

Seders, other traditions on tap for Passover



Mark Hicks, The Detroit News 10:43 p.m. EDT April 22, 2016



(Photo: Todd McInturf / The Detroit News)

Passover, the Jewish holiday that started at sundown Friday, usually launches with a festive feast full of centuries-old customs.

But the Seder set to unfold this weekend at the Emagine theater in Royal Oak is dubbed "[Not Your Bubbe's](http://www.meetyouatthewell.org/calendar/2016/3/22/not-your-bu)" for a reason. Event-goers can expect darts to break the middle matzah; Pablo Neruda's poem "Ode to Bread" replacing the traditional blessing; and perspectives from costumed guests to supplant chronicling how Jews escaped Egyptian enslavement.

"If you're very traditional and religious and you hit all the points in the Seder, it can be pretty lengthy and drawn-out," said Brooke Bendix, 31, of West Bloomfield Township, a host. "Our idea was that we're going to have it

informal, out of the box, while still keeping that tradition and keeping the integrity of what Passover is — but really having it in a different way."

New spins on old conventions abound as Jews across southeast Michigan celebrate the holiday that lasts through dusk April 30.

Traditionally, observers recall how ancient Israelites evaded death — the final plague wrought against Egypt — and fled bondage.

Those ancestors bolted so quickly they lacked time to let their dough rise, the Book of Exodus recounts. Today, descendants honor that by eating matzah, an unleavened form of bread.

Students at the [Lubavitch Yeshiva International School](http://www.lubavitchcheder.com/) for Chabad Leadership in Oak Park long have delivered handmade shmurah ones to Jews throughout the region around Passover.

"We're told this is the food of our faith because it represents the faith that Jews had in God when they left Egypt," said Rabbi Mendel Stein, the school's development director.

Stein brought some to Jay Novetsky, an ophthalmologist from Southfield. To him, Passover affords plenty of opportunities to remember past restoration, present religious freedom and future generations.

"The biblical commandment is that we should tell the story to our children," he said. "My father told the story to me, my grandfather told the story to my father. ... This year, I look forward very much to telling the story not only to my children, but also to my grandchildren so that the chain of tradition that comes all the way from the time of receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai is perpetuated again and again."

While history guides some observances, others feature modern twists.

A special sweets-centered Seder last Sunday at the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit in West Bloomfield toyed with fresh takes on traditional offerings. Instead of parsley to toast spring, diners nibbled spearmint leaf candy; the bitter herb mirroring slavery's unpleasantness was swapped with hot cinnamon candy, said Gail Greenberg, a Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit associate. "For a large chunk of people today, it's exceptionally important to make the Seder relevant so that it makes sense."

The updated interactive approach was evident as Alexis Rosenbaum, 6, and her younger sister, Emily, both beamed while making matzah. "It really helps connect some of the story and why we do what we do in a fun and creative setting," said their mother, Stephanie Rosenbaum of Huntington Woods.

Passover themes also were parsed Wednesday evening when a diverse group packed a brightly lit room at Bamboo Detroit for a discussion on the nation's jail system. "Let Our People Go: The Plague of Mass Incarceration in the U.S." featured talks by American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan Legal Director Michael Steinberg and Yusef Shakur, an area activist and former prisoner.

Reading captivity-related passages from the Bible and Jewish texts sparked passionate examinations of redemption and spirituality.

The focus evokes the Passover story, which involves "the exodus and this notion of being unjustly enslaved," said Rabbi Dan Horwitz, founding director at [the Well](http://www.meetyouatthewell.org/), a Jewish community-building initiative that coordinated the event. "We see a close parallel there. We live in an era with way too many people in prison."

Meredith Cohen of Royal Oak left with that lesson. "We really evaluate our state of freedom at the time of Passover, and I think a lot of times at Seders, we think about it on a more surface level," she said. "Events like this really bring to light the issue of whether we're truly free today."

Read or Share this story: <http://detne.ws/1SzUBL2>

We'll
try
not
to
show
that
ad
again

Used by
Google
to
prevent this ad
from being
shown by Google