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In This Issue:

- Jewish Field Trips: Food Tour
- What is Tish'a B'av?
- Counting the Omer
- Interview with Dr. Katrina
Crenshaw-Upah
- Parlor Meeting Re-Cap



Jewish Field Trips: Food Tour



There's no question that food plays a major part in Jewish culture. From Shabbat challah to Hanukkah latkes to any number of Passover-friendly matzah creations, it seems like every special day in Jewish life is marked by food (or lack of it). And it goes so far beyond our holidays. Judaism has a rich culinary history, and partaking in it is a great way for Jews by Choice to feel connected.

If you live in Southern California, you're in luck. There's no shortage of delicious Jewish eateries, including delis, Israeli restaurants, and even a few plant-based options. Here are some of our favorites.

Disclaimer: Not all of the options on this list are Kosher.

- **Canter's Deli - Fairfax**

When you think of Jewish-American food, you think of the classic deli. Reubens, pastrami, and matzo ball soup are all on the menu at Canter's, which has been an LA institution since 1931. While it's not a kosher restaurant, it will hit that comfort-food craving.

- **Bo.Re.Kas - Sherman Oaks - OK Certified**

Far too often, Ashkenazi food captures the spotlight for Jewish cuisine. Bo.Re.Kas, a newer restaurant exclusively serving bourekas, is changing that. Bourekas are a Sephardic pastry filled with anything from cheese to chocolate. This spot is open from 9am to sell-out, so get there early.

- **Ta-eem Grill - West Hollywood - RCC Certified**

TimeOut magazine put it best when they said "It's not hard to find falafel in Los Angeles...but man, is it hard to find great falafel...Enter Ta-eem Grill." Many different cultures lay claim to falafel, but there's no doubt that it's a well-loved dish is Jewish cuisine. Of course, you can also order other Mediterranean classics like chicken shawarma and beef kabobs.

- **Ben and Esther's - San Diego w/ an LA location on the way**

Historically, Jewish-American and vegan cuisines haven't mixed, but that's been changing. Ben and Esther's is a 100% vegan Jewish deli with several locations in California and the PNW. From brisket sandwiches to challah egg n cheese, they've brought the classic NYC experience to a plant-based crowd. While not certified kosher, there is no meat or dairy in the kitchen.

- **Maury's Bagels - Echo Park/Silver Lake**

If you've spent any time online in Jewish spaces, you will likely see people from the east coast teasing California about our bagel situation. I will give them one concession: We do not have a cheap bagel shop on every corner. But that doesn't mean we don't do bagels! Maury's has some of the best bagels the Golden State has to offer, plus other classics like challah and noodle kugel. While it's not kosher certified, the kitchen only serves dairy and fish.

**What is Tish'a
B'av?**



Tish'a B'av is often not taught in Introduction to Judaism classes. It is a Fast Day, a day of mourning in the Jewish calendar that commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. We mark this day through fasting and prayer on the 9th day of Av.

While the main focus of the day is on the destruction of the temple, Tish'a B'av goes beyond that. It's a communal day of mourning for all of the tragedies and losses of the Jewish people, including expulsions from countries and the Shoah. Tish'a B'av is a way for us to honor the victims of these events and reflect on how we have struggled and thrived as a people.

The day itself, we fast from sundown to sunset. During this time we read from The Book of Lamentations. Traditionally we read it at night, sitting on the floor, with our books lit by candlelight. The chanting is a unique nusach (melody), minor in key and haunting. We break the fast with a meal that does not include meat or wine. Other traditions may include visits to cemeteries or other places of mourning.

Counting the Omer



By Jill Housen

Counting the Omer, or the 49 days between the holidays of Passover and Shavuot, is special for me. It is one of the few times I intentionally slow down and make space to prepare my mind and spirit to receive the Torah.

This year was more challenging than others with new responsibilities added to my already busy schedule, and sometimes I did not meet my set time for prayer and counting. What I learned through this experience was to let go of expectations of perfection and to be more engaged in what was happening during the process of the actual meditation.

I questioned if it was possible to infuse this spiritual nourishment into my everyday life. This year I purchased a workbook, a 49-day self-care immersion. I found this grounded me while counting the Omer. Every day there was a prompt with an activity tied to the teaching.

Linking action to the teaching helped me incorporate my meditation into making lifestyle changes. I hope next year those who have not experienced counting the Omer will join me on this 7-week journey of growth and transformation.

Interview with a Mentor: Dr. Katrina Crenshaw-Upah



Dr. Katrina Crenshaw-Upah...

Is a licensed clinical psychologist and retired professional basketball player.

She converted to Judaism through the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din and now helps other candidates through the process as a conversion mentor.

How did you first get involved in serving as a conversion mentor?

As a previous mentee, I had a phenomenal experience with my mentor, so having a similar opportunity to be a mentor was one that I could not pass up.

What has been the most rewarding part of your experience as a mentor?

Hearing the excitement in my mentees voice letting me know that I am actually making a difference, as well as the opportunity to provide insight into Jewish customs or practices that my mentee has found helpful have both been rewarding experiences.

How do you help converts integrate into the Jewish community?

I listen. Not just to the words they say, but to the sincerity in their hearts. This is my first year being a mentor, and I plan to use the feedback from my mentee to make next year even better.

What do you believe is the most important or impactful part of the conversion process?

It's important to have a non-judgemental stance with unconditionally positive regard. Ask tons of questions and then ask more. Follow the knowledge, not the suggestions of others.

Parlor Meetings



Over the past few months, we have held meetings open to all friends of the Bet Din. This year's theme was Converts: Faces of the Jewish Future, which we feel perfectly encapsulates the importance of our mission. Converts represent a growing, passionate, and diverse piece of the Jewish people.

During these meetings, both converts and rabbis discussed the importance of guiding converts through the entire journey and the struggles and triumphs of finding community as a Jew by choice.

Participants, both Jews by choice and by birth, came from all over Los Angeles and beyond. Whether they wanted to show their support for SCCBD's mission or socialize with other recent converts, these meetings proved to be a great source of joy and discussion for the Sandra Caplan community.

If you missed these meetings but still want to show your support, you can donate to the Bet Din here:

Donate



We Are Here For You

We have staff resources to help if you are in need of a listening ear or additional support. Please [email](#) or call if you need our help.

A Bet Din that Welcomes All People Interested in Converting to Judaism



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