

# Introduction

## Why should my Jewish institution use this Guide?

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*“V’Achalta, V’Savata, u’Verachata”*

*You shall eat, you shall be satisfied and you shall bless G-d.*

—Birkat hamazon, the traditional Jewish blessing after the meal.

Jewish meals unite us—whether it’s a Passover seder at home, a communal lunch in a JCC senior center or a Jewish summer camp, or a Shabbat dinner in your congregation. Food, rituals around food, distinctions about what’s “kosher,” whether defined according to Jewish law or to other ethical standards, is a defining feature of our religion, tradition, and culture. So, when a group of Jews sits down to eat in a JCC, a synagogue, a hospice program or a summer camp, what we serve and how we serve it matters.

Hazon’s Food Guide seeks to help us to approach the daily act of feeding ourselves and our communities with the kind of sanctity, satisfaction, and gratitude our tradition celebrates. And believe me, in the age of industrial agriculture and in our increasingly “flat world,” this is not as easy as it seems. We do our best to provide nutritious meals to our children, our families, and our seniors. And yet, when we hand over a Styrofoam plate heaped with steaming industrial processed red meat, slaughtered by underpaid laborers and stewed in tomatoes imported from who-knows-where, we can’t help but be nagged by the uncomfortable question, is this really “kosher?” If we determine that who grows our food, where it comes from, what it’s fed, what’s sprayed on it and what it’s served on matters to us,

to our health, to the earth, to our neighbors, children, and grandchildren, then it's time to begin asking ourselves a few tricky, but answerable, questions right now: Where does my agency get its food? How many "food miles" did it take to get from the farm to my mouth and how much petroleum does that represent? Who are the people growing my food and are they being paid enough to feed their families? Are there farmers nearby who are struggling to sell their crops who might supply our agency? As a Jewish communal agency, how might we supply our constituents and neighbors with healthy, locally grown food within our building and beyond?

Jewish agencies have begun to answer these questions in all kinds of exciting and innovative ways, from planting their own gardens to sponsoring local farm stands for their communities. As the gathering places of our people, the places where we

convene to learn, to pray to socialize, to heal, and yes, to eat—Jewish institutions have the opportunity to address these questions in meaningful and perhaps even game-changing ways. We represent formidable purchasing power and we can vote for a more sustainable and healthy world with our daily purchases. So use this guide to help you take the first steps, to ask yourselves the very real and very Jewish questions about where your agency is sourcing its food. Together we can work to sustain ourselves, our communities and our world.

*Rachel Jacoby Rosenfeld is the Director of the Jewish Greening Fellowship, an innovative program of the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center that supports JCCs and Jewish camps in greening their facilities, operations, and programs.*

## Hazon and the New Jewish Food Movement

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As Jews, we've been thinking about kashrut - about what is "fit" to eat - for nearly 3,000 years. And a growing number of people today realize that our food choices have significant ramifications—for ourselves, our families, and the world around us.

Hazon stands at the forefront of a new Jewish Food Movement, leading Jews to think more broadly and deeply about our own food choices. We're using food as a platform to create innovative Jewish educational programs to touch people's lives directly, to strengthen Jewish institutions, and, in the broadest sense, to create healthier, richer and more sustainable Jewish communities.

The majority of today's agriculture system relies primarily on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, large amounts of water usage, and concentrated livestock facilities. These practices, along with a multitude of others, pollute the environment, cause health problems for workers and consumers, and suffering for animals. Hazon's Food Guide is a way for your Jewish institution to adopt more sustainable practices when it comes to its food choices and to understand why making these changes is so critical to the Jewish community and world at large.

This guide is a comprehensive, go-to resource for any Jewish institution looking to change their food programs to be more sustainable. There are different sections within this guide that pertain to specific topics on how to alter your institution's food programs and policies to be more environmentally, socially, and spiritually conscious. Do not feel overwhelmed by the many different sections you see here; you do not have to do everything all at once! It is important to realize what your goals are for your specific institution and then take this greening food process step-by-step. Even a small change is better than no change at all.

Don't forget to let us know as you make changes within your institution. We want this guide to be a forum for all Jewish institutions to share their sustainable food practices. If you want to learn more about Hazon's work, visit [www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org). If you have questions, email [foodguide@hazon.org](mailto:foodguide@hazon.org). We look forward to hearing from you.

*Nigel Savage and the Hazon Food Team*