

Renew your Rosh Hashana meal

Add flavors and colors to your table *Techiya Fisher*

Each holiday and festival has its special food that combines tradition with taste, it is only reasonable to expect that on Rosh Hashanah too, we would have traditional food. Rosh Hashanah is different. It is not so much what you eat on Rosh Hashanah, but how you eat it.

Although Rosh Hashanah is a day of soul-searching and repentance, it is a happy day. We believe God is merciful and will forgive our bad deeds from the previous year. We are excited to begin a new year in which we will do more good deeds. The joy of this New Year's day is reflected in the holiday's food customs.

Each different foodstuff that we eat, we try to make "*siman - symbol*" out of it. *Siman* is really a symbol that we use to help us get a good decree for the New Year. Like a sign or indication from heaven, the *siman* works to bring out our special good luck for the next year and change a pending difficult heavenly decree. It is either the food itself symbolizes a blessing or its name connotes or sounds similar to words that indicate a blessing.

Among the sefaradic Jews it is customary to make a Seder Rosh Hashana. They follow the seder (order) of Passover Seder). The origin for this custom dates back to the period of the Babylonian Talmud. Two tractates: Keritot 6a and Horayot 12a discuss omens that carry significance, Rabbi Abaye (289 C.E – 338 C.E) said that at the beginning of each new year, people should make a habit of eating the following foods that grow in abundance and therefore symbolic to prosperity such as rubia (a been like vegetable), leeks, beets.

The Ashkenasic Jews eat also symbolic food but do not do the “seder”



Honey

We eat sweet foods on Rosh Hashanah as a symbol of our wish for a sweet year. In biblical times, honey was the sweetener. Honey also represented good living and wealth. The Land of Israel is often called the land of milk and honey in the Bible.

We dip challah into honey, instead of salt, and say the blessing over the challah. Then we dip an apple into honey, and we say a prayer asking God for a sweet year.

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלוהי אבותינו שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה

Yehi Ratzon milfa'ne'cha adonai eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu sh'yirbu z'chi'yoteinu

May it be G-d's will that our merits will increase

After reciting “Hamotzi” over the traditional round challa and dipping it in honey, we dip the apple in honey and recite

ברוך אתה אדוני אלוהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ.

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech volam boreh pri Haetz.



Fish

Rosh Hashana literally means "head of the year." Just as our head (brain) directs us, Rosh HaShana directs the ensuing year. On this day, we stock up on sustenance for the year to come. In addition, it is our hope to be the head (leader) of other nations through our righteous acts. For these reasons, it has become a tradition to eat the head of a fish during the holiday meal.

Fish is also eaten on this holiday because it is an ancient symbol of fertility and abundance.

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלוהי אבותינו שנהיה לראש ולא לזנב

Yehi Ratzon milfa'ne'cha adonai eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu shni'he'teh lerosh v'lo lezanav
May it be G-d's will that we will be the head and not the tail.



New Fruit

On the second night of Rosh Hashanah, we eat a new fruit which we have not yet eaten this season. When we eat this new fruit, we say the shehechyanu blessing which thanks God for keeping us alive and bringing us to this season. This ritual reminds us to appreciate the fruits of the earth and being alive to enjoy them.

A pomegranate is often used as this new fruit. In the Bible, the Land of Israel is praised for its pomegranates. It is also said that this fruit contains 613 seeds just as there are 613 mitzvot. Another reason given for blessing and eating this fruit on Rosh HaShana is that we wish that our good deeds in the ensuing year will be as plentiful as the seeds of the pomegranate.

Since this a new fruit, the first blessing we say is 'sh'hecheyanu':

ברוך אתה אדוני אלהינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה

Baruch ata, Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha'olam, Shehechyanu v'kimanu v'higyanu lazman hazeh

Praised be You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us and permitted us to reach this season

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלוהי אבותינו שירבו זכויותינו כרימון

Yehi Ratzon milfa'ne'cha adonai eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu sh'yirbu z'chi'yoteinu ka-rimon.
May it be G-d's will that our merits will increase like pomegranate.



Carrot- Gezer

2 customs:

In eastern Europe the custom was to eat Zimmes - honey baked carrots. The Yiddish word "meren" has 2 meanings: carrots and to increase. Carrots symbolize our hope that we will increase our good deeds in the coming year. Some tzimmes recipes add prunes, sweet potatoes or even meat to the sweet carrots. According to this custom the blessing is:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלוהי אבותינו שירבו זכויותינו

Yehi Ratzon milfa'ne'cha adonai eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu sh'yirbu z'chi'yoteinu
May it be G-d's will that our merits will increase.

The Hebrew meaning of Gezer is also "a decree" and cut off In Israel and in Sefaradic communities is

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלוהי אבותינו שתגזור עלינו גזירות טובות

Yehi Ratzon milfa'ne'cha adonai eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu sh'tigzor alei'nu gzerot tovot.
May it be G-d's will that your decrees will be good ones.



Gourd – K’rah –tear or rip and read.proclaimed

Based on these two meanings the blessing combine both ; May G-d tear our bad verdict and may our good deeds be proclaimed before him

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלוהי אבותינו שתקרע רע גזר דיננו ויקראו לפניך זכויותינו

Yehi Ratzon adonai eloheinu ve'elohei avoteinu sh'tikra ro'ah gzar din-nenu v'yikre'hu lefaneicha zchuyoteinu



Beet, Selek – remove

May it be your will, our God and the God of our fathers that our enemies will be removed.

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלוהי אבותינו שיסתלקו אויבינו.

Yehi Ratzon adonai eloheinu ve'elohei avoteinu sh'yistal'koo oyveinu



Leek – Carti -

Has similar meaning

Many of the foods are also blessed with puns on their Hebrew names that turn into wishes. Some are creating English puns such as stuffing raisins in celery as a symbolic request for “a raise in our salary. Participants at the Rosh Hashana meal are encouraged to create their own puns; to make it as family only puns. Improvisation and personalization of these puns are important aspects in creating meaning and spiritual connections between the themes of Rosh Hashana and oneself.