



Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Mishpachah: The Modern Jewish Family

Memories from the Kitchen

**HOW TO PREPARE
A FAMILY COOK BOOK**

Step I: The Plan

Invite every person in the family (including your extended family) to a Shabbat dinner or a barbecue. (*If your family is scattered and cannot physically be there, you can do this through Skype or email.*)

Discuss creating a cookbook representing the diversity of your family members. (*In our family there are people with Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Irish, Italian, French, and Greek backgrounds.*)

Ask everyone to send in their favorite recipes (even the children) and to include a description or narrative (with photographs if possible). (*In my family's collection there is a picture of me making a Blankette de Veau with wine sauce. I am cooking and adding the wine while drinking some myself.*)

Assign someone (or more than one person) to coordinate all the material.

Assign someone to create a cover with the family name(s) and a family photograph.

The first page of your book should introduce this project and explain why it is important.

When you have everything assembled have it reproduced in multiple copies. Most photocopy places will spiral bind them for a fee. Make a copy for every member of the family, including children and grandchildren. Everyone will want their own copy of your family recipes, history and photographs.

Invite everyone to another Shabbat or other dinner and give them each their book. This is a priceless gift. **You are, in essence, preserving some of your family history through food.**

Step II: Telling Your Stories

- **Recipes: The way to a family's heart**
Recipes can be family favorites or from traditional holidays/gatherings.
Nonna's Stuffed Breast of Lamb
- **History: Bring the past to life** (*Examples in italics are from the family of Ziza Pallia – aka Nonna*)

Where did it come from, why is it a favorite? If it's a traditional recipe, how did it start?
Nonna learned how to make stuffed breast of lamb from her mother and they served it every Passover and Rosh Hashanah.

- **Photographs: Worth a thousand words**

Photos should be iconic or truly representative images.

A picture of Nonna cooking

- **The Story: Making it personal**

Nonna shares her secrets for stuffed breast of lamb, a family favorite.

Let's go to the market and buy what we need. This is a beautiful breast of lamb of -- about five pounds. Let's ask the butcher to form a pocket by slitting it crosswise.

With the lamb we will need the hashu, the stuffing.

Let's soak one cup rice in boiling water, enough to cover, for 30 minutes.

Now we need to sauté a pound of ground beef with a chopped onion, 1 tsp of ground allspice, 2 tbsp olive oil, 1 tsp kosher salt, 1 tsp ground cinnamon, 1/4 tsp of pepper and 1 cup pine nuts. Combine the meat mixture with the drained rice. This is your stuffing. Some people don't like to add pine nuts but this is how my mother made it, so this is how I make it. Besides, I love pine nuts!

Now we preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Help me put the breast of lamb in a large roaster and let's rub it with 1 tablespoon of olive oil, more allspice, garlic, salt and pepper. Now, loosely stuff it with the hashu; you don't want to put too much in because it will be too dense and not presentable.

Let's sear the lamb in the roaster over medium high heat for about 5 minutes until golden brown, turning once. Make sure you don't burn it or dry it up.

Add 1 cup water and cover and braise for one hour, basting occasionally (This is the secret to making it moist.) Reduce the oven temperature to 300 degrees, add 1/2 cup of water and cook for an additional 1 1/2 to 2 hours, and continue to baste it.

Let's sit down and relax and play a game of backgammon while we are waiting. You know how much I love to beat you at backgammon!

Now let's take it out. We need to let it cool for 10 to 15 minutes before we cut it. Let's take it to the dinner table and tell your mommy and daddy that you helped make it, they will be so proud of you.

Results: *Thank you so much, Nonna. I love cooking with you!*