

# Introduction

*Why should my Jewish institution use this toolkit?*

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*“V’Achalta, V’Savata, u’Verachata”*

*You shall eat, you shall be satisfied, and you shall bless God.*

—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, a senior center, or a Jewish summer camp, or a Shabbat dinner in your congregation. Food, rituals around food, and 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 sit down to eat in a JCC, a synagogue, a hospice program, or a summer camp, what we serve and how we serve it matters.

The Hazon Food Audit Toolkit and Food Guide seek 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 Food Audit Toolkit and Food 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 was the founding 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. She is currently the Associate Director of Community Engagement at American Jewish World Service.*

While we hope that the Hazon Food Audit and Food Guide Toolkit will help you make tangible changes in your institution – whether by procuring compostable plates or starting a garden – it is our hope that more than any one change, we provide a range of ideas and tools to help you use Jewish food education - in the broadest sense - to renew and strengthen your community, to help your community live lives that are more Jewishly vibrant and healthier and more sustainable.

# About Hazon

The word hazon means *vision*.

We work to create a healthier and more sustainable Jewish community and a healthier and more sustainable world for all.

**Our motto is “the Torah is a commentary on the world, and the world is a commentary on the Torah,” which reflects our determination to apply Jewish thought to some of the greatest challenges of our time – and our belief that the act of doing so is good not only for the world, but also for the renewal of Jewish life itself.**



## We effect change in three ways:

Through **transformative experiences** such as immersive multi-day programs that directly touch people’s lives in powerful ways;

Through **thought-leadership** that is changing the world through the power of new ideas and fresh thinking. We include in this category writing, teaching, curriculum-development and advocacy, amongst other things;

And through **capacity-building**, which means not just working with people as individuals, but explicitly supporting and networking great projects and partners in North America and Israel.

We were founded in 2000 and we have grown every year since, by pretty much all metrics. We are based in New York City and at the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, CT, and we have staff in San Francisco, San Diego, Boulder, Denver and Philadelphia. We welcome participants of all religious backgrounds and none, and we work closely with a wide range of institutions and leaders across the Jewish world. **If you’re interested in talking to us about how we might work together in the future – and especially about how we might be of use in your community – please be in touch.**

These are some of the current foci of our work:

## Transformative Experiences

- Retreats at Isabella Freedman, on all of the Jewish holidays, plus silent meditation retreats, Blues For Challah, LGBT programming and others. One special highlight in 2014 – our first-ever Purim Retreat led by Roseanne Barr;
- Multi-day food programs, including the Hazon Food Conference and the Hazon Israel Sustainable Food Tour;
- Multi-day bike rides, including our NY, CA and Israel Rides
- Teva Retreats for middle-schoolers
- The 3-month Adamah program, for 20-somethings
- Our Intentional Communities Conference

## Thought-Leadership

- The JOFEE Report. JOFEE stands for “Jewish Outdoor, Food & Environmental Education.” The JOFEE Report is intended to foster a conversation about how we strengthen Jewish life, and create a more sustainable world for all, by developing the JOFEE field in the next decade and beyond
- Resources on Jews, Food & Contemporary Issues, including curricula materials for adults and kids and JFEN, the Jewish Food Education Network
- Our blog, the Jew & the Carrot
- New resources on shmita – the sabbatical year in Jewish life
- Weekly emails, speaking, and teaching that we do throughout the year

# Capacity-Building

- Our local and regional staff are working closely with a range of institutions and leaders to support and strengthen Jewish life, including by launching a series of one-day Jewish Food Festivals around the country, and by utilizing our Food Guide and Audit in Jewish institutions
- The Hazon CSA is the largest faith-based network of Community-Supported Agriculture projects in North America
- We give out mini-grants to support the JOFEE field
- We're planning to do more work to develop a JOFEE network, and we're particularly interested in supporting and networking alumni of Adamah, Teva, Urban Adamah and other immersive JOFEE programs
- Our Siach network helps to strengthen Israel-diaspora working relationships in relation to shmita, intentional communities and sustainable food systems
- Through fiscal sponsorship and Makom Hadash we help to incubate, house and network great young organizations in the Jewish world.



## Hazon and the New Jewish Food Movement

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 Audit and 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 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 the Food Audit and Food Guide Toolkit 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 [hazon.org](http://hazon.org). If you have questions, email [foodguide@hazon.org](mailto:foodguide@hazon.org). We look forward to hearing from you.