

# Food conference gets me thinking

by **Natasha Rosenstock**

My road trip to the Hazon Jewish Food conference at the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, Conn., was half the learning experience of the weekend. I had the pleasure of spending six hours with two total strangers, learning about them, and myself, and getting a taste of just how much I didn't know about the food issues I was about to discuss for the weekend.

The driver, Rhea Kennedy, lives in Columbia Heights, works in public relations at Gallaudet University, is an aspiring vegetarian gourmet and has her own food blog, [www.youaredelicious.net](http://www.youaredelicious.net).

Rachel Kriger is learning five-season acupuncture (based on the traditional Chinese theory of the five elements, or seasons) in Laurel and, thanks to our road trip, I now know what that is.

Kruger grew up in a suburb of Philadelphia, but lived at the Freedman Center and participated in its farming and sustainable living fellowship. She's about to move into the woods again. She eagerly anticipated Kennedy's and my discovery of the pleasures of the rural retreat center.

We laughed that my version of escaping the city for the country is going to Potomac for Shabbat. There are crickets and stars and quiet all night so that I sleep deeply. There aren't sidewalks or streetlights. That's as country as I need.

Kennedy is from a small college town where people don't lock their doors. Me, I'm afraid of anything quieter and darker than the suburbs. It doesn't bring me peace — it makes me nervous.

It reminds me of when my sister used to tell me she was more afraid of walking at night in my college town than hers — which was New York City. It's because there weren't any people around. It's creepy!

I wasn't even at the conference yet, but was already seeing food in a different way. We discussed the kosher implications of genetically modified foods and the virtues — or not — of tofu (soy bean curd), seitan (wheat gluten food products) and tempeh (fermented soybean cake) as we passed signs on the road for Cinnabon and Carvel.

On one hand, keeping kosher makes it easy to opt out of much of the fast food Americans are offered. On the other hand, there is plenty of kosher junk food and opportunities not to eat real, whole food.

Opting out of the usual American diet of altered, chemical laden food can feel like eating on a desert island. Well, I don't know exactly how it feels — but I'm trying! Last year I tried a nine-day diet from a celebrity doctor. I ate only whole food and no meat or chicken for nine days. For carbohydrates, I ate brown

rice and oatmeal. I had so much more energy and felt like a new person. I am trying to get back on that wagon. I thought that was the most ideal, difficult, clean diet.

Boy, I didn't even know where a lifelong commitment to healthy eating could start!

At the conference, I attended a seminar about nourishment lead by Hale Sofia Schatz, author of *If the Buddha Came to Dinner, How to Nourish*

*Your Body to Awaken Your Spirit*.

Schatz asked the group, "What is nourishment?"

Rachel's "receiving replenishment" answer left her in awe.

I thought eating lots of vegetables and unprocessed food was an accomplishment. She has an entire grid illustrating what foods to combine for each meal and a host of other guidelines. For instance,

- Eat fruit alone, never with a protein (unless you're diabetic) because it will create fermentation in your body.

- We are often given several choices of carbohydrates at meals — such as rice, bread or pasta. But we don't choose. We take some of each. It creates confusion for your body. Eat only one of each food, such as carbohydrates and protein, at each meal.

- Avoid genetically modified foods (by choosing organic) — especially the foods we eat the most often, such as wheat, rice and corn.

- Eat seasonally, locally and organically whenever possible.

- "Get off the flour because it feeds the cycle of sugar and caffeine."

- And for those who eat more sometimes because they don't want to waste food? She says it is better to throw food away than to become the waste receptacle yourself.

As digestion takes place, you absorb nutrients through assimilation and integration in the small intestine. Food becomes you. Think about that next time you look at a bear claw.

I had the privilege of eating lunch with Schatz. She told us to think about something when we look at our plates. Does this fit who I used to be, how I used to eat, or my focus for the future? Does it reflect the on-the-go passionate person I

want to be now?

Food choices were a bit clearer than at the usual buffet because the Isabella Freedman staff listed all of the ingredients for each dish. They also indicated when they used locally grown ingredients

At the end of the weekend, it suddenly seemed so Jewish to be a Jewish farmer. So much of Judaism is about ancient traditions and living the way our ancestors did. Even if they often weren't allowed to own land and farm on it — they lived and ate seasonally, instead of trying to beat nature into submission. That's what I took home.

I want to experience the natural rhythm to life that was second nature to many until less than 100 years ago. I need to stop sending my husband to three stores to find fresh blueberries in

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gal Jewish immigrants heading to Palestine. He also forcefully and successfully urged the War Cabinet in 1943 to extend Jewish immigration into Palestine beyond the White Paper's March 1944 deadline and to allow illegal Jewish immigrants into Palestine up to the quota.

An anti-Zionist colonial secretary complained in 1941 that Churchill repeatedly asked him, "What are you doing to my Jews?"

Also, Churchill consistently opposed harsh treatment of Jewish refugees, sought to arm Palestinian Jews against the Arabs, and vigorously worked to establish a postwar regional settlement that included a Zionist state.

Churchill undoubtedly could have done more for Jews seeking refuge in Palestine, but the record is more positive and complex than Medoff suggests.

**MICHAEL MAKOVSKY**  
Washington

## Warm, positive

*Washington Jewish Week* has joined those condemning the *Philadelphia Weekly* for running a picture of a dreidel-playing hamster on the cover of its annual gift guide ("What's cute to one, offensive to another," *Mishmash*, *WJW*, Nov. 29).

The cover, which can readily be seen on the Internet, is a warm and positive depiction of Chanukah. Regardless of whether one thinks the hamster is cute or cuddly, the picture bears no resemblance to the images historically found in anti-Semitic cartoons.

The hamster actually reminded me of Mendel the Mouse, a character in Jewish children's literature, who also wore a *yarmulke* and who, of course, was a rodent.

Maybe those who complained were also offended by Fievel and the Mousekewitz family in *An American*

November because I want to make a particular recipe. The truth is that the blueberries he found tasted like wood. They were probably picked before they were ripe and then shipped from California.

I'm about to read the Schatz book and am tempted to try her "nourishment cleanse," which is not about fasting, but experimenting to see what foods, in what combinations, feel good for your body.

I'm ready to jump on the bandwagon, but will have to wait. Schatz says that cleanses should only happen in the spring because that is the time of renewal. Doing it now just wouldn't be very seasonal of me.

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*Tale.* Let's please reserve our criticism or ridicule for those whose treatment of Jewish issues is biased or hostile.

**STUART ENDICK**  
Burke

## Making a difference

The National Domestic Violence Hotline's Campaign "Called to Make a Difference" invites people to prevent the tragedy of domestic violence. The Interfaith Community Against Domestic Violence wishes to recognize one person, Barbara J. Zakheim, who chose to make a difference.

Eight years ago, Ms. Zakheim read a *WJW* article about a local Jewish domestic violence victim and subsequently discovered that Washington, D.C., was the only major metropolitan area in the country that did not have a specific organization to help Jewish victims of abuse. She gathered friends and they formed the Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse.

JCADA soon realized that emotional, physical, financial and psychological abuse occurs in the Jewish community at about the same extent as in the general population, meaning that they were, therefore, addressing a pressing unmet need.

During a program on Dec. 9 at Beth Shalom Congregation and Talmud Torah of Potomac, JCADA supporters thanked Ms. Zakheim, founder and immediate past president, for her leadership in creating and directing an organization that supports victims and their families, educates the community about the existence of abuse and helps prevent abuse through its student education programs.

The IFCADV joins in thanking and honoring Ms. Zakheim for her courageous decision to make a difference.

**SHARON A. O'BRIEN**  
President of IFCADV



*Capital Schmoozing*  
**Natasha Rosenstock**