

PASSOVER 5774

New Jewish-Style Prepared Foods Store For Brooklyn

BY LAUREN ROTHMAN | April 2, 2014, 12:00 am |

My conversation with Theo Peck, owner of Peck's, a new specialty food shop on Clinton Hill's Myrtle Avenue, started with onion rolls. Peck, the great-grandson of the owner of the legendary kosher dairy restaurant Ratner's, and I were reminiscing about the soft, onion-and-poppy-seed-topped rolls the now-shuttered Lower East Side restaurant served: slathered with fresh butter and eaten with a bowl of soup or in advance of a plate of cheese blintzes, they were a dream.

"Oh man, those rolls," Peck, a New York native who as a kid spent many hours in Ratner's, recalled. "Let me tell you, if we expanded, the first thing we would do is add a full Jewish-style bakery," he said.

Instead, Peck's sources its onion rolls from Orwasher's, the highly regarded Upper East Side bakery. Aside from the bread, nearly everything else in the small, light-filled store — from the rotisserie chickens to the brisket to the matzah ball soup to the tongue — is made in-house.

Peck's is all about a mix of tried-and-true Jewish recipe traditions, enlivened by the wider world of food trends. Sure, there's hummus here, but it's served on a sandwich with eggplant caponata, smoked tofu and frisee; there's brisket, but it's heaped on French sourdough with kimchi, Japanese mayonnaise and cilantro.

Peck's, 455A Myrtle Ave., Brooklyn. (347) 689-4969, [facebook.com/pecksbrooklyn](https://www.facebook.com/pecksbrooklyn)

Fair Trade Chocolate For Passover

On Passover — a holiday that celebrates freedom from suffering — it just doesn't make sense to partake of foods whose route to our tables is marked by strife. That's why this year, T'ruah, a rabbinical organization that campaigns for human rights, and [Fair Trade Judaica](#), which promotes fair trade as a Jewish value, have teamed up with the ethically sourced chocolate brand Equal Exchange to promote kosher for Passover chocolate.

"You have to put your money where your mouth is," said Rabbi Lev Meirowitz Nelson, director of education at T'ruah. He explained that the use of child labor is rampant in cocoa cultivation and harvesting: it's been documented in the cocoa fields of the Ivory Coast, where 40 percent of the world's cocoa is produced, as well as other African countries. But as consumers, we have enormous power to use our dollars to back up our demands for ethically sound products.

“This is doubly true around a holiday that celebrates freedom,” the rabbi said. “It would be a sad irony to celebrate with chocolate that’s harvested by child workers.”

Ilana Schatz, the founding director of Fair Trade Judaica, agreed.

But what about a matter just as important as ethics: taste?

“Oh, it’s excellent chocolate,” Schatz said. “I’ve tried every single flavor, and there isn’t one that I don’t like.”

Eight flavors of kosher for Passover, fair trade chocolate are available for purchase at shop.equalexchange.coop/pesach.

Mexican Gefilte Fish?!

Persian “matzah ball” soup made with chickpea-flour dumplings. Tender smoked brisket. Gefilte fish “a la Mexicana” in a bright-red, chile-laced sauce. These are just a few examples of the startling diversity of cooking in the Jewish diaspora, the subject of discussion at a lively talk held last week at the 92nd Street Y.

At “More Than Matzah Balls: Food and Cooking in Jewish Culture,” Joan Nathan, the cookbook author and Jewish recipe maven, spoke with three chefs from very different walks of life: Pati Jinich, the host of TV show “Pati’s Mexican Table”; Louisa Shafia, author of the cookbook “The New Persian Kitchen”; and Ari White, a Texan whose Eastern European family has been smoking Texas-style barbecue for three generations.

Each chef introduced herself and talked about her family history. Growing up in Mexico, Jinich’s Eastern European grandmother prepared Mexican gefilte fish every Shabbat. Just across the border in El Paso, Texas, White’s grandfather adapted the smoked, cured meats of his homeland to Texan tastes, adding fiery rubs and sweet sauces. And in Philadelphia, Shafia’s American-born mother was equally adept at preparing both Ashkenazi classics as well as the elaborate Persian dishes of Shafia’s father’s background.

Naturally, at an event taking place so close to Passover, the conversation eventually turned to the seder table. Nathan shared what would be gracing her table, and her choice echoed the diversity of flavors explored over the course of the evening.

“Five kinds of charoset,” she said. “To represent each corner of the Jewish diaspora.”

editor@jewishweek.org

© 2016 THE JEWISH WEEK, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED