

CHULENT & HAMIN

THE ULTIMATE JEWISH
COMFORT FOOD

JOEL HABER

CELEBRATING THE MOST JEWISH FOOD
WITH 12 INTERNATIONAL RECIPES

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THE ULTIMATE JEWISH COMFORT FOOD

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INTRODUCTION: MANY SHABBAT STEWS. ONE JEWISH HOME.

Jews have grown into the most globalized nation on Earth. Therefore, Jewish Food is famously diverse; we are comprised of tens of sub-communities, each with its own unique dishes. Such complexity has led some people to reject the very concept of Jewish cuisine, insisting that there is “no such thing.”

Many of my predecessors in the field of Jewish Food studies strongly disagree. In the *The Book of Jewish Food*, for example, Claudia Roden insists that just “because a culture is complex, this does not mean it does not exist.” I concur, and would argue that many things can qualify a food as Jewish. It certainly doesn’t need to be indigenous to our people, nor exclusively eaten by us. No one places that demand on French, Chinese, Italian, or any other cuisine, so why require it for Jewish Food alone?

Still, while it may not be necessary, there are indeed foods that are uniquely – and originally – ours. This eBook focuses on one such food: the Shabbat stew. Throughout our people’s long and storied history, virtually every Jewish community has eaten a one-pot meal that slow-cooks through the entire Friday night, and is eaten as a hot lunch on Saturday.

The different Shabbat stews one encounters across the Jewish world are made using distinct ingredients, and bear entirely different names. For example:

- A Polish *chulent* is typically made with beef, barley, kidney beans, onions, and potatoes.
- A popular version of Moroccan *dafina* features lamb, wheat berries, sweet potatoes, chickpeas, dates, and whole eggs (cooked in their shells).
- Iraqi Jews eat *t’bit*, comprised of chicken, rice, onions, and an aromatic spice blend.

At first glance, these seem like completely different dishes. But, in reality, they are merely different versions of the same dish, a dish that I consider the most Jewish food there is!

These three examples, and the tens more like them, share a number of commonalities. They combine a grain, a meat, and some vegetables and flavoring agents. While their names appear rather different on the surface, digging deeper we discover that they frequently translate to mean similar things. And most importantly, they are all prepared on Friday and cook “low-and-slow” overnight to be ready for Shabbat day.

The slow-cook idea grew out of a specific religious requirement. Jewish law prohibits active cooking on the Sabbath day, but Jews have also wanted to honor the day with a hot meal. This passive heating of precooked food solves these conflicting demands. We see, therefore, that the genesis of the Shabbat stew (the collective term I use to describe them all) also gives the dish its Jewish Food bona fides. If it were not for our specific religious needs, we never would have invented this food in the first place.

This eBook celebrates the Shabbat stew in all of its complexity and diversity. I’ve gathered recipes from Jews around the world, and bring them here to a wider audience in order to celebrate our amazing nation. We are a complex and diverse people, made of individuals who look different from each other, speak in different languages and accents, and have lived at one point or another literally all over earth. And yet, more incredibly, so many things tie us together despite our differences, giving us an extreme unity within our diversity. The kaleidoscopic Shabbat stew fundamentally – and deliciously – expresses that paradox of almost infinite heterogeneity paired with extreme fundamental harmony.

If you regularly cook a Shabbat stew for your Sabbath meal, I hope this eBook gives you new options to try. If you rarely cook such dishes, or even never have, this book can usher you into a quick and easy exploration of Jewish Food diversity. My greatest wish, however, is that by cooking the various stew versions in this book you will come to appreciate our incredible and truly unique nation.



ABOUT THE BOOK

This eBook is connected with a larger project I am working on: a book of food writing that explores the long history of the Shabbat stew. Since I view the many versions as stemming from one source, morphing as the stew moved from place to place, I use them as a way of tracing the routes of Jewish migrations throughout the Diaspora.

How and when did we arrive in each place? What were the different characteristics of our life there? And most importantly, how were these historic changes to our people manifested in our most beloved food?

With the working title *Chulent: How an Unassuming Sabbath Stew Traveled the World, Changed its Look, and Came to Embody the Jewish Experience*, the book will not be a cookbook, per se. But writing a book that focused on food but didn't help people cook it could be very disappointing... and hunger-inducing! So, I do include a number of recipes for various versions of the Shabbat stew, illustrating the diverse faces of this ultimate Jewish comfort food.

This mini-cookbook, then, is a teaser for the larger book project, while simultaneously standing on its own. Many of the following recipes may end up in the main book, along with other equally tasty ones. Connected with both books, I've also created a one-stop shop for all your Shabbat stew needs. Packed full of recipes, including reader submissions (and please do go and add your own), www.chulentbook.com aims to be the last word on the subject. I encourage you to check it out as well.



GENERAL SHABBAT STEW TIPS

How should I cook it?

The key to a good Shabbat stew is that it is cooked for a long time at a warm but not too-hot temperature. There are, however, many ways to accomplish this “low-and-slow” cooking technique, with three most prevalent today. One is to use a slow-cooker. To do this, some start the stew on High for an hour or two, then switch to the Low setting for the rest of the night. Others might do the initial cooking in a pot on the stovetop and then transfer it.

The second and third methods both use a regular pot, ideally a thick one, such as a Dutch oven. Then you can either leave it to cook overnight in an oven at around 230°F / 110°C, or leave it on an electric hotplate (in Israel, we call this a *plata*). If your stew is relatively dry to start, you might put a heat diffuser between the pot and the hotplate to prevent the bottom from burning.

Whichever method you use, placing foil between the lid and the pot helps prevent the stew from drying out. Fold the foil up over the lid, so steam does not drip down the outside of the pot, making a mess.

Some stews are better if cooked by one or another of the above methods. I may mention one method in a recipe, but that doesn't mean the others won't work. If I feel strongly about one, I will say so in the recipe notes. Otherwise, trial and error is a great tool. If you use one method and it isn't great, try a different one the next time!

Can I...?

People often read recipes and then ask things like: “Can I change this?” “...swap this for that?” or “...leave that other thing out?” The answer is always an emphatic, “Yes!” This is exactly what people have done with this stew from time immemorial! If some family member liked their food a bit spicier, more found its way into the stew! Someone else hated turnips? It got replaced by carrots and more potatoes!

Shabbat stew cooking is not delicate cooking. If you're curious how a change would affect the stew, try it and find out! Unless you are changing something fundamental, you will not ruin the entire dish. At worst, it won't be the greatest meal that you've ever cooked. Make note of why, and change it for the next time. That is what our ancestors have done for thousands of years!

Be adventurous! And on that note...

What about special dietary needs?

For many people, their dietary choices are not pure whimsy. Some entirely avoid gluten, vegetables to which they are allergic, red meat, or all meat. While many of the recipes in this book can meet some of these special needs without change (e.g. vegetarian or gluten-free), you must feel free to make changes to the others and try them!

For example, to prepare a gluten-free version of the standard Eastern European *chulent*, one can swap out the barley and replace it with buckwheat (aka kasha), which contains no gluten. In fact, this would be a legitimately traditional option as well. But also, no one should be beholden to tradition alone. Who cares if you put rice into this dish? If it works for you, do it! Your great-grandmother will not roll over in her grave, I promise! Same thing if you choose to leave out the meat, onions, or a specific spice from any of these recipes. Just consider replacing what you leave out with something else – plant-based “meat,” mushrooms, garlic, carrots, whatever!

I'm not allergic. I just hate...

So leave it out! Or replace it! It's what your grandma did as well!

(You must be sensing a pattern here already.)

I'm not Sephardic, but I just love those brown eggs.

Great! Put 'em in! Slow-cooking whole eggs inside of the chulent pot may have started in Spain, but their precursors can be found in Jewish cooking long before there was such a thing as a Sephardic (or Ashkenazic) Jew. Plus, plenty of Ashkenazic stews traditionally put the eggs in as well. It was not a strictly Sephardic custom.

Beyond the huevos haminados I just spoke about, there have been plenty of other add-ins to the Shabbat stew pot over the years (which I refer to as "Bonus foods"). Put in whichever you like. I'll give ideas for some at the end of the book. But even if one didn't traditionally go into the stew you are making, mix-and-match as you please.

Other Recipe Details

- All recipes are designed for 8 servings, though results vary by appetite! Scale the recipes for more or fewer people, or if your diners generally like bigger or smaller portions.
- The meat used when I tested these recipes was kosher, which means it had been salted already. If you use regular meat, you may need to add more salt than these recipes call for.
- If cooking eggs in the stew, be careful when you take them out to peel them. They will be hot! You can let them cool on their own, or run cold water over them first.
- Many people insist on specific techniques, such as the order in which you put the ingredients in to the pot, browning the meat first, etc. To be completely honest, I don't think most of them make a difference to the overall flavor or consistency of the stew. If you really want, try it both ways and see if you can taste the difference. Otherwise, I think it best to opt for the easiest option!
- That being said, pre-frying onions does make a difference from using raw ones. Fried ones will have a much sweeter flavor in the stew. If you prefer that, do it. If you don't want it as sweet, use raw.
- For dishes where beans (and their taste) feature prominently, there is little doubt that raw, dried beans are preferable to canned ones. For Shabbat stews, I again feel you'd be hard-pressed to taste the difference, in most cases. Here too, feel free to try both ways and see if you notice. In all cases, if I list beans and you are using dried ones, soak them overnight first.
- Amounts are given in both US and metric measurements (and temps in F and C). Some equivalents are approximate.



RECIPES

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CHULENT

POLAND



This is the recipe that I grew up with. Though my mom didn't like to eat *chulent*, she was kind enough to make it for the rest of us. And much of what my mother cooked for holidays and Shabbat was based on what her mother (from Galicia, the region that spanned southern Poland, Austria-Hungary, and Ukraine) cooked. This is the basic recipe, but over the years I have made numerous substitutions and additions at different times. See the recipe notes for a few options.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup / 150 g barley
- 1 cup / 150 g beans (any variety or a mix)
- 2 onions, peeled and cut into quarters
- 3-4 medium potatoes, cut into chunks (optional: peeled)
- 3-4 marrow bones
- 1½-2¼ lbs / 750 g - 1 kg beef, cut into chunks, or 3 lbs / 1.3 kg beef flanken with bones, or a combination
- 2 tsp salt

INSTRUCTIONS

My mother insisted on placing the ingredients into her slow-cooker in the following order: barley, beans, onions, potatoes, bones and beef. Sprinkle the salt on top and add water to cover. She claimed the meat flavor would then permeate the barley better.



Bottom line, No fancy steps here. Just add all of the ingredients to the pot and cook overnight, using any standard method (slow-cooker, stovetop, or oven).

Notes:

- Common in America are the use of barbecue sauce or ketchup for flavoring.
- Some use beer in place of all or part of the water. I don't taste a noticeable difference.
- I have replaced barley with buckwheat (kasha) as the (equally traditional) grain. The result is slightly lighter, a bit sweeter, oddly somewhat smoky, and gluten free for those who need it.
- Add in a peeled turnip, cut into chunks, and/or 1-2 chopped carrots. Both will add a bit of sweetness into the overall dish.
- For an earthier flavor, a handful of mushrooms, or some rehydrated and cut up dried wild mushrooms can be a good addition.
- All-beef hotdogs in addition to, or in place of part of the meat add a nice smoky taste.
- Popular "bonus food" additions include a kishke or small potato kugel cooked inside the chulent. Wrap in foil and puncture with a fork before resting on top of the stew.
- Other possible flavorings include: garlic cloves or powder, black pepper, paprika, sugar, honey or prunes.

HAMIN

INDIA



This recipe came to me from Anita Elias in London. She lived in Calcutta and Israel at various points in her life, before moving to England. The youngest of the three major Indian Jewish communities, the Baghdadi-Indian Jews eat foods that reflect both their former home in the Middle East and their newer one in India.

INGREDIENTS

2 onions, sliced
1 **tbsp** ground cinnamon
½ **tbsp** ground cardamom
½ **tbsp** ground cloves
2 **tbsp** tomato paste
2 **cans (14.5 oz / 411 g each)** diced tomatoes
2 **tsp** salt
1 **tsp** pepper
8-12 chicken pieces (whatever pieces you like)
4 **cups / 440 g** basmati rice
5 **cups / 1.2 liters** water
1 egg per person (optional)

For chutney:

2 bunches fresh cilantro
1 **tbsp** ground coconut, or ground almond
2 cloves garlic
½-**inch** piece of fresh ginger, peeled
Juice of 1 large lemon
¼-½ **tsp** pepper
1 **tbsp** olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS

Put onion, spices, tomato paste, tomatoes and chicken in a pot over medium heat. Cook for about 10 minutes to give it some color.

Rinse the rice and add it to the pot along with the water. Insert the eggs gently, if using them. Bring to a boil.

Cook in the oven at 325°F / 160°C for an hour. Then transfer to the hotplate or a low oven for overnight cooking.

To prepare the chutney, put all ingredients in a blender and mix. Adjust for taste and texture. If it is too liquidy, add more coconut/almond. If too dry, add more lemon juice or oil, etc.

Serve the chutney alongside the hamin.

Note:

- I like to remove the meat from the bones and mix it back into the rice along with a generous helping of chutney. (See the picture above.)
- This would likely be better made in a pot in the oven, though the other methods should also work fine.



DAFINA

MOROCCO



Moroccan Jews have two main names for their Shabbat stew – *dafina* or *skhena*. The names relate largely to regions in Morocco, but while there may have been major distinctions between the two stews once upon a time, these days you'd be hard-pressed to find a difference. This version blends elements from many recipes that I have come across. Serving the ingredients in separate dishes is a trademark of the Moroccan stew.

INGREDIENTS

½ medium onion, sliced
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp sugar
1 can (15 oz / 286 g) chickpeas
5 medium potatoes, peeled and cut in chunks
2¼ lbs / 1 kg beef or lamb, cut into chunks
2-3 marrow bones, or **1** calf's foot (cleaned and chopped in half)
2 tsp sweet paprika
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp turmeric
1 tsp salt
3 dates, pits removed
1 large sweet potato, cut in chunks

For the wheat bag:

1 cup / 165 g wheat berries
1 head of garlic, cleaned but kept whole
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp cayenne or hot pepper flakes, or more to taste

For the rice bag:

½ medium onion, sliced
1 tbsp olive oil
1 cup / 210 g white rice
½ **tsp** cumin
½ **tsp** salt

1 egg per person





INSTRUCTIONS

Fry ½ onion in oil. Add sugar and let it caramelize with the onion.

In a heavy pot, place the chickpeas. Arrange on top, in separate sections, the potatoes, meat and bones. Sprinkle the paprika, cumin, turmeric and salt on top. Add the caramelized onion and sugar to the pot. Add the dates and sweet potato. Cover with water, and begin to cook on the stovetop.

Place the wheat in a square of cheesecloth or a fine net soup bag. Put the head of garlic in the middle and pour olive oil over it. Add cayenne and/or hot pepper flakes. Close the bag, but make sure to leave space inside for the wheat to expand.

Fry the other ½ onion in oil. Add the rice, cumin and salt and cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring periodically. Cook the rice in 1 cup of water, parboiling it for about 15 mins. (It should not be cooked 100%, but to "al dente" with some white in the middle still when you bite into a grain.) In a separate bag/cheesecloth, add the rice mixture. Close the bag, leaving enough space for the rice to expand.

Place both bags into the main pot. The wheat may be submerged in the water, though not packed into the solid ingredients. The rice should sit on top (it can be partially in the water, but it will mostly steam to finish cooking). Gently insert the raw eggs around the top of the pot. Add more water if needed to cover the ingredients other than the rice.

Bring to a boil and then lower to simmer for 2 hours. Then place on a hot plate, or in a low oven overnight.

Before serving, peel the eggs.

To serve, each element should be served in a separate bowl: eggs, meat, wheat, rice, everything else.

HALEEM

ESFAHAN, PERSIA



This Persian stew comes from the city of Esfahan in central Iran. It is the closest equivalent here to the earliest version of Shabbat stew, called *harisa* (not to be confused with the spicy North African paste of the same name). This dish turns out to be very thick and stodgy, like a porridge. If it is too heavy for your tastes, see the recipe notes.

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs / 900 g beef OR 2 turkey legs and 2 turkey necks

1 lb / 450 g split/shelled wheat or wheat berries

1 lb / 450 g white beans

1 large onion, chopped

1 **tbsp** turmeric

1 **tsp** salt

1 **tsp** pepper

Optional (for serving): cinnamon, sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

The wheat may be soaked overnight, or should be rinsed thoroughly in cold water.

If using beef, boil it briefly in water and skim off the foam before adding the rest of the ingredients.

Add all of the ingredients to a pot and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, and simmer for an hour. Stir it periodically to make sure the bottom doesn't burn. If you see the stew is getting too thick, pour in some boiling water to loosen it up.

If you are using turkey rather than beef, remove the meat from the bones and return it to the pot with the skin. Discard the bones.

Cook overnight using any standard method.

Option for serving: sprinkle cinnamon and/or sugar on top.

Note:

- If the *haleem* is too thick at serving time, you may stir through some water, or even better, olive oil.



CHOUCROUTE GARNIE

ALSACE, FRANCE



A classic dish from Alsace, *choucroute garnie* combines real fermented sauerkraut and preserved meats. This "à la Juive" (Jewish) version uses only kosher meats, while the standard *choucroute garnie* features lots of pork products. Here, it is prepared as an overnight Shabbat stew, for Saturday lunch, though the dish is frequently made for weekday meals.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs / 900 g** sauerkraut (made using salt, not vinegar)
- 2 lbs / 900 g** corned beef brisket, left whole
- 8-10** medium potatoes
- 2 tbsp** schmaltz (chicken, duck or goose), or vegetable oil
- 2** goose legs, split into thighs and drumsticks
- 1** onion, chopped
- 2** carrots, chopped
- 2½ cups** dry white wine (e.g. Alsatian Riesling)
- 1½ cups** chicken broth
- 1** beef sausage (e.g. salami, rosette)
- ½ lb / 225 g** smoked beef or pastrami, cut into chunks

For Spice Sacht:

- 6** cloves garlic, smashed
- 20** juniper berries, smashed
- 12** peppercorns
- 4** bay leaves



INSTRUCTIONS

Rinse the sauerkraut thoroughly in a colander under cold water to remove excess salt. Drain. Rinse again under warm water and drain. Squeeze handfuls of the sauerkraut to remove as much water as possible and place in a large mixing bowl. When all of the sauerkraut has been squeezed fairly dry, pull the cabbage apart, loosening the clumps into separate strands.

Place the corned beef into a large pot of water and bring to a boil. You may continue with other steps while this takes place, and just keep an eye on the meat. After boiling for a few minutes, spill out the water and bring to a boil in a fresh pot of water. Drain again and set meat aside to cool.

Boil potatoes in well-salted water until they start to get soft. Drain and allow to cool, then peel off their skin. This, too, may be done alongside the following steps.

Preheat oven to 325° F / 160° C.

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INSTRUCTIONS

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Melt schmaltz in a large Dutch oven. Place the goose legs in, rendering some of their fat and browning on all sides. Remove legs to a plate.

Put onion and carrots into the pot, sauteeing in the rendered fat. Continue until soft, but not brown, approximately 5-8 minutes.

Add the sauerkraut and mix with the onions and carrots, continuing to sautee in the fat, about 3 more minutes.

Create a spice sachet:

Place spices (garlic, juniper berries, peppercorns and bay leaves) into a small piece of cheesecloth. Tie closed into a loose sachet. Place spice sachet into the sauerkraut mixture.

Add the wine and chicken stock to the pot. Let simmer, covered for 5 minutes.

Bury the goose legs, sausage (cut in half if necessary to fit in pot), smoked beef and corned beef inside of the sauerkraut mixture. Place potatoes around the edges, also partially submerged in the sauerkraut.

Place in oven for about an hour.

Leave covered pot overnight on an electric hotplate, or in a 250° F / 120° C oven.

Before serving, remove and slice the corned beef and the sausage. Place sauerkraut with vegetables and smoked beef chunks in the middle of a large serving platter. Arrange the goose legs, corned beef slices, and sausage slices around it.

Serve accompanied by mustard.

MEVOSEH

KURDISTAN



This Kurdish stew is more labor intensive, as in addition to the stew itself, you must also make the *kubbeh* dumplings that go inside. These are not the same fried *kubbeh/kibbe* that are well-known to Syrian Jews in America. They have a different exterior and are regularly served inside of soups or stews. In the Kurdistan region, there are tens of different types of *kubbeh*. Rice flour was more traditional there for this kind, but semolina replaced the rice in Israel, during the austerity period of the 1950s.

INGREDIENTS

½ lb / 225 g ground beef (if possible, have the butcher grind it twice for a finer grind)
1 large onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tsp salt
¼ tsp black pepper
1 small bunch parsley, chopped

For *kubbeh* dough:

2 cups / 320 g rice flour or semolina
1 cup / 230 ml water (or more if needed)
1 tsp salt

For *mevoseh*:

2 cups / 365 g bulgur
1½ lbs / 750 g lamb or beef, cut into chunks
1 medium onion, chopped
1 lb / 450 g small okra (fresh or frozen), left whole
2-3 small zucchinis, cut into chunks
1 tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper
½ tsp turmeric



INSTRUCTIONS

Start by preparing the filling for the *kubbeh*. Add the chopped meat to a pan over medium heat. As it starts to fry, mix in the onions, garlic, salt and pepper. Stir regularly until all has browned. Remove from heat and allow to cool. Add mixture with parsley to a food processor or blender, and pulse to mix it all together.

To make the *kubbeh* dough, mix the rice flour or semolina with the salt. Gently mix in the water. Start with one cup and add more as necessary, while kneading together. The dough should be pliable, but not runny or sticky.

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INSTRUCTIONS

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Prepare a bowl of water to wet your hands as needed. Assemble the kubbeh by taking pieces of the dough between the size of a golfball and an egg and rolling them into smooth balls. With a thumb or forefinger, make an indentation in the center of the ball, pressing the sides so they will be as thin as possible without tearing. Fill each with a teaspoon or more worth of filling, as needed. Close the ball up around the filling and smooth with a moistened index finger. You may leave them as round balls, or flatten them into patty shape, as you like. (Usually, they are not made into the torpedo shape typical of fried kubbeh.) Continue until you use up the dough. (Any leftover filling may be used to stuff vegetables, eaten as is for a snack, or even dumped into the main stew to add flavor.)

Boil a pot of salted water and put the kubbeh inside for about 10 minutes. Drain and set aside.

Now make the *mevoseh* itself. Rinse the bulgur well. Place it in a large pot with the meat and vegetables. Add the spices and cover with water. Bring to a boil and reduce flame to low. Let it cook for around an hour. Add the kubbeh to the pot, and continue cooking for about 15 more minutes.

Add more water if it has mostly been absorbed by the bulgur. Cook overnight.

Notes:

- Since the okra and zucchini have a tendency to become mushy through overnight cooking, smaller ones are a drop firmer. But another option is to replace them with a large turnip and 2 medium carrots, chopped roughly. The flavor will be different, but they will hold their form better, and are equally traditional in a Kurdish stew.
- This stew should be a bit more liquidy, so the slow-cooker method may be preferable, albeit less traditional.

VEGETARIAN HAMIN

AUSTRALIA



This recipe is based on one that I received from Cathy Chachoua, of Melbourne, Australia. Cathy moved there from Egypt, and traces her roots to Turkey and Greece. Still, this *hamin* was one that she invented and perfected in Australia, specifically for Saturday morning kiddushes at the Sassoon Yehuda Sephardi Synagogue. A beloved member of her community, she unfortunately passed away recently, and is dearly missed there. May this recipe be a tribute to her.

INGREDIENTS

- 2-3 medium onions, chopped into medium pieces
- 2 **tbsp** oil (or more as needed)
- 2-4 cloves of garlic, chopped small
- 1 large or 2 small green chili peppers, seeds and membranes removed, diced
- 3 **tbsp** tomato paste
- 1 **tbsp** cumin
- 1 **tbsp** turmeric
- 1 **tsp** salt
- 1 **tsp** black pepper
- 5 **cups** / 750 **g** white or red kidney, lima or other beans, or chickpeas (or a mix)
- 1 **cup** / 225 **g** brown lentils
- 6 potatoes, cut into medium chunks
- 1 egg per person, still in shells



INSTRUCTIONS

In a large pot, fry the onions in oil over medium heat until they start to soften and turn brown, but not until they turn dark brown or black, approximately 5-7 minutes. Add the garlic and chili pepper and continue frying for 1-2 minutes.

Add the tomato paste, cumin, turmeric, salt and pepper. Mix well. Next, add the beans and lentils, with enough boiling water to cover. Stir and let the stew cook for a few minutes.

Add the potatoes and top up the water to cover. Tuck the eggs, still in their shells, gently around the top of the stew ingredients.

Cook overnight by any standard method.

Options:

- Replace 1-2 potatoes with sweet potatoes of equal size.
- Add one large carrot, or one large turnip, chopped.
- Add a handful of dried mushrooms, pre-soaked in boiling water until soft.
- For a spicier flavor, leave in some of the chili seeds and membranes, and/or add 1 tsp of cayenne.

T'FINA PKAILA

TUNISIA



This earthy green stew has no grain that absorbs the cooking liquid, but it is commonly served over couscous or rice. It is particularly common to prepare *t'fina pkaila* for the Rosh Hashana holiday, but it also popular for a regular Shabbat lunch.

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs / 900 g chard or spinach leaves (see note)
1 bunch fresh mint (or **1 tsp** dry mint, saved for the end)
½ cup / 120 ml olive oil
1 onion, diced (optional)

For stew:

2 lbs / 900 g fatty stew beef, cut into chunks
2-3 tsp olive oil
2-4 marrow bones
2 cups / 300 g white beans or black-eyed peas
Cloves of **1** head of garlic, peeled
1 tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

Start by preparing the sauce. Cut the leaves off of the hard white stems of the chard. If using spinach, you can use the stems too. Chop the leaves into smaller pieces. Remove the mint leaves from the stems. (If you are using dried mint instead, do not add it yet.)

If using onion, fry it in the oil over medium heat until it softens, approximately 5-7 minutes.

Add the chard/spinach, and fresh mint. After about 5 minutes, lower heat to medium-low. Let the leaves reduce in size, stirring periodically to prevent them from sticking. As the leaves give off water, pour or ladle it into a bowl and reserve. Continue cooking for 45 minutes to an hour, until the leaves shrink by 80-90%. They will turn very dark, almost black. You'll know they are done when you hear some crackling coming from the leaves. Be careful to make sure they don't burn. If using dried mint leaves, stir them in now.

About 15 minutes before the leaves are ready, brown the beef in oil over medium heat in a separate pot. Add the beans, then the rest of the ingredients and the reserved liquid from the greens.

Once the leaves are ready, remove them from the heat. Add them to the meat and beans. Mix everything well, and cover. Cook overnight.

Serve with couscous or rice.

Note:

- Chard, also called mangold, is a type of beet leaf. Spinach is in the same family, but since the leaves are smaller and more tender they may not give off as much liquid. Watch them a bit more carefully. A dash or two of salt may help them soften and reduce.



SÓLET

HUNGARY



Among the trademarks of a Hungarian *sólet* (pronounced SHOW-let) are smoked meat, lots of beans and liquid, garlic and paprika, and no potatoes. The dish is widely eaten by Hungarians, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, and it may be eaten during the week, too. So this recipe features both a “weekday” version and a slow-cooked Shabbat version. This recipe is modified from one I received from Joshua Pines of London.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium onions, diced
- 6-8 cloves garlic, minced
- 3-4 **tbsp** schmaltz, or olive oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$ **lb** / **350 g** lima beans
- $\frac{3}{4}$ **lb** / **350 g** red or white beans (or a “cholent mix”)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ **lb** / **350 g** pearl barley
- 1 lb** / **450 g** smoked beef (usually shin), left whole
- 1** goose quarter (leg and thigh), preferably smoked
- 1 tbsp** sweet paprika (or Hungarian paprika paste)
- 1 tbsp** salt
- Dash** of pepper
- 1** egg per person, still in their shells

INSTRUCTIONS

Sautee the onions and garlic in melted fat or oil in a Dutch oven or large pot, over a low flame.

Add in the beans and barley. Place the meat on top, and then add the paprika, salt and pepper. Add water to cover by at least an inch. Gently place the eggs around the top of the stew. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 15-30 mins.

If making for Shabbat, transfer to a slow cooker set to Low for the night. If making for weekday use, cook covered on the stovetop over a low flame for two hours.

Before serving, peel the eggs, then slice them in half. Slice the beef and reserve on a plate.

For the weekday version, uncover the pot and put it into the oven on broil/grill for about five minutes to crisp the top layer.

When serving either version, serve the sliced eggs alongside the stew. Place some beef slices on each plate, too.

Notes:

- The ideal meat blend is beef and smoked goose. Smoked turkey thigh is a decent substitute. Kabanos (dry smoked sausage) also works.
- If no smoked meat is available, add more plain beef plus $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 tsp of liquid smoke.
- You may pre-cut the beef into chunks and cook as is. This is less traditional, but would be easier.
- The slow cooker method works best on Shabbat.



FERIK

EGYPT



Freekeh, the core (and titular) ingredient in this Shabbat stew is green wheat that is harvested and toasted over an open flame while it is still immature. *Ferik* is fairly similar to haleem (see page 13), but due to the different type of grain the stew ends up lighter in consistency. Still, the similarities should be obvious.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1½-2 lbs / 750-900 g fatty beef or lamb, cut into chunks
- 2 cups / 375 g freekeh
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp sweet paprika
- 1 tsp hot paprika
- 1 head of garlic, kept whole, unpeeled, but cleaned
- 1 egg per person, still in their shells (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

Fry the onion in oil over medium heat, until it starts to get translucent. Remove from heat before it browns.

Add the meat chunks. Sprinkle the freekeh around and on top of the meat. Add all of the spices. Tuck the head of garlic and the eggs (if using) gently into the top of the freekeh. Add water to cover.

Bring to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes. Make sure there is still a significant amount of water inside, then cook overnight by any of the standard methods.

Before serving, peel the eggs and serve one with each portion. Put the head of garlic on a separate plate, for all to help themselves to a soft clove.

Notes:

- If you cannot find freekeh, use bulgur. The taste will not be identical, but the consistency should be approximately right.
- Another seasoning option is to replace the turmeric and paprika with two teaspoons of cinnamon and 1 of allspice.
- Some leave out the garlic entirely.



KHALEBIBI

SHIRAZ, PERSIA



This stew originates in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz, and its name is one of the more interesting ones among the world's Shabbat stews. *Khalebibi* literally translates to “aunt-grandmother!” Perhaps this alludes to the central role that women have always had in passing recipes from one generation to the next. This version is based on one I got from Drew Alyeshmerni of Los Angeles.

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup / 100 g medium grain rice
- ½ cup / 75 g kidney beans
- ⅓ cup / 50 g pinto beans
- ⅓ cup / 60 g brown lentils
- ⅓ cup / 60 g mung beans
- 1¼ lbs / 550 g stew beef, cut into chunks
- 2–3 marrow bones
- 1 large onion, diced into ½ in / 1¼ cm pieces
- 1 large turnip, peeled and diced into ½ in / 1¼ cm pieces
- 1½ cups / 135 g red cabbage, chopped (not shredded) into ½ in / 1¼ cm pieces
- 1½ cups / 135 g white cabbage, chopped (not shredded) into ½ in / 1¼ cm pieces
- 2 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper (optional)
- 1 tbsp turmeric

For serving:

- 1 lemon, sliced

INSTRUCTIONS

Place all the ingredients in the cooking pot in the order listed. Add enough water so that the cabbage floats on top, then stir it well enough for the spices to mix through.

Cover the pot and cook overnight.

Serve with fresh lemon juice squeezed over the top.

Note:

- The mung beans and rice will largely disintegrate. This gives the stew a thicker consistency.



HAMIN KHARSHUF

ISRAEL



I invented this stew to highlight one of my favorite winter vegetables in Israel. Cardoon (in Hebrew **כרשוף** / *kharshuf*) looks like a prehistoric celery. A relative of the artichoke (to which it also tastes similar), you must peel the whole thing to remove the thorns and tough exterior. But because of this consistency, it holds its form well through long stewing, making it perfect for a Shabbat stew! I decided to feature many of my favorite Israeli flavors in here (though after attempting a version with techina (sesame paste) drizzled on top, I realize they don't all work).

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium cardoon, or **1¼ lbs / 565 g** frozen artichoke bottoms (see note)
- 3 cups / 500 g** wheat berries
- 15 oz / 425 g** chickpeas
- 1¼ lbs / 565 g** lamb or fatty beef, cut into chunks
- 12** cloves of garlic
- 3 tbsp** zaatar
- 1 tbsp** sumac
- 2 tsp** salt
- 1 tsp** pepper
- 1 egg per person, still in shells

INSTRUCTIONS

Carefully peel each cardoon stalk, removing the thorns, leaves and tough exterior. This will take a little while, but the effort is worth the result. Cut the peeled stalks into pieces about 3 inches long. Put them into a large bowl of lightly acidulated water (water with a bit of lemon juice inside).



Put the mixed wheat and chickpeas into the pot. Insert the beef chunks in various spots among the wheat and chickpeas. Insert the garlic cloves in various places. Sprinkle the zaatar, sumac, salt and pepper over everything.

Add water to cover. Gently insert the eggs around the top. Bring to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes.

Cook overnight by any of the standard methods.

Notes:

- If cardoon is not in season (or you have no idea where to find it), frozen artichoke bottoms work as a great substitute (as in the picture featured here, taken during the summer). Do not use marinated bottoms in jars, just plain, unflavored frozen ones.
- I like serving this with some extra virgin olive oil and a bit of lemon juice drizzled on top.
- Another option, for those who like their food spicy, is to stir some schug or harissa through your portion. These flavors work perfectly well with this dish.



BONUS FOODS

Communities around the world have included “bonus foods” in with their Shabbat stews. By this I mean foods that are cooked inside the pot with the stew, but removed and served separately. (For more on this, see <https://www.tasteofjew.com/shabbat-stew-bonus-foods/>)

Here are a number, and the communities with which they are associated. But in keeping with my overall theme, feel free to mix and match and use whichever appeals to you. Many can be purchased, or plenty of recipes can be found online. (I’m keeping the recipes of this book focused on the stew itself, and this is just an extra, to give you some ideas!)

Huevos Haminados: The original Shabbat stew bonus food, these slow-cooked eggs were first put into the pots in Sepharad itself – pre-Expulsion Spain. It is the most popular bonus food throughout the Sephardic diaspora, but many others eat it too.

Kugel: Though most of us think of this as a stand-alone dish, this Ashkenazi specialty (originating in Germany) began as a Shabbat stew add on. No reason not to include it in your stew once again.

Kishke and Helzel: Similar Ashkenazic foods with simply a different casing, these quasi-sausages stuffed (respectively) intestines or poultry neck skins with the most basic filling, made of flour, schmaltz, and not much else beyond maybe some onions. Nowadays, kishke is usually made using synthetic casing.

Jachnun: Of Yemenite origin, this Shabbat food was not originally eaten as a bonus food. It was cooked alone in a pot overnight, and served as a hot Saturday breakfast. Nowadays, however, many love to cook one or two of these pastry-rolls in their Shabbat stew.

Kukla: North African Jews sometimes include small balls, either made of flavored dough or of meat and semolina mixed together.

Tamra/Kora/Sara: With multiple names, this is a small meatloaf or sausage-like roll from Morocco. It combines ground meat with lots of nuts and spices.

These are just a few options to get your mind working, but there are endless variations. Hungarians have a very basic type of *kugel*, more like a doughball. Some North Africans make a stuffed intestine that includes rice and lots of organ meats. A Kurdish addition is stuffed tripe. You can even invent your own; I, for example, have included a whole salami inside my stew.

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Joel Haber researches, lectures, and writes about Jewish Food History, and focuses on food as a window onto culture. He has published articles on the subject in *The Nosh*, *Tablet*, *The Jewish Journal* (Los Angeles), and *Tradition*. He also writes regularly on his blog, *The Taste of Jewish Culture*. Joel has lectured internationally, in the U.S., England, Israel, Germany, and Spain, as well as online to wide audiences.

Joel also works as a licensed tour guide in Israel, and has guided thousands of people on a culinary tour in Shuk Machane Yehuda, Jerusalem's famous outdoor market. He is proud to live in the Jewish homeland, and to have the chance to share it with those who come to visit.

To contact Joel for speaking engagements, feel free to email jewishfoodbook@gmail.com.



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