

**The JCC in Manhattan
Purim Guide
2006/5766**



See inside for an overview of Purim traditions, great JCC Purim programs, & a delicious Hamantaschen recipe!

Purim 2006/5766 @ the JCC

A historical perspective:

At just the time of year when we weary of winter weather, Purim comes along to brighten things up a bit. The story of Purim - and many of its customs - comes from the biblical Book of Esther. Esther is one of five Biblical books called *megillot* (literally, scrolls) although due to its popularity in the tradition, it is called *The Megillah*. The book is set in the kingdom of Persia during the period of Jewish exile following the destruction of the First Temple in the 6th century BCE. It tells the story of King Ahasuerus who is manipulated by his aide Haman into ordering a pogrom against the Jews. This massacre is averted by the courage of Esther, the young Queen who reveals her Jewish identity to the king, pleads for her people and saves them. Esther and her uncle Mordecai thus enter Jewish collective memory as heroes while Haman is seen as the prototype of those who would seek to destroy the Jewish people.

Purim Traditions:

- The celebration of Purim this year begins on Monday night, March 13th, the 14th of Adar. It is said that "When Adar comes in, we greatly increase rejoicing!" While the Megillah reading takes place in synagogues during the evening service, it is definitely NOT your typical evening service. Rather, it is traditional to wear masks, dress in costumes and use noisemakers (traditionally called *graggers*) to try and drown out every mention of that dreaded name, HAMAN! And since there are many, many mentions of Haman in the story, the Megillah reading is a very noisy experience. Some have the custom of drinking to the point where it is impossible to distinguish between the name Haman and the name Mordecai - a custom endorsed by the Talmud - adding a quite unusual element of merriment.
- Purim is by nature a topsy-turvy holiday - where those on top lose out and those at the bottom become victorious. Where the king can't even get his first wife, Vashti, to obey his order to appear before him, he is duped by his advisor and then persuaded to change the policy of his kingdom by his lovely young bride who has hidden her true identity. Although the Jews of Persia are in mortal danger in this story, it ends with celebration by the Jews who are saved as their enemies perish. This theme of celebration and revelry occurs during this time of year in other cultures as well. *Mardi gras* (literally, "fat Tuesday") and *Carnevale* (Carnival) are widely observed throughout Europe and Latin America. With Winter winding down and Spring just around the corner, there seems to be a universal interest in letting loose!

**Purim* means "lots" for Haman cast a lot (*pur*) to decide when to kill the Jews.

- Most of the customs associated with Purim are derived from the book of Esther:

Purim Seudah: A special festive meal is often held on the day of Purim after the morning Megillah reading, reflecting the many lavish banquets featured in the book of Esther and the instruction in the book that this be “a day of merry-making and feasting”.

Purimspiel or Purimtorah: In the spirit of the holiday, it is customary to present comic Skits or plays often making fun of those in authority or spoofing traditional Biblical and rabbinic texts, consistent with the reversal of roles in which the villain is defeated and the king is repeatedly made to look foolish.

Mishloach Manot: The custom of sending gifts of food to friends is consistent with Esther 9:19 - “a holiday of sending gifts to one another.” These gifts typically include *Hamantaschen*, a three-cornered pastry said to be the shape of Haman’s hat.

Matanot l’Evyonim: As with most Jewish holidays, it is customary to remember those who are less fortunate with gifts of *zedakah* and we are obliged to give “presents to the poor” in the Megillah text (9:22).

Taanit Esther: Many observe the tradition of a fast (*taanit*) on the day before Purim just as Esther, Mordecai and the Jewish community in Persia did: “Then Esther sent back this answer to Mordecai: ‘Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish.’” (4:15-16)

For people to whom collective memory is so vital, the words of the Book of Esther have powerful resonance:

“Consequently, these days are recalled and observed in every generation: by every family, every province and every city. And these days of Purim shall never cease among the Jews, and the memory of them shall never perish among their descendants.” (9:28)
 “And Esther’s ordinance validating these observances of Purim was recorded in a scroll.” (9:32)

Celebrate Purim this year at the JCC with these festive & fun programs:

GPAC Party: Celebrate Purim!

Come together for a Purim celebration. Parents will meet separately while the kids are engaged in special holiday-related activities. Then we'll all gather to eat hamentaschen, listen to holiday music and have the opportunity for extended socialization. **Drop off kids at 6, parents meet at 6:30. Pizza for kids and light supper for parents. You must register with Judith Levitan, 212.399.2685 x219 to attend!**

Tue, Mar 7, 6 pm, \$10 per family

SSPGPP00W6

Teens: Operation Mishloach Manot

Spread the love this Purim! Bake hamentaschen; pack up and deliver mishloach manot (the ultimate Jewish gift baskets!) to local shelters!

Thu, Mar 9, 5:15 pm, Free

TTOPUR00W6

Culinary: A Persian Purim Feast

Eat, drink and celebrate Purim while learning a new cuisine! Indulge in our spiced pomegranate sangria while creating a unique meal from the Near East. You'll enjoy chicken steeped in pomegranate juice and walnuts, bean and noodle casserole with mint, saffron and almond rice, eggplant-carrot relish and scrumptious saffron doughnuts.

Thu, Mar 9, 7 pm, \$75/\$85

ESUPUR00W6

20's & 30's: Purim Cocktails with a Conscience

Gear up for Purim with this fun and meaningful event! Celebrate the *Book of Esther* with merriment, music and munchies while fulfilling the mitzvot of Purim. Help create *mishloach manot* (the ultimate Jewish gift baskets) for the elders at the Jewish Home and Hospital, then spend the rest of the night enjoying some wine, nosh, music with friends new, and old! This is the perfect way to socialize, show your heart, and draw the connection between social action and Judaism.

Thu, Mar 9, 7 pm, \$20/\$25 (Price helps cover food costs)

JYHPUR00W6

Pre-Purim Shabbat with 30's + 40's

Join a fun group of other 30's + 40's for a relaxed Shabbat dinner on the Friday before Purim at the private home of members in our community. Enjoy the warmth and camaraderie of welcoming the Sabbath with others in your age or stage of life. *Space limited to 25. Register by Wednesday, March 8 and you will be given the location after you register. If you require a vegetarian option, please e-mail associates@jccmanhattan.org after you register.*

Fri, Mar 10, 7:30 pm, \$25/\$35

BAODIN00W6

Purim Carnival

Dress to impress in your best Purim duds and celebrate with us at the fifth annual JCC Purim Carnival. Activities include carnival games, arts & crafts, snacks, and spectacular musical entertainment.

Sun, Mar 12, 10 am, \$9/\$12 in advance \$12/\$15 at door
FFN31200W6

Purim Cabaret: *Rhapsody in Seth*

Enjoy a wild and wonderful night as some of New York's leading Broadway and Off-Broadway artists give new life to the old tradition of the Purim Shpiel for the JCC's 4th Annual Purim Cabaret. Seth Rudetsky, a former writer for The Rosie O'Donnell Show, a DeeJay on Sirius Satellite radio, and the star and creator of the Off-Broadway smash hit *Life According to Seth*, assembles some of his favorite artist pals and puts together a musical night of Purim hilarity. Picture Esther and Mordecai meeting a Broadway musical comedy. Past performers in the Purim Cabaret have included Peter Gallagher, Sutton Foster, Anna Gasteyer, Lillias White, Lea DeLaria, and many others.

This year's line-up includes Euan Morton (Tony nominated for *Taboo*), Manoel Felciano (currently starring in *Sweeney Todd*), Orfeh (the musical *Trailer Park*), Anika Larsen (*Zanna Don't*), and Jeff Marx and Bobby Lopez (composers of *Avenue Q*).

Sun, Mar 12, 7 pm, \$15/\$20
EAYCAB00W6

Holiday Workshops: Purim (2-5 years)

Have a great time with your little ones while showing them the joys and traditions of the holidays. Featuring special songs, crafts, noshes, and more. Taught by Hannah Cohen.

Mon, Mar 13 & Tue, Mar 14
3:30 pm-4:45 pm, \$20/\$25
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Purim Holiday Lobby Celebrations (5 Years + Under)

Celebrate Purim in the lobby at the JCC. Crafts, stories, snacks, and more—a free drop-in program for your little one to enjoy.

Tue, Mar 14, 10 am, Free
FFOHL02W6

Mitzvah Programs for Families: Purim Esplanade Visit to Seniors

Join other JCC Young Families to celebrate Purim at The Esplanade. Wear your favorite costume, deliver mishloach manot (food baskets), and bring good cheer to senior residents. Meet in the JCC lobby at 2:45 pm or join us at the Esplanade, 305 West End Avenue at 74th Street.

Thu, Mar 16, 3 pm
FFOESP00W6

**A delicious twist on the classic Hamantaschen recipe.
Compliments of the JCC Culinary Arts Department.**

Chocolate Hamantaschen

Ingredients:

For the chocolate dough:

- 1- 1/3 cups margarine
- 2- 1/2 cups flour
- 1- scant cup sugar
- 2/3 cup cocoa
- 2- large eggs
- 1- teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

For the almond filling:

- 1/2 pound almond paste
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon flour

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Cream margarine in mixer at medium speed until softened. Add half the flour. Then add sugar, cocoa, eggs, baking powder and salt. Mix until combined, scraping the sides of the bowl if necessary. Stir in the remaining flour.
3. Divide dough in half, cover and refrigerate until chilled.
4. Prepare almond filling. Mix almond paste with sugar until combined. Add egg, then flour and mix until smooth. Set aside.
5. Remove one half of chocolate dough from refrigerator. On a lightly floured surface, roll out to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut into desired rounds. Spoon filling into the center of each round.
6. Reroll scraps and cut more circles. Fill as directed. Repeat with the other half of the dough.
7. To form hamantaschen, lift three edges of the circle toward the filling and pinch each corner tightly. Place 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake until the edges are firm.

Yield: Approximately 48 hamantaschen