

Culinary Outlook

Tradition graces this Rosh Hashana meal

FOOD



AILEEN CLAIRE

As Rosh Hashana nears — it begins at sundown on Friday, Sept. 29 — author and humorist Lora Brody recalls her family's celebrations. "It was always too hot or too cold," she remembers a relative saying of the season when Jews throughout the world celebrate the New Year.

To her, the days of Rosh Hashana involved a cast of thousands — and plenty of food. In Hartford, Conn., where Brody grew up, the autumn enhanced the excitement of seeing familiar friends in the synagogue. The dinner table would be covered with turkey, noodle pudding, chicken soup, chopped liver, homemade challah (egg bread) with raisins, herring and sour cream, and the sweet kosher wine she loved.

A prolific writer and cook, Brody explains that she wrote her most recent book, "Cooking with Memories: Recipes and Recollections" (Stephen Greene Press; \$18.95), to preserve recipes and stories for her three children. The book is to be published in November.

"Everyone should write down memories — what they did on their holidays, what they ate or cooked," she says. "It's great to have recipes on file, and even if the recipes don't live on through children at least they have the memories of stories about family and friends."

In the foreword, Brody explains how "taste, texture and aroma" can bring one back to another era: "As the memories were called up, along with them came the recipes, recorded on yellowed and dog-eared index cards, scribbled on the fly leaves of old cookbooks, buried in the saved letters of friends: I resurrected treasured dishes, some of which had not seen the light of day since 1957, and found that my children loved them as much as I had."

Brody revised (and her mother re-tested) many of the recipes, updating them for today's health conscious society. She lowered salt and substituted for many fats, using ricotta rather than heavier cheeses, for example. She also took chicken fat out of most of the recipes since "the uninitiated don't seem to have a taste for chicken fat." She changed cooking times and temperatures and did away with the family recipe for twice-cooked roast beef — "they wanted to make certain that it was done."

Her next book will be fairly serious, addressing her cancer surgery last year and her son's recovery from drug addiction. "Last year when things were so bad, we had a quiet

family observation of Rosh Hashana in the country, and I felt closer to God than ever before even though we weren't in synagogue," she says.

This holiday, Brody sent a challah to her son Jonathan in Taiwan. She says, "It may arrive dry, but it will continue the tradition."

BRISKET

- 5 to 6 pound brisket
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 large onions, peeled and sliced
- 4 stalks celery, cut into 1/2 inch slices
- 1 (8-ounce) bottle chili sauce
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 cup brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1/3 cup Dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons molasses
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1 can beer (non-alcoholic, if desired)
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 4 salt and pepper to taste
- 4 potatoes, peeled and sliced

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees with the rack in the lower third, but not bottom, position. Sear the meat, fat side down first, in the bottom of a heavy-duty oven-proof casserole dish. Turn the meat over and sear the other side.

Into the casserole dish, add the water, onions, celery, chili sauce, garlic, bay leaves, brown sugar, mustard, vinegar, molasses, and soy sauce. Cover and cook for 3 hours.

Add the beer. Cover and cook 1 more hour, checking occasionally to

make sure there is liquid in the pot.

Add more water if necessary.

Remove the meat from the pot and pour the sauce into a metal bowl. Discard the bay leaves. Cool broth.

Slice the meat when cold. Skim the fat off the sauce. Return the sauce to the casserole or heat-proof serving dish, add the paprika and meat, and reheat on top of the stove, covered. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Parboil the potatoes (new potatoes 20 to 25 minutes; medium-size potatoes 30 to 35 minutes), then add to the brisket dish to finish cooking. This kitchen-tested recipe makes 8 servings.

CHICKEN SOUP

- 2 pullets or 1 large fowl (or twice the amount of a regular fryer)
- several packages of chicken necks and backs
- 2 cubes chicken bouillon
- 3 large onions, peeled and sliced
- 4 carrots, cut into 2-inch chunks
- 3 parsnips, cut into 2-inch chunks
- 4 stalks of celery, leaves included, cut into 2-inch slices
- 1 bunch parsley, well rinsed
- 2 teaspoons black peppercorns
- 5 cloves garlic, peeled approximately 3 to 4 quarts cold water
- 1 salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 additional chunks of carrots, celery, parsnip, and sliced onion
- 5 fresh sprigs of dill



Lora Brody

Rinse the chicken and necks and backs well, and place them in a very large pot or kettle. Add the bouillon cubes and the chopped vegetables, parsley, peppercorns and garlic. Cover the chicken and vegetables completely with cold water and bring to a simmer.

Cover the pot, leaving the lid off

center so that some steam escapes. Cook for 2 hours on very low heat — the soup should be just barely simmering. Let the soup cook with the chicken in it for 1 additional hour, and then strain off the liquid. You should have about 3 quarts of liquid.

Refrigerate until very cold and then scrape off the fat, which will have solidified on top. The fat can be used for matzo balls or to make chopped liver. It will freeze beautifully in a covered plastic container.

You can use the stewed chicken for chicken salad, or add it back to the soup before serving (it won't have much taste).

Discard the cooked vegetables (or eat them out of the bottom of the pot the way I do). Reheat the soup and taste before adding any additional vegetables or seasoning. If the soup is very undersalted, I like to add another bouillon cube rather than straight salt. If you do this, try adding 1/2 a cube at a time to avoid oversalting. I like lots of pepper in my soup.

Add remaining vegetables and cook only until they are tender. Serve with matzo balls, if desired, and sprigs of fresh dill. This kitchen-tested recipe makes about 3 quarts of soup.

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Shopping Around

People were asked what it is about the nutritional content of what they eat that concerns you and your family most

Fat content, low fat	27%
Salt/sodium content, less salt	26%
Cholesterol levels	22%
Vitamin/mineral content	21%
Sugar content, less sugar	20%

Source: Food Marketing Institute NEA GRAPHICS

The fat content of foods was mentioned by people as their No. 1 nutritional concern. On the other hand, the vitamin and sugar contents were cited as somewhat less important.

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