



COMMUNITY WORDS

TRADITIONAL FOODS OFFERS COMFORT DURING COVID

BY ATIDA LIPSHATZ - OCTOBER 1, 2020

Our dining room table is now a jigsaw table.

Our TV room is now a gym.

Instead of 24 guests around the table for Rosh Hashana ,it was just us 4 household members.

I can add many items to the list of " Unprecedented in 2020 " including colouring my own hair and not

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going to shule over Yontef.

I do put on a dress every Friday night but haven't worn heels in months and the lipsticks are just gathering dust.

My workplace has been closed for nearly a quarter and I haven't seen my children in Israel for over a year. My eyes are going square from zooming and as much as I love walking, I want to actually sit down for a chat in a coffee shop.

In place of our usual huge sukkah where we entertain family and friends many times over the week, we bought a little pop up to fit a maximum of 6.

The Prime Minister and the Premier have put a stop to so much in our lives in the times of the pandemic – BUT during this Yontef season, my food processor can still slice and my Kenwood can still mix.

I am able to find comfort and consolation in cooking traditional foods.

Kneading honeycomb into the Rosh Hashana challah, baking butter cake to break the fast and preparing cabbage balls for Sukkot brings a touch of normality to my upended life.

The tastes, aromas and even the visuals of the customary foods contribute to my sense of well-being.

During the first lock down, I committed to trying at least one new recipe a week.

My family sampled all kinds of dishes. Most were relegated as one-time wonders and a few were upgraded to the regular repertoire.

But the Yontef season has me longing for nostalgia and familiarity.

Years ago one of my daughters lovingly compiled a book of my late mother's recipes and I now crave the recipes from it more than any anti-oxidant rich supersalad.

Through these challenging times, my sisters and I have a wonderful arrangement for Yontef where we still share the preparation of the meal and each take to the others our particular specialty. Of course I'd rather them and their families sitting around our extended table, but if I can't enjoy that, at least we can still have a small sense of family closeness by knowing that together, apart, we are relishing the same delicious meal. I can still enjoy my one sister's perfect honey cake and the other sister's unique tzimmus because Yontef just isn't the same without them.

COVID has given us the opportunity to evaluate our values priorities and desires.

I have certainly realised that the ritual of preparing our family traditional foods is very important to my equilibrium at this significant time of year and helps take away some of the disappointment of the many aspects of Yontef we are missing out on.

The soothing of linking to the past through food, perhaps triggers a sense of hope of reconnecting in the future.

So without too much further analysis, I'm going to pop on my slippers, roll some shtrudel pastry with my unmanicured hands and hopefully chat to my Israeli kids on Facetime.

ARTICLE BY AUTHOR/S

**Atida Lipshatz**

Atida Lipshatz is a trained Optometrist but currently works managing an Orthodontic practice. She lives in Melbourne, has been happily married to her husband for 30 years and is the proud mother of 4 adult children , 2 of whom live in Israel. She has a great passion for most things Jewish - traditions , Israel, Hebrew, knowledge, peoplehood and community. The observance of the Jewish Holidays, and the cooking and entertaining that come with it, are very central to her being.

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