

Haroset Customs and Ingredients:
No Matter How You Spell It

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A Hands-On Workshop Experience

In the Tastes, Sights, Smells of Pesah

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Haroset Customs and Ingredients: No Matter How You Spell It

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Family Participation Is The Essential Ingredient In All Passover Recipes

There was always a sense of warmth and support when we sat in the kitchen, whether we were watching Mom (in those days it was generally a Mom thing) prepare some new or familiar dish, or when we were invited to actually participate in the cooking or baking. Not only did we have a chance to be drawn in to the actual task, but we had an extended and supportive opportunity to talk about whatever was on either her mind or on ours. Somehow it was the most encouraging environment for what today we call “communication.” The informality linked with the tastes and smells and the sight of the cooking and baking seemed just right.

Today, one of the phenomena of the modern modern American family is that fathers are cooking and baking more than ever before; some claim that it is quickly becoming the number one avocation of men between the ages of 25 and 45. I often learn about one or both parents cooking in the kitchen rather than sending for “delivery” or bringing home “take-out.”

There are wonderful opportunities for teaching the lessons of Passover to the next generation as the family “prepares” for the Festival. Beyond the actual food regulations and customs, there is the “kitchen schooling” experience within which each of our children is exposed to what we truly believe about the rights of others, respect for the traditions and customs of others – within the Jewish community and within the larger community, and appreciation for the Jewish heritage of freedom and democracy that has been our gift to humanity.

Age-appropriate assignments. There is a need to think about safety. I wouldn’t recommend that a young child be given a paring knife to peel an apple, but there are simple and safe chopping devices. If an adult cuts an apple, then a youngster can use a spoon to remove the core from each portion. For older children, a wooden bowl and chopper can be appropriate and also become a “family heirloom” to be passed on in addition to the “best” recipe for haroset.

Making Memories Is The Prime Goal, Not the Food or Symbol Itself.

We've selected "making" haroset and then "choosing the best haroset recipe" as an example of how the kitchen can facilitate communication and values education. There are so many other examples of involvement that are sensory related.

- Cutting or decorating pre-cut place-cards, and writing the names for those so able.
- Cutting or setting out vegetables and ask, for what is this vegetable or fruit or plate?
- A recipe book from which different children read and "direct" the cooking and baking.
- "Secret" family recipes – that are on the Internet, but it's still "our Seder recipe"
- Create their own haggadah that can grow each year as they grow older

Memories of touching, seeing, tasting, smelling and talking that leads ultimately to hugging and kissing of parent and child as Passover is about to begin.

The Mortar, the Merrier

Joan Michel, The Jewish Week

“As have many Jewish customs, charoset has evolved into regional variations.”

Afghanistan: walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds, apples, sweet wine, pomegranate seeds, black pepper, dates.
 Babylon (Saadia Gaon): 1 cup date syrup to 4 cup crushed nuts, 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds, 4 cup wine vinegar.

Bukhara: walnuts, almonds, dates, raisins, apples, sweet wine.

California: apples, bananas, dates, raisins, juice and grated rind of a lemon, walnuts, almonds, pecans, dry red wine, matzah meal, cinnamon, sugar.

Curacao: peanuts, cashew nuts, dark brown sugar, dates, prunes, raisins, figs, candied fruit, wine, honey, cinnamon, orange and lime juices or watermelon and tamarind juices.

Egypt: dates, nuts, bananas, apples, sweet wine, cinnamon, pomegranate seeds.

Galicia: apples, nuts, sweet wine, cinnamon, horseradish.

Greece: almonds, raisins mashed in vinegar, pepper, good pinch of finely ground brick.

India: dates cooked into a syrup and sprinkled with ground walnuts.

Iran (the Arie's): Puree 2 cup each walnuts, almonds, pistachios, 2 peeled, seeded apples, 2 peeled, seeded pears, 2 pound pitted dates. Stir in 4 cup sweet wine and 2 tablespoons black pepper.

Ireland: apples, cinnamon, sweet wine, almonds.

Israel: apples, bananas, dates, nuts, juice and grated rinds of lemon and orange, dry red wine, cinnamon, honey, matzah meal.

Italy: bananas, dates, apples, walnuts, orange including peel, sweet Malaga wine, matzah meal.

Jamaica (Lopes family): a pound of dates and 2 cup sultanas (raisins) soaked overnight in orange juice and drained; grated rind of 1 etrog soaked overnight in water and drained. Grind dates and sultanas to a paste, add etrog rind and boil 30 minutes with the orange juice. Add port wine and shredded coconut to a dry consistency. Cool, shape into bricks, dust with cinnamon and form small pyramids.

Kitniyot: mashed cooked garbanzo beans, pomegranate juice, wine vinegar, toasted sesame seeds and coriander seeds, black pepper.

Maimonides: dried figs, raisins, pitted dates soaked in boiling water, then boiled and crushed; add wine vinegar, shredded stick cinnamon and fresh ginger.

Mogador: 1 cup pitted dates and 2 cup almonds ground to a paste. Pour sweet wine over 3 cups dried rose petals and let soak a few hours, then remove their bitter white parts and knead petals to a paste; fold into date-almond paste. Stir in 2 tablespoons powdered cinnamon.

Morocco: seven species. Also dates, almonds, other nuts, pomegranate seeds, figs, wine, cinnamon.

Netherlands: chunky mixture of apples, nuts, cinnamon, sugar, raisins, sweet wine.

New American: apples, mango, pecans, lemon juice, cinnamon, honey, sweet wine.

Paris (the Yechurum's): Bring to a boil 2 cups dry red wine with 2 cup sugar and grated zest of half a small orange; simmer 10 minutes. Add 1 pound dried figs and simmer until softened. Let cool and add 2 tablespoon ground cardamom, then blend well.

Persia: dates, pistachios, almonds, apples, raisins, orange, banana, pomegranate seeds, sweet wine, vinegar, cloves, cardamom, cinnamon, black pepper.

Poland: walnuts, almonds, apples, wine, cinnamon.

Provence: chestnuts, blanched almonds, sour apples, dried figs, walnuts, raisins, dates, wine vinegar, grated ginger.

Russia: apples, raisins, cinnamon, honey, nuts if you could get them.

Santa Fe: apples, nuts, sweet wine, whatever else you usually use, and finely chopped roasted and seeded green chili peppers.

Sephardic: coconut, walnuts, sugar, cinnamon, raisins, apricots, dried apples and pears, prunes, cherry preserves, wine.

Spain: almonds, dates, apples, orange juice, ginger, cinnamon, vinegar rolled into balls about the size of an olive.

Surinam: grated coconut, ground almonds, mixed dried fruit, raisins, dried apricots, dried pears, cinnamon, cherry preserves, sweet wine.

Syria: dates cooked to a jam consistency.

Tblisi: equal parts of pears and a variety of apples, walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, honey, liquid from steeped cloves.

Turkey: sweet apples, dates, raisins, juice and grated zest of orange, wine, sugar, walnuts.

Venice: chestnut paste, dates, figs, poppy seeds, walnuts, almonds, pine nuts, orange zest, dried apricots, raisins, cherry or orange brandy, honey.

Yemen: dates, raisins, almonds, other nuts, figs, sesame seeds, apples, pomegranate seeds, grape juice, black pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves.

TRADITIONAL ASHKENAZI HAROSET

2 large apple - peeled, cored and finely chopped
 1 cup finely chopped walnuts
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 2 tablespoons kosher red wine

Mix apples, nuts, sugar and cinnamon together in a bowl.

Add wine and mix in to thoroughly blend.

Keep in refrigerator until ready to put out on the table for Passover Seder.

AMERICAN HAROSET

Jewish Cooking in America by Joan Nathan

6 large apples
 2 tbsps. sugar (about)
 1 tsp. cinnamon
 1/4 c. sweet wine
 1/2 c. chopped pecans

Core and quarter the apples.

Put the apples in a food processor with the remaining ingredients. Process in pulses, leaving a bit of a crunch to the mixture.

Adjust seasoning.

Yield: about 5 cups.

Note: In Shreveport, Louisiana, 95-year-old Isabelle Goldman uses sherry as her wine and adds raisins. Her recipe came from Alsace in the 1830's.

ISRAELI HAROSET

Source: "A Passover Seder With Israeli Flavor" Judy Zeidler

2 apples, peeled, cored and chopped
 2 bananas, peeled and chopped
 Juice and grated peel of 1/2 lemon
 Juice and grated peel of 1/2 orange
 15 dates, pitted and chopped
 1/2 cup ground pistachios
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1/4 cup sweet Passover wine
 5 tablespoons matzo meal

In large bowl, combine apples, bananas, lemon juice and peel, orange juice and peel, dates and nuts; mix well.

Add cinnamon, wine and matzo meal; blend thoroughly.

Yield: 10 side-dish servings.

AUNT VICKI'S GREEK HAROSET

The following is a family recipe from Faith Wolf's Aunt Vicki, Source: "Mediterranean Meal: Passover foods are rooted in Judaic history" Gerri Kobren BALTIMORE SUN/SUN SPOT

1/4 cup golden raisins
 1/2 pound dried apricots
 1/4 cup toasted pine nuts
 1/2 pound moist dried figs
 1/2 pound dates
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 dash ground cinnamon

Soak raisins and apricots together in water to cover overnight or cook them in water to cover until the apricots are tender but not mushy. Drain fruit, reserving liquid.

Toast pine nuts on a cookie sheet in a 250-degree oven for 10 minutes. Cool. Grind pine nuts in food processor until fine but not pureed.

Add remaining ingredients, including raisins and apricots, in small batches, processing after each addition, until desired consistency is reached. If too stiff, add apricot cooking water or plain water.

CHAROSET CALIFORNIA STYLE

Jewish Bulletin of Northern California, March 19, 1999. Louise Fiszer recipe writes: "I generally serve several different charoset and then we all vote for the best one. The Charoset California Style is a winner every year."

2 apples, peeled and cored
 2 firm pears, peeled and cored
 1 cup almonds
 1 cup dried cherries
 sugar to taste
 lemon juice to taste
 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
 4 to 6 Tbs. sweet red Passover wine

Chop all ingredients in food processor until a rough paste forms.

HAROSET, HOHTARAN SHIRAZI'S PERSIAN

"The Jewish Holiday Kitchen," by Joan Nathan,

25 dates, pitted and diced
 1/2 cup unsalted pistachios
 1/2 cup almonds
 1/2 cup golden raisins
 1-1/2 peeled apples, cored and diced
 1 pomegranate
 1 orange, peeled and diced
 1 banana, sliced
 1/2 to 1 cup sweet red wine
 1/4 cup cider vinegar
 1/2 Tablespoon cayenne pepper
 1 Tablespoon ground cloves
 1 Tablespoon ground cardamom
 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 1 Tablespoon black pepper

Combine all the fruits and nuts. Add the wine and vinegar until a pasty consistency is achieved.

Add the spices and blend well. Adjust seasonings. Makes 5 cups.

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YEMENITE HAROSET OF HAVA NATHAN

"The Jewish Holiday Kitchen," by Joan Nathan

1 lb fresh dates
 1 lb raisins
 3/4 lb almonds
 1/2 lb walnuts
 3 pomegranates, peeled and seeded
 1 Tablespoon mixed spices (equal parts cinnamon, pepper, cumin, cardamom, cloves, ginger)

In a food processor, chop all the fruits, including the pomegranate seeds and juice and the nuts.

Add the spices, adjusting each to your taste.

Makes 7 cups.

VENETIAN HAROSET

"The Jewish Holiday Kitchen," by Joan Nathan, Schocken Books, New York, 1988

1-1/2 cups chestnut paste
 10 oz. dates, chopped
 12 oz. figs, chopped
 2 Tablespoon poppy seeds
 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
 1/2 cup chopped almonds
 1/2 cup pine nuts
 1/2 cup golden raisins
 1/2 cup chopped dried apricots
 1/2 cup brandy
 honey, to bind

Combine all ingredients, using just enough honey and brandy to make everything bind together.

TURKISH HAROSET

"Food: Telling the Story of Passover" Beverly Levitt

2 sweet apples, peeled, cored and chopped
 1 tablespoon lemon juice
 1 cup large golden raisins or sultanas
 1/2 cup white figs, coarsely chopped
 1/4 cup dried cherries (optional)
 1/2 cup walnuts, shelled and chopped fine
 1/2 cup ground almonds
 1 tablespoon lemon zest
 1 tablespoon brown sugar or honey
 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
 pinch of cayenne pepper
 2 to 3 tablespoons sweet red Passover wine or more, if necessary.

Cover apples with lemon juice in bowl.

Chop fruit and nuts by hand, in blender or food processor.

Stir in zest, sugar and spices; taste and adjust seasonings.

Moisten with wine to make thick paste. Serves 6.

RAMBAM'S HAROSET

Rabbi Gil Marks in the archives of the Jewish Communications Network taken from the recipe given by Moses Maimonides 12th century century

1 cup pitted dated, chopped dried figs, or raisins
 2 cups water
 1/4 cup wine vinegar
 2 tablespoons fresh or 1 tablespoon dried hyssop leaves (not ground)

Pour water over fruit and let soak overnight.

Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring frequently, until mixture forms a paste-like consistency. Cool.

Stir in hyssop and vinegar.

ITALIAN HAROSET

This Haroset recipe is drawn from Mira Sacerdoti's *La Cucina Ebraica in Italia* (which was originally published in English); she notes that the preparation varies tremendously from cook to cook and presents a number of recipes. This is the one that looked most interesting:

6 ounces (weight, 150 g) dried chestnuts
 3/4 pound (250 g) peeled apples
 1/4 pound (100 g) blanched almonds
 1/4 pound (100 g) pitted dates
 1/4 pound (100 g) pitted dried prunes
 1/4 pound (100 g) sultana raisins
 1 teaspoon powdered cinnamon
 The juice of 2 oranges

Simmer the chestnuts in lightly salted water until tender.

Drain them, dry them, and run them through a meat grinder with the other dried fruit. Grate the apples into the mixture, then stir in the other ingredients and mix thoroughly.

DATE HAROSET

1/2 pound chopped dates
 1 cup golden raisins
 1/2 cup red wine
 1/2 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar

Place the chopped dates and golden raisins in a small saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until the fruit thickens to a soft paste. Cool. Cook Time: 1 Hour

Stir nuts and cinnamon into the cooled fruit mixture.

Form paste into small, bite-size balls.

Roll in confectioners' sugar. Makes 40 servings. "This haroset recipe is more of a confection, and very different from the apple based variety. It can be stored in the refrigerator for 1 week in a closed container. "

HAROSET, GAROSA BALLS, CURACAO

This recipe is from the cookbook, RECIPES FROM THE JEWISH KITCHENS OF CURACAO. The article accompanying the recipes explains, "The first group of Jews to arrive in the New World docked in Curacao in 1651. They came from Holland, where they had settled at the turn of the 16th century under the protection of the freedom-loving House of Orange. Marinas - Spanish Jews who had publicly converted to Christianity but who secretly adhered to Jewish religious practices and rituals - had fled to Portugal first and then to Holland to escape the Inquisition."

14 pitted dates
 10 pitted prunes
 8 figs, stems removed
 cup golden raisins
 cup cashew nuts
 lemon, unpeeled and cut in chunks
 cup sweet red wine
 cup honey, or more as needed
 2 tablespoons cinnamon to coat

Place dates, prunes, figs, raisins, nuts and lemon in food processor. Chop coarsely. Add the wine and cup honey. Process to chop finely. Mixture should be moist but firm enough to shape. Add a little extra honey if needed.

Transfer to a bowl and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Roll into balls about 1 inch in diameter. Toss in cinnamon to coat. Cover and refrigerate until needed. Makes 25 to 30 balls.

Note: If you prefer, the mixture can be spooned into a serving dish and dusted with cinnamon before serving.

HAROSET PROVENCAL

This is from Sefer Ha'Menuha, a work of the 13th century Provencal scholar, Rabbi Manoach.

1 pound chestnuts	1 cup blanched almonds
2 medium tart apples, cored and chopped	1 cup pitted dates
1 cup dried figs	1 cup raisins
1 to 3 tablespoons grated fresh ginger	wine vinegar

Cut an X in the shell of chestnuts. Place in boiling water and cook for 15 minutes. Drain. When able to handle, peel off shells.

Finely chopped chestnuts and almonds. Add fruits and finely chop. Stir in enough wine vinegar to make a thick paste. Add ginger.

PIEDMONTESE HAROSET

Source: "The Book of Jewish Food," by Claudia Roden

1/2 lb (250 g) cooked chestnuts
 2/3 cup (125 g) blanched almonds
 2 hard-boiled egg yolks
 Grated zest of 1 orange
 Juice of 1 orange
 About 3/4 cup (175 ml) sweet red kosher wine
 1/3 cup (75 g) sugar or more to taste

Boil the chestnuts for a minute or two, and drain.

Grind the almonds fine in the food processor, then add the rest of the ingredients, including the chestnuts, and blend to a paste.

SEVEN-FRUIT HAROSET FROM SURINAM

Source: "The Jewish Holiday Kitchen," by Joan Nathan, Schocken Books, New York, 1988

8 oz. unsweetened coconut
 8 oz. chopped walnuts or grated almonds
 1/4 cup sugar
 1 Tablespoon cinnamon
 8 oz. raisins
 8 oz. dried apples
 8 oz. dried prunes
 8 oz. dried apricots
 8 oz. dried pears
 4 oz. cherry jam
 sweet red wine

Combine everything except the jam and wine in a pot. Cover with water and simmer over low heat. Periodically, add small amounts of water to prevent sticking. Cook at least 90 minutes. When it is cohesive, stir in the jam and let stand until cool. Add enough sweet wine to be absorbed by the haroset and chill.

Makes 5 cups.

YEMENITE HAROSET

"The World of Jewish Cooking," by Gil Marks: Wow! This one looks like it'll give your taste buds a wake-up call! If one had the time, it could be interesting to make at least three different types and have guests do a comparison/tasting. I think I would do this one and the one from Surinam (separate post), along with the classic Ashkenazic style. Yield: About 2 cups

15 dried figs, chopped
 2 to 3 tablespoons sesame seeds, lightly toasted
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1 teaspoon ground ginger
 Dash of ground coriander or cardamom
 1 small chili or pinch of cayenne
 Dry red wine

Finely chop the figs, dates, sesame seeds, cinnamon, ginger, coriander or cardamom, and chili or cayenne. Stir in enough wine to make a paste. Store in the refrigerator. Serve at room temperature.

YEMENITE HAROSET (COOKED)

Gil Marks in the archives of the Jewish Communications Network

8.5 ounces sesame seeds, toasted
 1 kilo [2.2 lb] dates, pitted and chopped
 1/2 kilo [1 lb] raisins, chopped
 1 cup almonds, chopped
 1 cup walnuts, chopped
 4 teaspoons ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 water

In a large saucepan combine all ingredients and enough water to make a mixture that resembles preserves.

Simmer over medium-low heat until mixture thickens (about 15 minutes). Cool.

ANNE ROSENZWEIG'S HAROSET

Anne Rosenzweig, one of New York City's outstanding restaurateurs added rhubarb for spring.

1 cup sugar	1 cup water
1 cup diced rhubarb (see Note)	1 cup Reisling or other off-dry white wine
1 cup toasted pecans (see Note)	1 Granny Smith apple, peeled and diced
1 cup diced jícama	1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 pinch cayenne pepper	

In a saucepan, bring the sugar and water to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Stir in the rhubarb, and simmer for 1 to 2 minutes until soft but still crunchy. Drain and cool.

In another saucepan, cook the wine over high heat until it is reduced to ¼ cup. In a food processor, combine the reduced wine, pecans, apple, jícama, cinnamon, cayenne pepper and rhubarb, and pulse 2 or 3 times. Remove to bowl. If desired, add a little more sugar.

NOTE: To toast nuts, preheat oven to 450 F, toast for 4 to 5 minutes, remove nuts from oven and allow to cool for about 10 minutes.

NOTE: When buying rhubarb look for firm, shiny stalks. Take care to trim off any leaves because they contain high concentrations of oxalic acid, which can be toxic. Do not remove the strings from the stalks because they hold most of the color and will dissolve during cooking.
 Makes 8 to 10 servings

GEORGIAN HAROSET (TIBLISI)

Gil Marks in the archives of the Jewish Communications Network,

1/4 cup whole cloves	1/4 cup boiling water
1/4 cup almonds	1/4 cup hazelnuts
1/4 cup walnuts	1/3 cup honey
6 medium (2 pounds) apples and finely chopped	
6 medium (2 pound) pears and finely chopped	

Pour boiling water over cloves and let stand for 15 minutes. Strain, reserving liquid.

In a food processor or nut grinder, grind nuts until smooth.

Combine fruit, nuts, clove water, and honey to taste.

ISRAELI HAROSET

Gil Marks in the archives of the Jewish Communications Network,

2 medium apples, peeled, cored, and grated
 2 medium bananas, mashed
 14 pitted (10 ounces) dates, chopped
 1/3 cup (2 ounces) blanched almonds, ground
 1/4 cup matza meal
 juice and rind of 1/2 lemon
 juice and rind of 1/2 orange
 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 granulated sugar
 1/4 cup sweet red wine

Combine all ingredients, adding enough wine to make a paste.

PERSIAN HAROSET, DE-SPICED FOR AMERICAN CHILDREN

Jewish Cooking in America by Joan Nathan (Alfred A. Knopf, copyright 1994 by Joan Nathan).

1 c. walnuts
 1 c. almonds

1 c. raisins
 6 strawberries
 1 c. dates, pitted
 2 apples, cored, pitted, and quartered
 1 banana, cut up
 1/2 c. sweet wine
 1 tsp. cinnamon
 1/4 tsp. pepper

Grind all the ingredients together in a food grinder or throw them in a food processor and process until crunchy paste is formed. Or better yet, place in a wooden bowl and allow the youngest member of your family to pound everything with a hand food chopper until it forms the consistency of a crunchy paste. Yield: 4 cups.

Tip: Try serving this with cream cheese on your matzah for breakfast.

MOROCCAN-STYLE HAROSET

Unlike most Haroset, this delectable dried fruit-nut mixture is formed into little balls, which will keep for weeks in the refrigerator. (Note: For best results, all the dried fruit should be fresh and soft.)
 Serving count: Makes about 6 dozen 1-inch balls (about 3 cups of haroset mixture).

2 c walnut pieces
 1 c blanched slivered or whole almonds
 25 pitted dates
 10 large, brown ("calimyrna") dried figs
 20 dried apricots
 10 large, pitted prunes
 1/2 c shelled pistachio
 1/4 c sweet red Pesach wine
 ground cinnamon to taste

Put all of the nuts and dried fruit through the fine blade of a food grinder or finely grind them together in a food processor fitted with the steel blade (in batches, if necessary).

Mix in just enough wine to make a smooth paste that is soft and malleable.

Form the mixture into 1-inch balls.

Roll the balls in ground cinnamon.

Store the balls in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. You can also freeze these.

For the best flavor, let them come to room temperature before serving.

HALEK (CALCUTTA DATE SYRUP) HAROSET

Gil Marks in the archives of the Jewish Communications Network,

Many Iraqi Jews prepare a syrupy variation of date honey and Middle Eastern immigrants in Calcutta make a similar syrup called halek. Since this version requires a great deal of effort to prepare, it is usually made in a large quantity only once a year just before Passover. The leftover halek is then used throughout the rest of the year to add a distinctive touch to desserts.

4 cups (about 24 ounces) pitted dates about 8 cups water
1 cup finely chopped walnuts or almonds

Place the dates in a large bowl and add enough water to cover. Soak until soft, at least 24 hours. In a food processor or blender, puree the dates and soaking liquid. Let stand overnight. In batches, place a little of the date mixture in a linen towel and squeeze out the liquid. Discard the solids left in the towel. (Some people use a small manual wine press in place of the more tedious towel.)

In a saucepan, bring the date liquid to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and boil, skimming the surface and stirring occasionally, until thickened and reduced to about 2 cups, about 1 hour. Cool, then pour into a jar. Store in the refrigerator for up to 1 year. If sugar crystallizes, place the bottle in a bowl of hot water until the syrup is smooth.

To make the charoet, stir the nuts into the 2 cups of halek.

Haroset A' La' Rina

Rina Perry, From my mother with love & more

2- 3 Apples - Smith peeled and diced
1 Cup almonds with out the skin
1 Cup walnuts
1/2 Cup pitted dates (up to 1 cup).
1 t cinnamon
2 T sugar,
Red sweet wine.

Put every thing in the food processor, but the red wine. Work to fine paste. Now start pouring slowly the wine till you get a paste that you can spread it on a Matza. Sprice according to taste, including perhaps some lemon juice.

Note: I like to "play" with my Charoset. You can add some sweet orange peels, or even some time you can do the Charoset and add 2 cups of peanuts instead of the almonds and walnuts (check with your Rabbi). I remember my mother making it like that.

Haroset

From an article by Rabbi Gil Marks in the archives of the Jewish Communications Network, .

The Rabbis devised a chopped fruit mixture called charoset -- derived from *cheres*, the Hebrew word for clay -- as a way to blunt the taste of the bitter herbs at the Passover Seder. Arguably this tasty mixture into which the bitter herbs are dipped is everyone's favorite part of the Seder plate. The leftovers, if any actually remain, are enjoyed throughout the week.

The ingredients used to make charoset vary among communities depending on its symbolic meaning and availability. According to authorities such as Maimonides, charoset "is meant as a reminder of the mortar which the Israelites worked with in Egypt. Dates, dried figs, raisins, or the like are taken and pounded, wine vinegar is added, and the mixture is seasoned with condiments in the same way that mortar is seasoned with straw (Maimonides, *The Book of Seasons* 7:11)." In this vein, most Sephardim prepare charoset following Maimonides instructions using dried fruits -- often those mentioned in *Song of Songs* -- to make a thick paste resembling mortar.

Ashkenazim, on the other hand, add a secondary symbolic meaning to charoset in remembrance of the verse "Under the apple tree I aroused you (*Song of Songs* 8:5)." Thus chopped fresh apples are the primary component of Ashkenazic charoset. In this vein, some Sephardim apply both verses and use both dried fruits and fresh apples. In addition to apples, Ashkenazim mix in ground nuts to thicken the mixture and red wine, in remembrance of the plague of blood, to loosen it. A little honey is often added for extra sweetness.

The final touch to charoset is the addition of long-shaped spices, primarily cinnamon and ginger, symbolizing the straw with which the Israelites made bricks in Egypt. In Temple times, street peddlers could be heard throughout Jerusalem calling out, "Come and get your spices for the commandment (of charoset) (*Pesachim* 116a)." These spices were often freshly chopped. However, with the decline in international trade during the Middle Ages, the ground forms of spices were generally the only ones available. Although today cinnamon sticks and fresh ginger are once again widely available, the ground forms are still almost universally used.

Charoset was traditionally made in a wooden bowl using a hackmesser, mezzaluna, or another type of chopper. Since most modern kitchens lack these utensils, the fruit and nuts can be chopped separately on a cutting board, then mixed together or they can be chopped in a food processor, but do not puree as it is meant to have texture.

Savoring the Seder: Flavors from East and West mingle at the Seder Table

By Judy Bartancigor, The Orange County Register, April 5, 2001

This Saturday, as sundown ripples across the time zones, Jews from Moscow to Milwaukee to Marrakech will sit down for the Passover seder (the festive ceremonial meal) to retell the 3500-year-old story of their ancestors' flight to freedom from the land of Egypt.

And what will they feast on? Jewish cooks could not do better than to turn to "1,000 Jewish Recipes" (IDG Books Worldwide), award winning Faye Levy's encyclopedic volume on Jewish cuisine. And if you think they will all be serving brisket and borscht, think again.

"When people who don't know about Passover hear about all the things you can't eat," says the Woodland Hills author, "they think, how restrictive, how boring. But ask any Jew what's the holiday with the best food, and they'll say Passover!"

For the eight-day celebration Jewish people eat matzo instead of bread to commemorate the hasty departure of their forefathers from Egypt when there was no time for dough to rise. But lest you think the lowly board dull, Levy presents a dizzying array of dishes from stuffings with spinach or leeks and carrots to sweet or savory kugels (starch-based casseroles), puddings and souffles.

Then there's haroset, the fruit and nut mixture representing the mortar and bricks the Hebrews made while slaves under Pharaoh.

Levy offers seven, from the traditional European, with walnuts, apples, sugar, cinnamon and sweet wine, to the Yemenite version with dates, raisins, almonds and what her mother-in-law called "coffee spice," an aromatic mixture of cinnamon, ginger, cloves and cardamon. Truly unique are the Haroset Truffles (recipe follows) that Levy first tasted at the home of a Moroccan family while studying cooking at La Varenne in Paris. ("My six-week stay that lasted six years. I sold my dishwasher to pay for the classes!")

Dessert with no flour? No problem. You'll find Passover brownies, cream puffs, cookies, tortes and cakes, like the luscious Toasted Hazelnut Cake with Strawberry Sauce featured below. "I think it's a testament to the creativity of Jewish cooks throughout the ages," comments Levy, "that they thought up all these delicious dishes."

Her 625-page book represents 30 years of cooking experience, which began when she was a young bride living in Israel. Although Levy had watched her mother bake ("mainly so I could lick the bowl"), she never paid much attention.

Enter her husband, Yakir. "When I met my future mother-in-law, she told me I couldn't marry her son because he'd go hungry! Here was a woman who could make pita from the age of six. I had to learn fast."

And where better to learn than in Israel, home to so many cultures. "When I met Yakir, I was so excited when I realized that there was so much more to Jewish food and cooking in general than I had experienced."

While the majority of Jews living in the U.S. are Ashkenazic (of Eastern or Central European descent), more than half those in Israel are Sephardic (originally from Spain, but including Morocco, Greece, Turkey, etc.) or from other Communities of the East, like Yemen, Iraq and India.

"Israel is not just a melting pot," says Levy, "it's a melting pressure cooker. It's a small, crowded country, and people from widely diverse cultures are always cooking for a holiday and sharing ideas."

This mix of cultures has created a sort of Israeli "Jewish fusion" cooking that is constantly evolving. "But it's not like fusion cooking here where a chef says, 'Now, how can I be creative? Let's put ginger in a French cream sauce,'" Levy notes. "In Israel it's completely natural. Friends and relatives from different cultures eat at each other's homes and say, 'That tastes good. What did you put in it?'"

Take the matzo ball, the beloved soup dumpling of Levy's Polish ancestors, so popular that it's the one Passover dish served all year. Her mother, who has lived in Israel for 30 years, now adds the cumin and cilantro of her Sephardic neighbors.

To meet her mother is to understand where Levy gets her energy and enthusiasm. Pauline Kahn Luria lives in a fourth floor walk-up ("it's 56 steps, but I enjoy it!") loves to dance, and treks each day up a steep hill to downtown Jerusalem to shop or enjoy the sights and smells of Machaneh-Yehudah, the city's colorful open market. Mother and daughter have just returned from a week in Hawaii. (Will they be adding macadamia nuts to their haroset this year, one wonders.)

"Whenever we're together, whether I'm visiting her in Israel or she is here, we cook, either the traditional Polish favorites I remember from childhood or the Mediterranean dishes we've both learned along the way," says Levy.

And what will be on the Passover table this year when they join her brother-in-law's family for their traditional pot luck? "I never plan things real far ahead, but they usually like me to bring a kugel," says Levy. "Last year I brought Matzo Kugel with Apples, Almonds and Raisins."

Surely there will be Israeli salad, the national salad of Israel, which Levy says she serves with practically every meal. The book contains six variations, the traditional consisting of equal proportions of chopped tomato and cucumber with some chopped onion, lemon juice and oil. "My mother-in-law used to add red or green cabbage," says Levy. "Since living in California I add jicama and sometimes bok choy or napa cabbage. When we first moved here my husband thought salsa was spicy Israeli salad!"

Besides the haroset, their ceremonial seder plate will contain horseradish (or bitter herb) recalling the bitterness of slavery, to be Ceremoniously tasted with the sweet haroset during the seder, roasted egg and roasted shank bone representing the ancient Passover sacrifices on the altar, and karpas (greens), celery or parsley, symbolizing the Festival of Spring.

Nephew Nir Levy, 11, the youngest child present, will recite the Four Questions, adding his voice to the chorus of Jewish children across the globe, as he asks why this Passover night is different from all other nights. On the table, as in the streets of Israel, East meets West, and our menu for Passover combines Levy's spicy Moroccan stew with an Eastern European savory kugel for a melding of flavors every family will enjoy.