

Sabrina Malach on Shoresh

Kaley Ames

A stunning beauty with dirt under her fingernails from days in the field or greenhouse, Sabrina Malach is warm, energetic and passionate about food. As the director of community outreach for Shoresh Jewish Environmental Programs, Sabrina has dedicated herself to fulfilling Shoresh's mission –to build a connected and ecologically sustainable Jewish community. In 2012 Shoresh partnered with 350 community organizations, reaching 2750 community members through the plethora of unique programs. With food at the core of Shoresh, in 2012 they provided their partners with over 3500 pounds of fresh, local, organic vegetables for people in need through the Canadian Jewish Humanitarian Organization, Ve'ahavta. Shoresh's extensive programs span every age group, starting at kindergarten and stretching all way to the residents at Baycrest where Shoresh conducts a series of eight workshops in addition to a planted gardening space. Shoresh is only a few years young, and with 2012 being their biggest year yet I was excited to have the opportunity to ask Sabrina a few questions about some of the exciting projects Shoresh will be offering up in 2013.

First off, what is unique about Shoresh?

At Shoresh we come to the table with something everyone cares about: food. Food brings people of different denominations together –and it is something that has been the focus of our community for three thousand years.

Shoresh is also deeply concerned with food accessibility, food justice, and hunger relief as

feeding the poor and taking care of our neighbours is essential to Jewish ethics and practice. Our partnership with Ve'ahavta demonstrates that commitment in addition to the holistic methodology that drives Shoresh. **Tell me about Shoresh's Kavanah Garden and Shoresh at Bela Farm.**

Shoresh's Kavanah Garden is celebrating its fifth season. Almost 1500 people play, learn and plant in the garden every year. The Kavanah Garden features over 100 varieties of organic vegetables, herbs, fruits, and wildflowers and provides the physical grounds for teaching land based Jewish values and growing sustainable organic food. With support from the Six Points Jewish Venture Philanthropy Fund this spring, we are building a permanent home for the Garden in partnership with UJA Federation at their Lebovic Jewish Community Campus in Vaughan.

We are in the process of creating Bela Farm, a rural centre for sustainable land based Judaism one-hour west of Toronto. We are fortunate to have 115 acres of land donated to us just outside of the city.

What are some hot topics concerning Shoresh at this moment in time?

First I would have to say food and how it impacts our personal, communal and planetary health. People are very focused on being organic and as healthy as they can be, which is something we at Shoresh are very passionate about. Yet we strive to shift some focus on taking care of our neighbours and the planet. While the food you eat might be good for your body, you also have to think about the impact your consumption has on the community and the environment.

Another interesting trend is the 'old becoming the new' again. We have seen artisanal

gefilte fish companies opening up in places like New York. People are sitting down with their grandmothers and recording recipes and collecting as much old-world information as they can in order to own our food history. Reclaiming things like matzo ball soup and brisket because they are a part of our heritage and it binds us a people.

Which raises the idea of the power that food has on our community's plurality and inclusivity. The table is one of the best places in Jewish culture where we can either come together or be torn apart over things like kashrut and levels of observance. If we at Shoresh can create some format where people can come and eat and be brought together by food no matter what their denomination, then I think we have done a good job. This is something we are focusing a lot of energy on and while we are making progress our work is far from over.

To find out more about Shoresh, visit their website at www.shoresh.ca

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