

american samplers, series 3 (the chicken chronicles, no. 1)

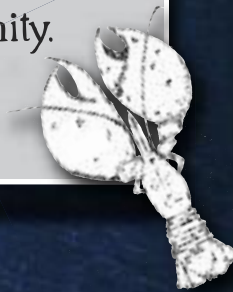
susan c. dessel

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2009

Daily Fare -

[Jewish] Peddlers were known as "egg-eaters" by the Cherokee Indians with whom they traded because eggs were the only available Kosher food which could be obtained away from an established Jewish community.

- Leon A. Harris, quoted in Colleen E.H. Berndt. *Hostile Territory: High-tension Religion and the Jewish Peddler* (San Jose: San Jose State University, 2007), 19.



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In 1654 –

In September 1654, twenty-three Jewish refugees from Brazil stepped ashore on the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam [New York].

In 1700 about two hundred Jews lived in the British colonies of North America.

In January 1784, a trio of members of New York's Shearith Israel [Remnant of Israel, the first Jewish congregation in North America, also known as The Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue] presented a letter to the State's first governor, George Clinton. They wanted to acquaint him with the 'ancient congregation of Israelites' ... They hoped that by introducing themselves and making him aware that 'though the society [they] belong[ed] to is but small when compared to the other religious societies... none has manifested a more zealous attachment to the sacred cause of America in the late war with Great Britain' than it. ... [they] noted that they, and the people for whom they spoke, now expected to reap the benefits of living 'under a constitution wisely framed to preserve the inestimable blessings of civil and religious liberty.'

This document mixed hope, fear, genuine enthusiasm for the American cause, and concern that somehow the Jews, a miniscule community living in a sea of Christians, would be invisible.

– Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 13, 39, 41.



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Jewish farmers, then and now –

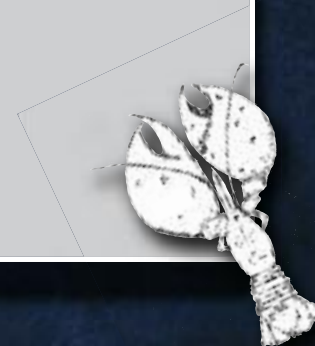
In 1892 Yana “John” Garson, an immigrant from Vilna, Lithuania (then Russia) and recognized as the first Jewish farmer in the area, was in Glen Wild, near Woodridge, in Sullivan County... & produced the area’s specialty, iced fresh milk for New York City.

– Abraham D. Lavender & Clarence B. Steinberg. *Jewish Farmers of the Catskills: A Century of Survival* (Gainesville, Fla.:University Press of Florida, 1995), 31.

In 2012 Jeff and Adina Bialas harvested for the first time a small but substantial crop of salsify at J&A Farm in Goshen, New York, where they grow 12 acres of mixed vegetables. Jeff describes salsify as “parsnip’s ugly cousin,” but says that it adds an important element of variety to his later-fall offerings at the farmers market. The root vegetable tastes like an artichoke or sunchoke, which is an easy selling point for some of J&A Farm’s customers. Jeff said that he made small bunches of the roots, so more people would be willing to try cooking with it. Once they had, many quickly became converts.

“We ended up selling out of the entire crop by a little after Thanksgiving..which was unexpected,” said Jeff, who planted two 500-foot long rows of the vegetables this past year. He planted the salsify with carrots and parsnips since they are all long-season crops. “We plant it end of April, early May, and we don’t harvest ‘til after Labor Day, ‘til around the first frost, almost October,” he added.

– From an interview by Joy Y. Wang, “*Last Chance Foods: Satisfying Salsify*,” WNYC Radio, January 11, 2009, <http://www.wnyc.org/articles/last-chance-foods/2013/jan/11/last-chance-foods-satisfying-salsify/> (accessed)



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Chalaf, the shochet's knife –

Ritual slaughter of animals differs in many ways from common techniques of slaughter. In ritual slaughter, we find caution and detail in every act. In this rabbinically-supervised slaughter, the animal is killed with a knife. In this act we emphasize Jewish respect for the dignity of life.

The blade must be flawless, without a nick, and perfectly smooth, thus assuring that the kill will be quick, clean and painless to the animal. This entire process begins with the shochet (ritual slaughterer) inspecting the knife for possible flaws and nicks. He does this by running the edge of his fingernail and finger up and down the blade. The slightest nick means that the knife must be resharpened. After this, he recites a short Bracha [blessing] before beginning the actual shechita [ritual slaughter].

This knife (chalaf) is usually about 6 inches long for chickens and 18 inches long for larger animals. The knife has no point at the end of it, and is of equal width from top to bottom. These precautions are necessary in order to guarantee that the neck of the animal will not be torn. The shochet must cut through the trachea and esophagus to the jugular vein very quickly and in a clean fashion. He must not kill the animal by stabbing it.

– Eliezer Eidlitz, *"Is It Kosher?" in Encyclopedia of Kosher Foods: Facts and Fallacies* (Israel: Feldheim Publishers Ltd., 1992), 76-77.



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Kosher meat in Nieuw Amsterdam/New York: The shochet [person certified competent to kill cattle and poultry in the manner prescribed by Jewish law] –

Under the Dutch, Asser Levy and Moses Lucena were sworn in as slaughters of animals in 1660, the former becoming a partner of Egbert Meindersen, a butcher, and also dealing in cattle. We also find that on October 31, 1665, Asser Levy, by virtue of his appointment under the Dutch, was resworn in under the English as a slaughterer of animals, with other butchers, among whom was Gerrit Jansen Roos, whose partner he became in the building and ownership of a slaughter house patented to them and known as the Broadway Shambles.

It is interesting to note that when Levy and Lucena were sworn in, they were exempted from having to slaughter hogs. The shochet ritually slaughtered animals for any non-Jewish butcher who wished to sell kosher meat in the general markets of the city. Such meat was marked by two small seals of lead attached by wire to each quarter. On these seals, in addition to the word kosher, a Hebrew letter representing the day of the week was marked; later, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, a number corresponding to the secular date was added. Among the effects of the Shearith Israel [Remnant of Israel, the first Jewish congregation in North America, also known as The Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue] shochet were sets of pincers for impressing these letters and numbers. It was understood that Jews coming to the market could check the meat they were about to buy to make sure the seals were attached.

– Hyman B. Grinstein. *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York 1654-1860*
(Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 5705/1945), 298-299.



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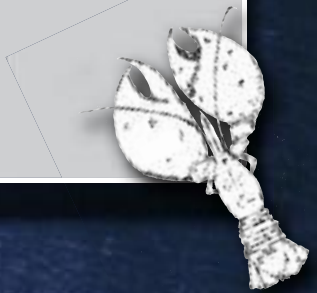
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Having been ritually slaughtered and brought to the kitchen -

For the meat to be kosher, all traces of blood must be removed by soaking in cold water for half an hour, then sprinkling the meat on all sides with coarse salt and allowing it to drain for one hour before washing it again in cold water three times.

- Claudia Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey From Samarkand to New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 20.



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While circumstances dictated that some Jewish women in seventeenth and eighteenth-century New York engaged in the mercantile world –

Most Jewish women devoted the majority of their hours to raising their children in a traditional Jewish home. Maintaining a kosher home required an extensive commitment of time. A member of congregation Shearith Israel [Remnant of Israel, the first Jewish congregation in North America, also known as The Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue] reminisced that the 'women of the congregation were the real actors in the kitchen business.' Women cooked and baked for themselves; servants could not work in the kitchen without the immediate supervision of the woman of the home; otherwise the dwelling would be treifa (unclean). If a woman suspected that the rules of kashrut (kosher), including separate dishes for meat and dairy products, were not followed, she was obliged to report it to the synagogue... If the burdens of maintaining a kosher kitchen gave special meaning to life, it also meant added work.

– Howard B. Rock, *Haven of Liberty, New York Jews in the New World, 1654-1865, vol. 1 of, City of Promises: A History of the Jews of New York*, Deborah Dash-Moore, General Editor (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 64.



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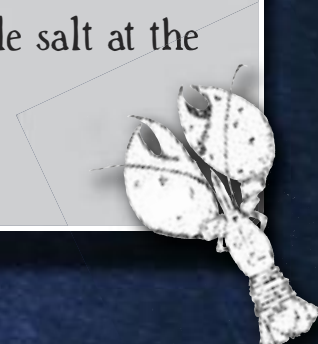
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SALT -

In Biblical times, salt was used as an offering to God. 'With all thy offerings thou shalt offer salt' is a directive in Leviticus, and as the table represents the alter, it means that there should always be salt on it. Bread dipped in salt is a symbol of hospitality. [Royalty] and lowly strangers have always been welcomed with it in Jewish lore. Salt also has various symbolic meanings in Jewish folklore. In Egypt, at Passover, we dipped lettuce in salted water, which represented the tears of the Hebrew slaves of the Pharaohs. Moroccans sprinkle salt at the birth of a child to ward off the evil eye.

- Claudia Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand to New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 233.



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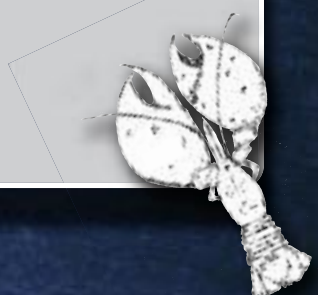
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An official 1899 survey of New York City's Eighth Assembly District which included much of the Jewish immigrant enclave enumerated 631 food shops which –

... catered to the needs of the inhabitants of this area. Most numerous were the 140 groceries which often sold fruits, vegetables, breads and rolls as well as the usual provisions. Second in number were the 131 butcher shops which proclaimed their wares in Hebrew characters. The other food venders included: 36 bakeries, 9 bread stands, 14 butter and egg stores, 3 cigarette shops, 7 combination two-cent coffee shops, 10 delicatessens, 9 fish stores, 7 fruit stores, 21 fruit stands, 3 grocery stands, 7 herring stands, 2 meat markets, 16 milk stores, 2 matzo...stores, 10 sausage stores, 13 wine shops, 15 grape wine shops, and 10 confectioners.

– Hasia Diner, "A Century of Migration, 1820-1920," In *From Haven to Home 350 Years of American Jewish Life*, ed. Michael W. Grunberger (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 2004), 87-88.



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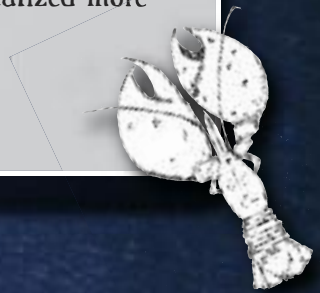
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The establishment of government by free consent of all had become imbedded in the mind of the average [wo]man, as an essential part of the American dream—

No, the American dream that has lured tens of millions of all nations to our shores in the past century has not been a dream of merely material plenty, though that doubtless counted heavily. It has been much more than that. It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any class. And that dream has been realized more fully in actual life here than anywhere else, though imperfectly even among ourselves.

— James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1931), 83, 416.



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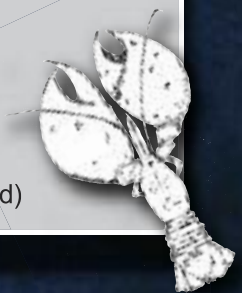
We have a dream that one day all work will be valued equally –

Domestic Workers United [DWU] is an organization of Caribbean, Latina and African nannies, housekeepers, and elderly caregivers in New York, organizing for power, respect, fair labor standards and to help build a movement to end exploitation and oppression for all.

Domestic Workers United was founded in 2000 by groups of women workers after having done two years of advocacy for individual domestic workers who were underpaid or abused by their employers. Members felt the need to build power as an entire workforce, particularly for those who were not being organized, and establish fair labor standards for the industry. Since its founding DWU has been organizing workers from the Caribbean, Africa and Latin America. DWU collaborates with other domestic worker organizations in New York, across the US and internationally to build the power of the domestic workforce as a whole. At the first US Social Forum in 2007, DWU became a founding member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA). In 2010, DWU represented NDWA as a founding member of the International Domestic Workers Network.

In 2003, DWU and the NY Domestic Workers Justice Coalition launched the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights campaign. After six and a half years of organizing, building a base of over 4000 workers and a broad coalition including employers, unions, clergy and various community organizations, we brought our power to bear with the passage of the nation's first comprehensive legislation extending basic rights and protections to domestic workers. The New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights was signed into law on August 31, 2010. DWU is now leading the implementation of the historic law through outreach, education, and enforcement and also helping to support similar Bill of Rights campaigns across the country.

– From DWU (Domestic Workers United), *"History and Mission,"* www.domesticworkersunited.org/index.php/en/about/history-mission. (accessed)



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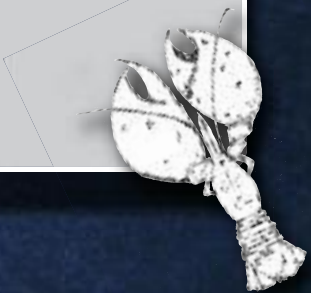
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From an interview at Champion Ping Pong (a.k.a. Champion Table Tennis Center) on Roosevelt Avenue in Jackson Heights, Queens (NYC) with Jidong Lu: born in Mainland China and came to the U.S. in 1989 as a student—

Working as a dean in a public high school in the Bronx is a lot of stress... That's why I come to this club five nights a week. Ping pong is an excellent sport to relieve pressure.

Playing ping pong, one rule you have to keep in mind - to be flexible. And in life, in whatever kind of job you take, you have to be flexible. We come to this earth with nothing, and when we leave we cannot take anything with us. In between you just have to find a way to enjoy yourself. Not to be bothered by petty things. When you hit the ball, each one coming at you is different. In your life too. There are different stages, different ways of life. When I was in China ten years ago, I would never have imagined I'd be here in America. And everything changed after I came here because you have to start from the very beginning again. Like playing table tennis, you do not know what kind of angle the ball is going to be hit to you. So you just have to remain flexible.

— Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, *Crossing the BLVD: strangers, neighbors, aliens in a new America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 345.



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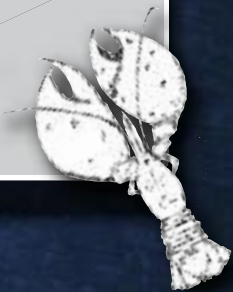
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You don't have to be Jewish to love Levy's –

The renegotiations of American and Jewish identities in [works of fiction] are often complex, contrary to conventional notions of popular cultural facility. This can be seen even in something as ostensibly slight and straightforward as an advertisement. The famous print ad campaign that told the American public 'You don't have to be Jewish' to love Levy's 'real' Jewish rye bread – and featuring photos of a native American Indian, an Irish policeman, an Italian cook, and African-American and Asian-American children, all happily feasting on slices of rye bread – explores ethnic stereotypes as it subverts them.

– Jeffrey Shandler, "American Jewish Popular Culture," in *From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life In America*, ed. Michael W. Grunberger (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 2004), 203.



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From a nationally representative random-digit-dial telephone survey with oversamples of Black, Latino, and Asian respondents in the United States—

In her analysis of the survey Professor Deborah Schildkraut explored the meaning of American identity and its impact on contemporary debates about immigration. She focused on the causes and consequences of two facets of American identity: (1) how people define the normative content of American identity, and (2) the extent to which people think of themselves primarily as American rather than primarily as a member of a pan-ethnic (i.e. Latino or Asian) or national origin group.

I conclude that national identity within American democracy can be a blessing, a curse, or none of the above. Under some conditions, it can enhance participation, trust in government, and one's sense of obligation to the American community. I also find that there is a real yearning among the American people for a sense of unity amid our diversity – rather than a yearning for replacing diversity with uniformity. But national identity within American democracy can be a curse for society as a whole when our attachments are so strong that perceptions of deviation lead to threat and resentment. It can also be a curse to members of minority groups who are attached to their American identity but who also perceive that they suffer from discrimination. And still there are other cases where conventional wisdom would lead us to expect to find significant impacts of identity attachments, and yet there are none. The notion of American identity is thus a predisposition that the government has good reason to cultivate, but also good reason to approach with caution.

– Deborah J. Schildkraut, “*Analysis of the Results of the 21st Century Americanism Survey (21-CAS)*,”
Americanism in the Twenty-First Century: Public Opinion in the Age of Immigration (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
www.russellsage.org/research/immigration/public-opinion-about-being-an-American-in-the-age-of-immigration (accessed)

