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Playing with your food: Resources for food education

Changing the food you eat is one part of the equation; changing the way you think about it and talk about it is equally important. Food offers a wonderful starting point for diving in to Jewish tradition, and some of our ancient Jewish texts and practices offer remarkably relevant insights into the way we eat today.

Hazon has developed a number of resources to engage people of all ages on issues related to eating, cooking, and making sense of the challenges of our contemporary food system. These include curriculums for students and families, an adult sourcebook, and the Jewish Food Education Network. We've also included links in this section to a number of other organizations who are doing amazing work in this field, including the Teva Learning Center, Kayam Farm and the Jewish Farm School.

It's amazing how Jewish tradition can come to life when you hold a ripe tomato in your hand, or make challah with younger or older generations. A particularly intense educational experience can be had through organizing an on-farm *shechita* (kosher slaughter). We invite you to explore the possibilities of Jewish food education!

Jewish Food Education Network (JFEN)

Hazon's Jewish Food Education Network (JFEN) provides innovative curricula and resources on Jews, food and contemporary life. Since its creation in April 2009, JFEN has rapidly grown in strength, with over sixty members using its educational resources in different settings and across all denominations.

Whether you are looking to find a new way to engage adults around the topic of Jewish tradition and food, get teens excited about Jewish activities, or revitalize programming at your institution, JFEN provides a supportive network for connecting to and learning from what other participating communities are doing in Jewish food education.

JFEN in action

Rachel Saks, a food educator, brought JFEN to over a hundred campers at Camp Ramah in the Poconos. While cooking delicious, easy-to-make recipes, Saks used the curriculum to teach how tasty, healthy food can be Jewish.

On a remote island off of Washington, Miriam Coates used JFEN as part of her children's homeschooling and is actively working to bring JFEN to her larger Jewish community.

Min Ha'Aretz. Hazon's Min Ha'Aretz student curriculum allows students from grades 5-9 to explore the question, "What is the relationship between Jewish texts, traditions, and practices and the food we eat?" More specifically, how does Judaism relate to all the processes and choices involved in how we grow, harvest, prepare, and eat our food, as well as manage our waste?

The Min Ha'Aretz curriculum isn't only for students, but for the entire family as well. The family curriculum consists of 4 lessons that are step-by-step guides and handouts for family education events focusing on food and Jewish tradition. Family programming is for use in conjunction with the Min Ha'Aretz student curriculum or as an enrichment program for families in many educational settings.

The curriculum includes planning materials, text study materials and group activities for:

- **Family Cooking and Learning Night**
Lead families in preparing a delicious meal together, followed by text study and activities that foster parent- student conversations about food, the environment, and Judaism.
- **Farm Trip**
Provide an experiential opportunity for students and their families to take their learning from the classroom to the farm.
- **Farmers' Market Trip**
This trip provides a platform for students to explore the variety of foods available in their area and ask farmers about the concepts learning the classroom.

Food for Thought: Hazon's Sourcebook on Jews, Food and Contemporary Life. Food for Thought creates the opportunity to extend Hazon's innovative work on contemporary food issues and Jewish traditions around food to a broader audience. Food for Thought is a 130-page sourcebook that draws on a range of texts from within and beyond Jewish traditions to explore topics relating to Jews and food. The sourcebook includes traditional Jewish texts in Hebrew and English, and a range of contemporary Jewish and non-Jewish texts. It is designed to be accessible to people with little Jewish background as well as rigorous and challenging for someone with more extensive Jewish learning. It includes a variety of texts on a variety of pressing topics:

- Chapter 1: Learning Torah
- Chapter 2: Gratitude, Mindfulness & Blessing Our Food
- Chapter 3: Kashrut
- Chapter 4: Bread & Civilization
- Chapter 5: Eating Together
- Chapter 6: Health, Bodies & Nourishment
- Chapter 7: Food & Place
- Chapter 8: Food & Ethics: the implications of our food choices

Meet your Meat: Organizing an on-farm *shechita* (slaughter)

The do-it-yourself food movement is growing: people are braiding challah and making pickles in numbers not seen for at least three generations. Learning these new-old skills is a way to connect to older generations—and also a way to take back some control over the food we eat, which is increasingly grown, produced and packaged behind closed doors or in places too far away for us to ever see. Learning about how Jewish tradition prescribes the transition from live-animal to meat is a something that few people ever imagine to see, but more and more people are yearning for. “If I’m going to eat meat, I ought to be able to look the animal in the eye before it dies on my behalf,” said one participant at the chicken slaughter before the 2009 Hazon Food Conference. This is a feeling shared by many, and an educational *schechia*, which actually gives people access to see the process, from the cut of the knife through the plucking of feathers and soaking and salting (part of the process of making kosher meat) can be a very powerful experience for participants.

For logistical reasons, we recommend organizing a poultry *shechita*, rather than a larger animal. Cows, lamb and goats must have

their lungs checked after slaughter, and there is a 30-70% chance that this will reveal that animal is unfit for kosher consumption. Even if the animal is kosher, only the front half is used for kosher meat in the United States, so you will have at least half an animal (if not the whole thing) that will need to go to non-Jews. The infrastructure requirements for butchering a cow or lamb are very complex as well. For these reasons, we suggest you stick with chickens!

There are several organizations that can help you organize a chicken *shechita*:

- **Green Pastures Poultry** (Cleveland area)
www.greepasturespoultry.com
- **Grow and Behold Foods** (New York area)
www.growandbehold.com
- **Loko** (“Local Kosher”) (Boston area)
www.lokomeat.com

Hazon may also be able to connect you with individuals in your area with some experience in this kind of project, who can help you. Contact foodguide@hazon.org for more information.

Slaughtering, plucking, eviscerating, and butchering a turkey is disgusting.

No, it’s not. It’s beautiful. If animal meat makes you squeamish, go see the Bodies exhibit or find yourself an illustrated anatomy book. Our lives depend on our intricate series of tubes and containers, a central distribution system, waste collection... the “*asher yatzar*” (bathroom blessing) comes to mind: if but one of these openings or hollows was closed where it should be open, or open where it should be closed, we could not function. Ditto with animals. Putting my hand inside the carcass of a dead turkey and pulling out the still-warm entrails was an AWE-some experience. Meat comes from a living animal, and if you can’t hear that – you shouldn’t eat meat.”

– Anna Hanau, after the turkey *shechita* at the 2008 Hazon Food Conference

Other organizations doing amazing food education work in the Jewish community, and beyond

The Teva Learning Center is North America's foremost Jewish Environmental Education Institute specifically focused on providing Jewish environmental programs to teach kids, as well as all generations, to learn about the connection between Jewish values and the earth. Teva runs Shabbat retreats, outdoor education programs for Jewish Day Schools, and educator-in-residence opportunities.

Teva also offers an Annual Seminar on Jewish Environmental Education that educators and lay leaders from your institution can attend to develop their skills. You can also contact the Teva Learning Center for more information and to have their educators run educational programs at your institution.

Kayam Farm at Pearlstone is the most active Jewish educational farm in the country, welcoming close to 3,000 participants annually for field trips, holiday celebrations, summer camp, volunteering, skills workshops, and much more! Jews and non-Jews of all ages come to Kayam, including young children, Hebrew Schools, Jewish day schools, adults, families,



and senior citizens. Now embarking upon its fourth growing season, Kayam has amassed a plethora of innovative experiential Jewish garden education activities, and has begun to publish its work in an outstanding curriculum format entitled "Chai VeKayam- A Curriculum Manual for Jewish Agricultural Education".

Jewish Farm School is an environmental education organization that's mission is to practice and promote sustainable agriculture and to support food systems rooted in justice and Jewish traditions. The Jewish Farm School runs a wide range of farm-based and sustainability-themed programs. Its emphasis is on teaching practical skills while also educating about the larger context of our contemporary food systems, and how our traditions and practices can inform our decisions and actions today.

Food Education resources

Sustainable Table offers resources related to food and education, including: lesson plans, information on bringing sustainable food to cafeterias and dining halls, and school gardens

Center for Environmental Education: this organization's resource center offers sample criteria for "green schools" and access to national curriculum databases.

Green Teacher: website for the curriculum magazine Green Teacher, which includes pedagogical articles and lesson plans; back issues available online for free.

Environment Protection Agency

Environmental Kids Club - Games, pictures, and stories for fun ways to help your institution explore the environment, and take steps to protect it.

➔ [MORE LNKS at hazon.org/foodguide/ch8](https://hazon.org/foodguide/ch8)