

cookbooks that were stored in the museum's temperature-controlled rare book room.

Museum materials about food give us "contextual background and information about the people that we are studying and researching," says Aaron T. Kornblum, archivist for the Western Jewish History Center and acting librarian at the Magnes Museum's Blumenthal Library. Kornblum tends to these printed culinary heirlooms—preserving, describing, cataloging and indexing so that they might be shared with the public and university community, onsite and eventually on the Internet.

Among the library holdings rests a copy of the first Jewish cookbook printed in the United States, an 1871 hardcover entitled, "The Jewish Cookery Book on Principles of Economy Adapted for Jewish Housekeepers." Another book is an edition of the first Jewish cookbook printed in English. Published in London, England in 1846, the "Jewish Manual or Practical Information in Jewish and Modern Cookery" is "edited by a lady." These rare books are in very good condition and form an illustrative history of printed books spanning from 1846 to 1937. "Kockbuck fur die Judische Kuke" (Cookbook for the Jewish Cook), published in Berlin, is perhaps the last such book published in Germany before Kristallnacht, Crystal Night, the Night of Broken Glass, in 1938.

Also in the collection is a 1906 edition of "Aunt Babette's Cookbook" by Bertha F. Kramer, originally published in 1889 in Ohio. This instructional guide for young homemakers is a comprehensive and highly detailed compilation of recipes and helpful tips to keep the home operating as efficiently as the man's business. Intended for Bertha's daughters and granddaughters, this cookbook contains heirloom information on preparing all meals and running the household.

The wife's duties are noble. "Health relies on properly selected and prepared food made palatable." Nothing goes unused in Babette's kitchen. "Food improperly prepared is a waste." Aunt Babette's collection of recipes is wide in scope, yet also includes proper advice on servants, marketing, work, dishwashing, and preserving lunches for travel and picnics. The recipe for cleaning cream is truly an artifact of 1889 as it involves an intricate mixture of ether, alcohol, ammonia, glycerin and white Castile soap, finely chopped and then softened in heated water. A recipe for a lifetime, Babette guarantees, "this will last forever."

Another homemade remedy is a flaxseed lemonade, offered as an "excellent remedy for coughs." Made by steeping five tablespoons of whole flaxseed in one quart of warm water and juice of three lemons, it thickens in three hours, after which it is strained, sweetened to taste, and chilled with ice.

One chapter, entitled "Easter," turns out to contain special recipes and table settings for Pesach, the Passover supper celebrating the Jewish exodus from slavery in Egypt thousands of years ago. Passover-safe recipes for cakes, puddings and sauces

follow the religious laws of Judaism and the time-honored food traditions maintained on this holiday. Exotic and tempting recipes include matzo kugel, mandlebrot, chrimsel fried in goose oil, and an apple Charlotte made with matzo.

As the Judah L. Magnes Museum offers us these opportunities to study the customs of food preparation from the Jewish perspective, we are reminded that our identities and cultural sensibilities are interwoven with our food heritage. This heritage is an imprint in any given society, an interactive pattern that provides both nourishment and a spiritual guide through the ages.

AUNT BABETTE'S APPLE CHARLOTTE

Matzo
½ lb fine suet
6 apples thinly sliced
Sugar
Raisins
Cinnamon
Almonds
Yolks of 7 eggs
Whites beaten

Bake one hour.

Note: What Aunt Babette assumes we would know is that the matzos should be soaked and then squeezed of excess water. The egg yolks should be mixed with the sugar and cinnamon, and then the suet, matzos, raisins, almonds and apples are mixed in. The beaten egg whites would be folded into the mixture before it is placed in a baking dish and baked for 1 hour at 325 degrees

Suet is raw, uncooked, beef or mutton fat, especially the hard fat found around the loins and kidneys. It melts at about 70°F. The primary use of suet is to make tallow in a process called rendering, which involves melting and extended simmering, followed by straining and cooling. You might substitute butter in this recipe, however, the dish would no longer be kosher for Passover.

