



TUV HASHAVUA: Best of the Week

Re-Learning to Cook for My Ancestors *by Momo Hikoza*

My loved ones are aging and the process doesn't have that promised "golden years" type of glow to it. Some already experience health issues in both body and mind; issues concerning the spirit can also follow, and part of my inheritance is to care for my stricken relatives.

In my family, one side consists of boringly healthy farmers who tend to live long. On the other side - now, they are the interesting ones! They include government-overhauling politicians, revolutionary doctors and teachers, entrepreneurs, warriors on the wrong side of the war, poets, theologians, photographers, artists, thieves, writers - the stuff of romance and legend. But on that side of the family, there was also insanity - even more romantic!

Honestly, I think that the "insanity" was overhyped. Instead, that side of the family suffers from what is rapidly now being recognized as garden-variety dementia. Since symptoms can show up in a person's 30s (rather than when they are very old, as was once thought), my ancestors were described as "normal," but generally temperamental, eccentric, hard-to-handle, etc. There was an acceptance of a "jerk gene," but in reality, I think they behaved that way because they were suffering earlier-onset dementia.

Since I'm a caretaker for one of my ancestors who suffers from Alzheimer's, and also since I'm the one who enjoys researching and cooking, it's fallen upon me to get him to eat. Alas, he is someone who was never particularly fond of eating, and it was a challenge for my stricken relative to eat to maintain his health, as much as possible. The healthier he is, the less the disease seemed to progress, so it is worth the effort. Getting the right nutrients often requires listening to one's body, but what happens when the mind no longer listens?

Various guidelines advise the Alzheimer's patient to drink plenty of fluids and to consume foods dense with nutrients, rather than empty calories - but for a different reason: patients tend to have limited capacity and reduced appetite, so every bite needs to convey nutrients as well as needed calories for energy. It's more important than for younger people who enjoy eating; getting nutrients isn't the problem usually - rather, we tend to get far too many nutrients, even when we "eat healthy"!

So, the basics: high-quality ingredients, careful cooking and portion control, high-liquid fruit and vegetables to reduce the need for glasses of water, and flexibility to accommodate the "don't-wannas." Sounds like baby food; but he won't eat pabulum, either.

Cooking foods and serving meals with CSA ingredients helps to ensure that the nutrients in the food are retained better than for produce bought in a

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THANK YOU to Our VOLUNTEERS

7/9 Pick-up [B Week]

Jane Cinsov
Manisha Shah-Balargon
Tara Johnston
Food Bank Delivery:
Lenny Fuchs

7/18 Pick-up [A Week]
THURSDAY PICKUP!

Deborah Witlin
Judy Gostl
Judy Beizer
Food Bank Delivery:
David Snyder

Momo was first taught to cook in a culture known for the reverence of its elders. The CSA has been helpful toward her re-learning how to cook to ensure her elders get better nutrition with their food - a double mitzvah!



CAYUGA PURE ORGANICS (CPO) - our grain, bean, and flour farm - suffered a devastating fire on May 30, which destroyed the barn housing all of CPO's cleaning and packaging equipment, as well as a considerable amount of inventory. We do not yet know how our shares will be affected throughout this season; we will keep you updated as information becomes available.

We will be donating *tzedakah* to Cayuga Pure Organics collected through the end of July.

TUV HA'ARETZ CSA at the Forest Hills Jewish Center
106-06 Queens Blvd., Forest Hills, NY 11375
718-264-7000, ext 250 | tuv@fhjc.org

WEBSITES:

- **FHJC:** www.fhjc.org
- **Hazon:** www.hazon.org
- **Golden Earthworm:** www.goldenearthworm.squarespace.com
- **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/tuvFHJC
- **Yahoo Listserv:** groups.yahoo.com/group/TuvForAllFHJC
- **Twitter:** twitter.com/#!/tuvfhjc



NEXT WEEK 7/18 Tish B'Av: THURSDAY PICK-UP!

[B] WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Kohlrabi	FRUIT SHARE
Zucchini	Blueberries
Green Lettuce	Gooseberries
Red Lettuce	HERB SHARE
Radicchio	Mint
Swiss Chard	Oregano
Cipollini Onions	CAYUGA SHARE
	Pre-ordered Cayuga grains, beans, and flour available for those who did not pick-up last week

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store. Since many elderly people don't have much of an appetite anyway, smaller portions can appear less challenging than a big plate of food, served all at once.

Thinking about how to serve the meal, and of the capacities and appetites of your loved ones can help define how your produce is prepared when you get it home. I don't cook things to a flavorful base, as I might for myself; I cook instead for later ease, and to prevent spoilage. The food is kept deliberately bland for seasoning later, which depends upon how he feels that day.


I've modified my cooking so that his food is moister and tenderer, to make it easier to chew and swallow. He also responds better if the food is presented simply – for instance, it's better to first serve a saucer of celery and carrots (cut to finger- or bite size, but not smaller), then a small bowl of peas with a small spoon after he's finished the first plate, then a slider burger cut in half, then a half-serving of ice cream and berries, etc. Should I have him eat with a spoon or a fork? Big or small? A bowl, a plate, or a rimmed saucer? These choices are all related to issues of overwhelming his palate and his eyes with complexity or intensity. So far, it seems to work best to think of his palate like that of a 4-year-old – keep the food manageable and interesting, yet chewable and appealing.

Of course, if the food doesn't smell or look good, it won't get tasted. When preparing a meal, cooks keep in mind that food has to be more than just good for you. It can be frustrating for the cook when preparing

for those who find eating a dull or uninteresting chore. Learning what will prompt the "I want to eat that" response is important in piquing appetites for feeding those who cannot feed themselves, no matter what the state of their health.

All of this is even truer when a person is recovering from an injury. The elderly heal more slowly than when they were younger, and a trauma requiring medication or surgery can bring on temporary Alzheimer's-like symptoms, too. A meal can be a welcome distraction and a way for the patient to engage and control something in her out-of-control life. She likes to direct and "help" me; so, I include her, rather being upset by her "meddling."

Having a weekly CSA pickup provides a way to organize our menus, too. Organic vegetables are not often beautiful, but they do have an appealing fresh-from-the-farm appearance and fragrance, and trusting the provenance of the produce is one less worry for me! It gives us conversation material and they get some control over what they might eat over the week, which makes it more likely to be eaten.

Being a CSA member has really helped me to adapt to my new situation in positive ways. Not only can I feed my elders well, but I feed more than just my own simple physical hungers. 

! GARLIC !

\$30 for three deliveries (1 lb each in Aug, Sep, Oct; 8-10 heads/lb).

SIGN UP NOW. Make checks to *Yiddish Farm Education Center* and bring to the pick-up.

To reserve your share,
TINYURL.COM/XTRAGARLICTUV
LAST CHANCE !!

Springtime Ratatouille

Cathy Erway, noteatingoutinnyc.com
Serves 2-3

3-4 small zucchini, 1-inch chunks
2-3 cipollini onions, wedged
1-2 cloves garlic, minced
2 ripe tomatoes, chopped
1/2 cup shelled fresh peas
handful fresh oregano, torn
4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
salt and pepper, to taste

Heat a tablespoon of the olive oil on a wide, heavy-bottomed skillet or sauté pan. Once very hot, add the zucchini pieces and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, about 2 minutes, or until just browned in some areas. Remove from pan. Add another tablespoon of olive oil and scatter the onion into the hot pan. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Once slightly browned in parts and milky-white or translucent, remove from pan.

Add another tablespoon of olive oil and add the minced garlic. Once fragrant, after a few seconds, add the tomatoes and a pinch of salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, 2-3 minutes or until juices have slightly cooked down. Add the peas and cook another 1-2 minutes. Return the squashes and onions to the pan and cook until warmed through and slightly more softened. Taste and correct for seasoning. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil and the fresh herbs with crusty bread.

TIP FOR ALZHEIMER'S DINERS: Try cooking the ingredients separately and putting them on a single plate, arranged in little piles. The diners can eat these separately, or they can mix them together as they eat. Cut the bread into bit-sized pieces, especially if it's crusty. They will eat slowly, may need encouragement, and will follow your example. So, eat with them and be patient. 😊