## Check this out who knew you at Kreplach for Purim :) Enjoy! SPOTLIGHT | PASSIONATE PALATE

# [Kreplach for Purim](http://www.stljewishlight.com/news/339506196550411.php)

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| bp5294  Food columnist Margi Lenga Kahn observes as Joanie Protzel, of Protzel's Delicatessen, demonstrates making kreplach. Looking on is Joanie's son, Max Protzel. Photo: Dennis Caldwell | transparent |
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**BY MARGI LENGA KAHN, SPECIAL TO THE JEWISH LIGHT**

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On midnight of the Chinese New Year, it is traditional to eat dumplings, specifically Jiaozi. They are crescent-shaped, filled with various meats and vegetables, and steamed. They symbolize wealth and prosperity and bring good luck to all who indulge.

The Jews and the Chinese hardly have a monopoly on dumplings. Just about every culture has its version. There are Polish pierogi, Russian vareniki, Armenian manti, Korean mandu, and Tibetan momos, to name just a few. While I can't speak to the symbolic meanings associated with the dumplings of other cultures, there's more to our *kreplach* than simply their good taste.

Much of the symbolism around *kreplach* can be found on Purim. The filling, which is hidden inside the dough, is symbolic of Queen Esther's secret. It is only after the Queen tells King Ahasuerus that she is Jewish our people are spared and Haman is condemned to death for plotting to annihilate us.

The use of chopped meat to fill *kreplach* is also symbolic. According to Jayne Cohen, author of Jewish Holiday Cooking: A Food Lover's Treasury of Classics and Improvisations (Wiley), the fillings are made by beating (or chopping), which echoes the noises made during the reading of the Megillah each time Haman's name is spoken.

And the shape of the *kreplach*? Alfred J. Kolatch, in The Jewish Book of Why, explains that the triangular shape is symbolic of our three Jewish patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Reason enough to make *kreplach*, right?

But, I wondered, does anyone still make *kreplach*? Making the dough can be a challenge, and rolling it thin enough, even more so. And then there's the stuffing and folding each individual *kreplach*. Making *kreplach* is not exactly in sync with the frenetic pace of our lives these days. However, I found two people who are committed to the tradition.

Nancy Pollack, a member of Nusach Hari B'nai Zion in University City, is a fabulous home cook.

"I make a big batch of *kreplach* before Rosh Hashanah," she told me. "I fill them with a combination of leftover roast and chicken, fried onions, and an egg. I serve half of the *kreplach* for Rosh Hashanah. I freeze the other half in zip-lock bags, 12 to a bag, and serve them again on erev Yom Kippur."

Her late husband, Myron, grew up with homemade *kreplach* and his mother was the one to teach Nancy how to make them.

"My mother-in-law didn't use a recipe," she told me. "I just watched her. And, to this day, I've never seen a recipe. I've been making *kreplach* for the past 35 years."

Then there's Joanie Protzel, of Protzel's Delicatessen, in Clayton at 7608 Wydown Boulevard. She learned to make *kreplach* from her mother and her grandmother.

"My mother and grandmother loved to cook. My grandmother used a yahrzeit glass for measuring. I had to fill the glass with water to know how much of each ingredient she used. I loved to watch them cook. They passed on their legacy to me by sharing their special techniques and giving me their cherished Jewish cookbooks."

Joanie makes *kreplach* at her family's deli. She uses a Kitchen Aid to mix her dough and a pasta machine to roll it thin. After stuffing each square with a filling of carrots, brisket, fried onions, and her secret spices, she parboils them and immediately freezes them in packages of 10. Those packages can be purchased year-round at Protzel's for $6.79.

"Just last week my son, Max, who oversees the business on a daily basis, called to say that he had an order for 4 packages of *kreplach* from a woman in Naples, Fla. She wanted them shipped overnight. The shipping alone was $75. All this for my *kreplach*," she laughed.

"My mother does a lot of the cooking for us," Max Protzel told me. "She bakes our kamish bread, brownies, cookies, and strudel. And," he adds proudly, "creates our specialty trays."

I confess that I'd never made *kreplach* before this column. So, who better to teach me than my mother? I called to see whether she might consider. She laughed. "You're going to make *kreplach*? I'll be over in 15 minutes. Don't start without me!"

We spent a delightful afternoon together experimenting with different noodle doughs as we worked out the right balance of moisture to density. We used a food processor to mix the dough, chop the onions (which we fried in a mixture of schmaltz and canola oil — what else) and to blend the filling ingredients. (Though the *kreplach* can certainly be made by hand the process will probably take longer.) We rolled the dough and stuffed the *kreplach* by hand.

When we finished a couple of hours later, my mother and I had made three-dozen *kreplach*, more than enough for both Purim and the high holidays. Furthermore, we kept the tradition going, one that I look forward to sharing with my own children and grandchildren.

In the event that I've piqued your curiosity and sense of culinary adventure, I've included the recipe that my mother and I concocted. And, as always, the recipe should be used only as a guide.

If you have something against schmaltz, substitute more oil. You could also sauté garlic and chopped celery and carrots along with the onions for additional flavor. If you don't have leftover meat or chicken you could always fry some ground beef, or a combination of ground beef and ground chicken or turkey, and still come up with a great filling. Just be sure to taste the filling for spices before using.

Margi Lenga Kahn is the mother of five and grandmother of one. A cooking instructor at the Kitchen Conservatory, she is currently working on a project to preserve the stories and recipes of heritage cooks. She welcomes your comments and suggestions at [margikahn@gmail.com](mailto:margikahn@gmail.com).

**ANN AND MARGI'S *KREPLACH***

**Dough:**

3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling

1 tsp. salt

3 eggs

1/2 cup plus 2 tbsp. cold water

**Filling:**

Approximately 1 pound of a combination of leftover chicken and beef

2 tbsp. schmaltz

1 tbsp. canola oil

2 large onions, chopped

2 tbsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 tsp. salt, or to taste

1/2 tsp. ground black pepper, or to taste

**For boiling *kreplach*:**

1 tbsp. salt

1/2 tsp. canola oil plus additional for oiling cookie sheet

Chicken Soup

Place flour and salt in bowl of food processor. Pulse to combine. Whisk together eggs and all the water in a small bowl. With the machine running, gradually pour egg mixture through feed-tube, adding only enough for mixture to become a mass and leave the sides of the food processor bowl. Continue to process for 1 minute.

Remove dough from processor, flatten, and wrap in plastic. Refrigerate dough while preparing filling.

Heat oil over medium heat in a large skillet. Chop onions in food processor using metal blade. Transfer onions to skillet and sauté, about 10-12 minutes until translucent and just beginning to brown. Remove skillet from heat.

Add leftover meat to food processor bowl fitted with metal blade and pulse to coarsely chop. Add sautéed onions and continue to pulse until mixture is thoroughly combined. Taste for seasoning, adding more salt and pepper as needed.

Fill a large soup pot, 3/4 of the way up, with cold water. Add 1 tbsp. salt and 1/2 tsp. oil to pot. Bring water to a rolling boil.

Remove dough from refrigerator and divide in half. Rewrap one half and set aside.

Place some water in a small cup. Lightly oil a large cookie sheet.

Place one piece of dough onto a lightly floured counter. Roll dough into a rectangle, 12 inches wide, and as long as you need to roll it so that it's thin without tearing. Cut the dough into 4-inch squares.

Place a tablespoon of filling onto the center of each square. Dip your finger in the water and run it along one triangle of the square. Fold the dough into a triangle, pressing edges together to seal. Place *kreplach* onto prepared cookie sheet. Continue making *kreplach* in this way, repeating the process with remaining dough.

Gently drop 12 *kreplach* at a time into boiling water and cook until pasta is al dente, 10-20 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer *kreplach* to an oiled cookie sheet and allow them to cool. Continue to boil remaining *kreplach*.

Once cooled, *kreplach* can be refrigerated overnight or frozen in zip-lock bags.

To serve, heat *kreplach* in warm chicken soup. Ladle soup into bowls, floating 2-3 *kreplach* in each bowl.

Leftover *kreplach* can be refrigerated and fried the next day, a delicacy not to be missed.

Makes about 36 *kreplach*.

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