

## Passover Cooking

Trevor Toubé

Some of you will know that my late wife, Sharlott, wrote a regular cookery column for the Essex Jewish News, which was distributed with the Jewish Chronicle. I thought I would share some of her favourite Passover recipes with you.



### Sfongo And Minas

Many dairy main courses can be made by adding to onions and potatoes some of the following ingredients: spinach, egg, cheese, or cottage cheese. The recipes which follow will serve six.

*Sfongo*, the Turkish spinach and potato pie served at Passover, is created by preparing a top and bottom crust of 2 lb [1kg] potatoes, boiled, peeled and mashed with:

- 1 - 2 oz [30 - 60g] butter
- 4 fl oz [125ml] milk
- 2 beaten eggs
- 4 oz [100g] grated cheese
- salt and pepper to taste.

Place half the mixture in a well-buttered baking dish and fill with 1½ lb [750g] spinach sautéed in:

- 2 tbsps olive oil
- 1 minced clove of garlic
- a pinch of nutmeg
- salt and pepper.

Cover with the remaining potato and bake for about 40 minutes at 200°C [400°F] until light brown.

The simplest potato *minas* is made with:

- ½ pint [200ml] hot oil (really!)
- 6 *matzot*
- 2lb [1kg] onion (or half onion, half leek)
- 1lb [500g] mashed potato
- 6 oz [170g] grated cheese
- 6 beaten eggs.

Grease a baking pan with half the oil and line with three of the *matzot*, soaked first in water until pliable. Fill with the mashed potato (seasoned with salt and pepper, onions (and leeks), 4 oz [110g] of the grated cheese and about 2 tablespoons of chopped herb. Cover with the remaining soaked *matzot* and bake for 20 minutes at 200°C (400°F). Pour over the beaten eggs

and bake for 10 minutes. Sprinkle with 2 oz [60g] cheese and bake for another 10 minutes. Remove and pour over the rest of the oil. Serve hot or cold. (If you decrease the amount of oil - as I always do - the result is equally flavourful.)

A Turkish *minas* is made by substituting spinach, sautéed with garlic and nutmeg in olive oil, for some or all of the potatoes and using 1/2 lb [220g] cottage cheese in place of some or all the grated cheese.

### Spicy Steamed Pudding

If made with *parev* margarine, you have the perfect, stick-to-your-ribs, comfort food to crown a *fleishike* family feast. This recipe will fill two one-pound pudding basins, which should be carefully greased with butter or margarine, covered with greased foil, tied tightly to secure the top, and steamed for three hours in simmering water which reaches about ¾ of the way up the basins.

The following ingredients need to be well mixed and then packed into the basins.

- 1 cup [8 fl oz, 220 ml] each
  - grated carrot
  - grated potato
  - grated cooking apple
- ½ cup [4 oz, 110g] melted butter or margarine
- 1½ cups [12 oz, 340g] sugar
- 1 cup matzoh cake meal
- ½ cup potato flour
- ½ teasp. salt
- 1½ teasp cinnamon
- ¼ teasp each ground cloves, allspice, and nutmeg
- 1½ cups [½ lb, 225g] dried fruit (raisins, sultanas, prunes, or apricots)
- ½ cup [2 oz, 55g] ground nuts

Serve hot with cream, custard, or a *parev* sauce such as the one below.

### Citrus Sauce

Simmer the following ingredients for about 8 minutes to dissolve the sugar and reduce the liquid.

- 1 cup [ $\frac{1}{2}$  lb, 225g] sugar
- 4 fl oz [110 ml] water
- the zest of a lemon or orange
- a squeeze of juice

Add the juice of 2 lemons or one large orange,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of butter or margarine, and 1 teaspoon of potato flour mixed with a little cold water. Stir over gentle heat to thicken. The sauce is equally good hot or cold.

### Himmel Und Erde

This robust peasant dish from the Rhineland claims to make a perfect marriage of heaven and earth, based as it is on apples and potatoes. Quick to make, it would be ideal as an accompaniment to meat or poultry for the *seder* or with salami or sausage for a family lunch.

For four servings, simply sauté in 2 tablespoons fat or oil:

- 12 oz [350g] peeled, chopped cooking apples
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 clove
- 2 allspice berries
- $\frac{1}{2}$  stick of cinnamon
- pinch of nutmeg.

Add 1lb [450g] potatoes, which have been boiled *al dente*, about 20 minutes, in salted water, then peeled and cubed. When the mixture is very soft, remove the whole spices, season with salt and pepper, and mash together, adding more oil or fat if you are living dangerously. Garnish with an onion, thinly sliced and gently fried brown in even more oil or fat.

If this dish is to be served with meat, fry in schmaltz, but use half butter, half oil for a *milchike* meal.

### Walnut Macaroons

Knead together to a thick paste:

- 1 lb [450 g] ground walnuts
- 5 oz [140 g] caster sugar
- 1 egg white, lightly beaten.

Add more egg white if necessary. Form balls and bake firm on baking parchment for about 15 - 20 minutes in a medium oven, 180°C [350°F].

### Jam Tomorrow

Another Viennese specialty begins with this walnut paste shaped into four rolls, each about 5 inches [12 cm] long and less than 1 inch [2 cm] diameter, hollowed to about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch [1 cm] depth, and baked light-brown, for 15 minutes. Cool on a rack and fill the central channel with thick jam.

### A Final Reminder: DON'T PANIC

Face it: of all the holidays, Passover imposes the greatest demands on the homemaker, so plan ahead and honour your own priorities. After all, most of our grandmothers never knew from puddings, and we didn't complain.

You don't want to fall asleep at the *seder* table because preparations have worn you to a frazzle. In some cases, the perfect *parev* Passover pudding is a bowl of fresh fruit with, perhaps, a few biscuits bought in your favourite kosher bakery or delicatessen, accompanied by a warm welcoming smile from the host or hostess.