have stirred acclaim and controversy. Random House will publish his new novel this spring. "The New Jewish Stereotypes" was adapted from a lecture delivered at a symposium on "The Images and Minds of Man" sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and Loyola University.



Illustrated by Rudolph Carrasco

I was researching *Exodus* in Europe and in Israel. And the revelation was this: that we Jews are not what we have been portrayed to be. In truth, we have been fighters.

"In truth, we have been fighters." So bald and stupid and uninformed is the statement that it is not even worthy of dispute. One has the feeling that, single-handed, Mr. Uris has set out to counter with his new image of the Jew, an older one that makes him nervous and mad—the one that comes down to us in those several stories, the punch line of which is, "Play nice, Jackie—don't fight." However, there is really not much value in setting oneself the task of swapping one stereotype for another. What I should hope Mr. Uris will do, when he does not happen to be having revelations by way of "researching" novels, is to read a new book called *Dawn*, by Eli Wiesel.

Mr. Wiesel is not an American-Jewish writer; he is a Hungarian, now living in New York, and his first book, *Night*, was an autobiographical account of his experiences as a fifteen-year-old boy in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, those concentration camps, he writes, which "consumed my faith forever . . . murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust." *Dawn*, the second book, has for a background the Jewish terrorist activities in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel. The hero of the book is assigned the task of executing a British major who has been taken hostage by the Jewish terrorists; the novel deals with the hours the hero

spends just prior to the execution. . . . I should like to tell Mr. Uris that Wiesel's hero is not so proud to discover himself in the role of a fighter, nor is he able to find justification for himself in some traditional Jewish association with pugnacity or bloodletting. But actually however, it turns out that there is really no need for me to tell Mr. Uris anything; if we can believe a news item that we find in *Time* magazine, Mr. Uris apparently knows a good deal more than he lets on to the *New York Post*.

In Manhattan [*Time* reports]

. . . Captain Yehiel Aronowicz, 37, . . . one-time master of the blockade-running Israeli refugee ship "Exodus," reported some reservations back home about the best selling (4,000,000 copies to date) novel inspired by his 1947 heroics. "Israelis," he said, "were pretty disappointed in the book, to put it lightly. The types that are described in it never existed in Israel. The novel is neither history nor literature." . . . In Encino, California, *Exodus*' author Leon Uris rebutted: "You may quote me as saying, 'Captain Who?' and that's all I have to say. I'm not going to pick on a lightweight. Just look at my sales figures."

Certainly, it is unsafe to indict a man on the basis of what *Time* quotes him as having said; it may even be *Time*'s pleasure to titillate its readers with still another Jewish stereotype, the Fagan, the Shylock, who will sell anything, his

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