

Jewish National Fund – Plant a tree in Israel.



When Jaki asked me to do an article on the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and their tree planting program, I was immediately transported back to my own Sunday school days. I have wonderful memories of our class bringing in our dollars to buy “Trees for Israel”. Somewhere along the way someone said, “If you go to Israel, they will have a map to show where your tree is planted.” I could hardly imagine that as a child. As an adult, I know it to be a vast forest.

“Over the past 113 years, JNF has evolved into a global environmental leader by planting more than 250 million trees, building over 240 reservoirs and dams, developing over 250,000 acres of land, creating more than 2,000 parks, providing the infrastructure for over 1,000 communities and connecting thousands of children and young adults to Israel and their heritage. Jewish National Fund is a non-profit organization founded in 1901. It all started with a dream. Theodor Herzl, a Viennese journalist, witnessed virulent anti-Semitism at the Dreyfus trial. He knew it was time to take action and was determined that before the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland came to an end, a national fund would be established to purchase land for a Jewish State in Ottoman-controlled Palestine.” Excerpt from <http://www.jnf.org>

It all began in 1901 when Theodor Herzl, a Viennese journalist, wanted to establish a national fund for Israel. From money collected from the fund, parcels of land were purchased in Israel. During the first decade of its existence land acquisition increased and an experimental agricultural station was established. By 1921 purchases of land had quadrupled, bringing the acreage to a total of 25,000. By 1927 JNF land purchased doubled to 50,000 acres, with 50 communities and planting began for Balfour Forest. Land purchases continued and in 1939, despite severe restrictions imposed on Jewish immigration by British mandate authorities, there were 450,000 Jews in the country, ten percent of whom lived on JNF land.

Upon Statehood in 1948, JNF worked on planting forests and reclaiming the land for agricultural purposes, which provided employment for thousands of new immigrants.

In addition to reclaiming the desert through the planting of trees, it also allowed Jews to show they cared; in fact JNF has been planting trees in Israel for over a century. Planting trees connects us to the land. It celebrates our joys and literally plants a stake of hope and optimism in the future of Israel.

When I spoke to the JNF marketing folks in New York, I inquired as to the type of trees they were planting. I knew from reading that both olive and fruit trees were planted. They indicated that large varieties of trees were planted and the type of tree and its agricultural needs were considered based upon the weather and the soil in the area where the new forest would rise.

Many trees are planted to honor or memorialize the life of someone special to them. Taylor was one of those people. “Taylor Allen Force, an American hero who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and a Vanderbilt University student was brutally murdered by an Islamic terrorist in Israel. Taylor was loved and respected by everyone who was fortunate to have known him. His permanent smile, positive spirit and kindness were complemented with his honor, integrity and dedication to serving others. Not far from where he was murdered in Tel Aviv, land has been slated to become “The Taylor Force Orchard.” Terrorists want to take away life; our answer is to bring NEW life!”

“When you come to Israel, plant fruit trees.” - Leviticus 19:23

“And I will bless those who bless you.” – Genesis 12:3

Planting fruit trees brings blessings to the people and the land. Excerpt from <http://www.jnf.org>

In addition to Taylor, there is a new movement underway to establish a forest of trees to honor Shimon Peres, a previous Prime Minister of Israel who recently passed away (1923-2016).

There is a story that says “if you give a hungry man a fish, he’ll eat for a day. But, if you teach him how to fish, he won’t be hungry anymore.” The same analogy goes to planting fruit trees in Israel. You can give a hungry person a piece of fruit to satisfy their hunger, or you can teach him how to plant fruit trees, which will not only satisfy their hunger but also their family and neighbors.

Through the Fort Wayne Jewish Federation, we can contribute to plant trees in Israel for many special occasions including birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, Yahrzeits and others. A program can be set up in our local Sunday Schools to encourage our children at an early age to plant trees for Israel and help sustain the growth of the state.●

Pistachio Challah



INGREDIENTS

Dough

500 grams (2 cups) of flour
2 tablespoons of active dry yeast
1 cup of warm water
1/3 cup olive oil
2 egg yolks
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon salt

Pistachio Filling

1 cup pistachios
1 tablespoon honey
1/2 cup olive oil
1 teaspoon salt
1 egg to brush the challah before baking
1/3 cup chopped pistachios for topping

Preparation

1. Combine water and yeast in a mixing bowl. Stir and let it dissolve and bubble for few minutes.
2. Add in rest of ingredients and mix (with electric mixer or by hand) until the dough is smooth.
3. Cover and let rise for at least an hour.
4. Put all ingredients for pistachio filling in a food processor and process until as smooth as possible (I like it a bit chunky). Transfer filling to a little bowl.
5. Cover filling with a thin layer of olive oil and refrigerate.
6. After the dough has risen, divide it into 4 pieces. Each challah will be braided from 2 strands.
7. Roll each part with a rolling pin to 20 x 40 centimeters (7 3/4 x 15 3/4 inches) approximately 1/2 centimeter (1/4 inch) thick. Spread a 1/4 of filling on the dough and roll. When you have 2 rolled strands, braid them together, and roll it around itself. Repeat with the other 2 pieces of dough.
9. Place rolls on a baking sheet covered with parchment paper.
10. Cover challahs with a clean and damp kitchen towel and let rise for another hour.
11. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F). Brush the challah with beaten egg twice and top with crushed pistachios.
12. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes until golden. Cool on a wire rack. ●

Smoked White Fish Cheese Ball

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces smoked white fish
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 teaspoons grated onion
1 teaspoon horseradish
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon liquid smoke
1/2 cup chopped pecans
3 tablespoons snipped parsley



PREPARATION

1. In a bowl of an electric mixer, combine white fish, cream cheese, lemon juice, onion, horseradish, salt and liquid smoke.
2. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.
3. In a separate bowl, combine pecans and parsley.
4. Shape fish and cream cheese mixture into a ball and then press the outside with pecans and parsley.
Serve with crackers. ●