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Friday, November 29, 2013

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Chanukah: 3 Candles occurs on Friday, 29 Nov 2013
Candle lighting: 4:26pm on Friday, 29 Nov 2013
This week's Torah portion is Parashat Miketz
Chanukah: 4 Candles occurs on Saturday, 30 Nov 2013
Havdalah (45 min): 5:28pm on Saturday, 30 Nov 2013

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Food and memories – an unbeatable combination

Barbara Silverstein, Special to The CJN, Friday, November 29, 2013

Tags: Food

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The laughter was loud and the nostalgia was palpable at Beyond Bubbie, an evening of storytelling that linked food and family lore.

Nine presenters, eight of them local foodies, served up memories of their grandmothers' and mothers' cooking to an audience of some 300 people at the Al Green Theatre.

Beyond Bubbie was presented by the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre; UJA Federation of Greater Toronto's Ontario Jewish Archives; Shoresh, a Jewish environmental organization; and Reboot, a think tank

and project incubator that grapples with issues of Jewish identity.

Rose Reisman Catering and The Pickle Barrel sponsored the event, which was held to promote, Beyond Bubbie, an interactive community cookbook (www.beyondbubbie.com). Award-winning food writer David Sax hosted the evening, and the Varsity Jews, a University of Toronto a cappella choir provided the musical entertainment.

Celebrity chef Rose Reisman, an author, caterer and restaurateur, says her late mother, Mary Finson (Finkelstein), never encouraged her to cook. "She liked to cook fattening foods for me."

Reisman showed a clip of the cooking show, Loving Spoonful with host David Gale, which featured a bake-off between Reisman and Finson. Reisman prepared chocolate biscotti while Finson made mandelbrot. For Finson, the winning recipe was clear. When she tasted her daughter's biscotti, she politely said, "That's nice." But when she took a bite of her own mandelbrot, she told viewers: "These melt in your mouth."

Executive chef Anthony Rose of Rose and Sons spoke of summer weekends at his grandparents' cottage on Lake Simcoe, where, following an afternoon of fishing with his grandfather, Simon Gottlieb, his grandmother Esther would fry the freshly caught fish and serve it on toasted challah with slices of gefilte fish. Rose calls the dish Gefilte and Fish Schnitke.

Restaurateur Judy Perly, the originator of Klezmer Sundays at the Free Times Cafe, reminisced about her grandmother, Gertie Wasserman who was always worried the family didn't eat properly, because her daughter, Bella Wasserman Perly, worked at Perly Maps, the family business. Wasserman often phoned her daughter to ask, "Bella did you eat?" – which is how the Free Times Cafe Sunday brunch got its name.

Dino Venasio, owner of the kosher deli Ben & Izzy's (3513 Bathurst St.), said he learned to cure meat from his Italian grandmother. An observant Jew today, he can't eat any more of her cooking, but he shared fond

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memories of making pasta with his grandmother every Sunday. Venasio generously treated everyone in attendance to smoked meat sandwiches from Ben & Izzy's after the presentation.

While Venasio, went from Italian to Jewish cuisine, chef Alida Solomon of Tutti Matti learned to make pasta from her adopted grandmother in Tuscany. Her mother, Maureen Solomon, a retired teacher, helps in the restaurant. And now Alida Solomon has taught her mother how to make homemade Italian pasta.

Other presenters that evening included food writer and broadcaster Sarah Elton, playwright and novelist Sean Dixon and First Nations cultural co-ordinator Denise Booth.

BUBBIE MARY'S MANDELBROT

(Rose Reisman's mother)

3 eggs

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 cup oil

2 cups all purpose flour

2 tsp. baking powder

1-1/2 cups corn flake-style cereal, crushed

1 cup chopped almonds

pinch cinnamon

Line a baking sheet with foil sprayed with oil. Preheat oven to 350.

In a mixing bowl combine eggs, sugar and oil until well mixed. Add flour, baking powder, cereal and almonds and mix well. Form 2 logs and place on baking sheet. Sprinkle with cinnamon and bake 30 minutes. Cool 10 minutes.

Reduce temperature to 300. Slice logs into 1/2 inch slices. Turn each piece on its side and bake another 40 minutes or until crisp.

ROSE REISMAN'S CHOCOLATE AND DRIED CRANBERRY BISCOTTI

2 eggs

1/3 cup oil

1 cup sugar

1-1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

1-1/2 cups flour

1/2 cup cocoa

1/2 cup rolled oats

1 tsp. baking powder

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A group of Toronto teenagers travelled to Detroit where they learned that you don't have to be homeless to be hungry.

1/2 tsp. baking soda

1/8 tsp. salt

1 cup dried cranberries

3/4 cup semi sweet chocolate chips

Line a baking sheet with foil sprayed with oil. Preheat oven 350.

Mix eggs, oil, sugar and vanilla. Add remaining ingredients and mix well, just until all ingredients are incorporated. Form dough into 2 long rolls or logs. Bake for 30 minutes.

Turn oven to 300. Slice log into 1/2- to 1-inch slices. Place cookies on their sides. Bake another 40 minutes or until done to your liking.

BUBBIE GERTIE WASSERMAN'S CHUNKY APPLE SAUCE

(Judy Perly's grandmother)

4 large apples (any kind but Macintosh), peeled and cored

1/2 a lemon cut in eighths

1/2 cup white sugar

1-1/2 cups water

1 cinnamon stick

Cook apples, lemon, sugar and cinnamon stick in water on medium heat. Adjust sugar and water to taste. When cooked, mash apples or leave them chunky. This recipe makes enough apple sauce for 4 dozen small latkes.

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