

THE JEWISH FEAST OF PURIM

WHAT IS IT?

Purim is a very festive and fun Jewish holiday, celebrated every year, as requested by Mordecai and Queen Esther. The word Purim means "lots," since Haman cast lots to decide what day to kill all the Jews in the kingdom. Of course, now that we have studied this story, we know how God turned all that around, and that's what is celebrated at Purim. You can pronounce the word as *PUH-rim* or *poo-REEM*. Growing up in a Jewish home, I have sweet childhood memories of Purim, which is more of a lively party than a somber religious observance. Each year, our family went to our temple on Purim, and it was definitely a highlight, especially for kids!

THE MEGILLAH

The celebration centered around the reading of the Megillah, which is a hand written scroll containing the book of Esther.

Unlike the torah scroll, (*the scroll containing the five books of Moses, which has two wooden poles, one on each end, and a portion is read each week during services, and it is then rolled back on either end to hold the place for next week*), the Megillah has one wooden pole, is read in its entirety at Purim, and then rolled back up for next year. If you've ever heard the expression, "the whole megillah"... this is where it comes from!



Megillah

You might think it would be tedious and boring for kids to sit through hearing the entire book of Esther... but it wasn't! Because everyone is given a "grogger," which is a noisemaker. As the rabbi reads the story, every time he says the word "Haman," everyone stomps their feet, yells "BOOO!" and twirls their groggers to try and drown out the name of the evil villain. Conversely, we all cheer loudly when



Groggers

Mordecai's name is mentioned. In this way, everyone listens with great anticipation, and participates in the telling of the story. It was always so fun to get to do this in temple, whereas all other holidays required somber quietness.

COSTUMES

There is music, songs and dancing at Purim, and one of my favorite things was dressing up! Traditionally, people wear masks or costumes, and there is a parade so everyone can display how they are dressed. Of course, most of the boys dress up as Mordecai, and the girls all get to be Esther for a day! It is said that the tradition of hiding yourself in a costume is a nod to the idea that God was working, clearly seen, yet "hidden" behind all of the events that He orchestrated "behind the scenes."



HAMAN? BOOOOO!!!



Here I am, dressed as Queen Esther, in 1973 and 1977.

GIFTS and DONATIONS

Sometimes, people would give gifts on Purim, but always there was an emphasis on giving money or food to the poor. Donations would be taken and distributed. This is called doing a "mitzvah" which is a Hebrew word for "commandment, or good deed." The entire family would participate in any way they could, even children giving money from the little that they owned.

FOOD!!

While there is feasting and food of all sorts, the most well known Purim treats are "hamantaschen" which means "Haman's pocket" or "Haman's ears." Legend



hamantaschen

has it that Haman wore a three corned hat, and perhaps that is why the pastries are shaped as they are. They used to contain poppy seed filling, but now are more commonly filled with apricot or other fruit jam, chocolate, or even savory fillings. See the back of this page for a recipe!

While I appreciate my sweet memories of celebrating Purim and other Jewish traditions, I am deeply thankful for God's providence in my life. Much like we see in the story of Esther, I can see His Hand as I look back on my life, as He pursued my heart, revealed to me the truth of Jesus, saved me, and is now the Lord of my life.

Shari Sasser

HOW TO MAKE HAMANTASCHEN

INGREDIENTS

2 large eggs
 2/3 cup sugar
 1/4 cup canola oil
 1 tsp orange zest
 1 tsp vanilla
 2 1/4 cups flour
 1 tsp baking powder
 1/4 tsp salt
 Nonstick cooking oil spray
 Preserves or jam in desired flavor

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. In a mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, sugar, canola oil, orange zest and vanilla.

In another bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt.

Slowly stir the dry ingredients into the wet, until a dough begins to form.

Knead until smooth and slightly tacky to the touch. Try not to overwork the dough, only knead until the dough is the right consistency to roll out.

Lightly flour a smooth, clean surface. Use a rolling pin to roll the dough out to 1/4 inch thick. Scrape the dough up with a pastry scraper, lightly re-flour the surface, and flip the dough over. Continue rolling the dough out until it is very thin (*less than 1/8 of an inch*). Lightly flour the rolling pin occasionally to prevent sticking, if you need to.

Use a 3-inch cookie cutter (*or larger, but not smaller*) or the 3-inch rim of a glass to cut circles out of the dough, cutting as many as you can from the dough. Gather the scraps and roll them out again, and cut out more circles. Repeat process again if needed until you've cut as many circles as you can from the dough.

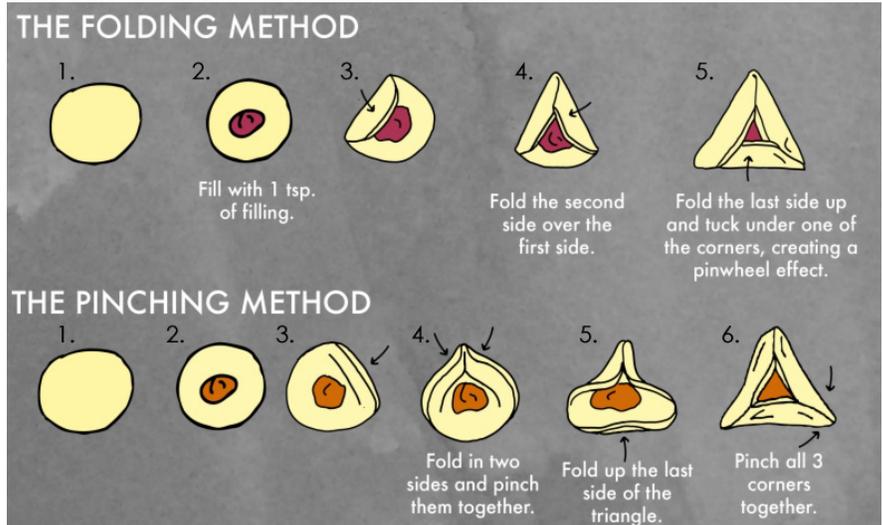
Place a teaspoon of filling (*preserves or jam*) into the center of each circle. Do not use more than a teaspoon of filling, or you run the risk of your hamantaschen opening, and the filling spilling out during baking. Cover

unused circles with a lightly damp towel to prevent them from drying out while you are filling.

Assemble the hamantaschen as shown in the gray box above.

When all of your hamantaschen have been filled, place them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or nonstick foil, evenly spaced. You can fit about 20 on one sheet... they don't need to be very spaced out because they shouldn't expand much during baking.

Bake for 20-25 minutes, until the cookies are cooked through and lightly golden. Cool the cookies on a wire rack.



TO FOLD, OR TO PINCH?!



There are two ways to shape hamantaschen into triangles. You can fold them, or pinch the corners. Try them both ways, and see if you are Team Pinch, or Team Fold!!



Hamantaschen... they don't have to be just for Purim! :)