

Sukkot: The Paradigmatic Harvest Festival

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The Jewish harvest festival of Sukkot, “Tabernacles,” is the quintessential Jewish holiday celebration. The tradition itself recognizes this liturgically, by calling it *He-Hag* – “The Holiday,” *z’man simhateynu* – “the season of our rejoicing,” in comparison to the other two pilgrimage festivals on the Jewish calendar, *Pesah* (Passover) and *Shavuot* (“the Festival of Weeks”). But besides these explicit declarations of Sukkot’s pre-eminence as “The Holiday,” I will show how the specific foods and food practices associated with Sukkot implicitly mark and cultivate experiences of *simhah* - which designates both the emotional state of “joy” and the ritual celebration intended to effect it.

My analysis starts with Mary Douglas’ famous insight in “Deciphering a Meal” that in a culture’s system of meals,

meals are ordered in scale of importance and grandeur throughout the week and the year. The *smallest, meanest meal metonymically figures the structure of the grandest*, and each unit of the grand meal figures again the whole meal -- or the meanest meal.¹

But I go beyond her point that the patterned multiplication of the basic dishes of “the meanest meal” distinguishes the festive, “grand meals,” that is, in this study, the holiday meals of Sukkot, from ordinary meals. There are multiplications of other aspects of Sukkot meals besides the foods actually eaten that are intended to bring about the emotional state of joy. All of them depend upon some kind of expression of extravagance, through activities involving different sorts of superabundant “consumption.” By adding to a basic, ordinary meal these five things or practices: (1) superabundant foods eaten during the seven days of Sukkot, (2) superabundant sensory experiences of Sukkot “foods”, (3)

superabundant expenditures for Sukkot ritual objects, (4) superabundant number of guests (“*Ushpizin*”) for Sukkot meals, and (5) superabundant memories of Sukkot celebrations past and to come even after we die, - Sukkot is distinguished from all other festival celebrations in the Jewish system of meals. I will explain each of these in what follows.

Superabundant Foods

The patterned *multiplication* of the dishes of less or non- festive meals distinguishes the festive meals of Sukkot from other Jewish meals, as do Sukkot’s characteristic stuffed foods or other “one-dish meals” with multiple ingredients. We can see this both in the idealized prescriptions of halakhah, Jewish law, defining what and how to eat and drink on the holiday, and the internalization of this “grammar of meals” in the improvisations of it in actual Jewish meal practice for Sukkot. According to halakhah, the “fixed meals” one should eat in the sukkah consist minimally of bread, cake, or other dishes made from grains.² So for festivals in general, not just Sukkot, according to Jewish Talmudic and post-Talmudic prescriptions, one must eat meat and drink wine in order to enjoy a festival. This is what distinguishes “*Yom Tov*” (holiday) meals from ordinary meals.³ So if adding things to it makes an ordinary meal a festive meal, i.e., meat and wine to bread, then it seems that the stuffed foods and rich stews customarily eaten on Sukkot (e.g., in Ashkenazic Jewish cuisine - stuffed cabbage, a meaty *tzimmes*, or brisket cooked with dried fruit and root vegetables), are conscious expressions and improvisations of this halakhic grammar of meals to make Sukkot even “more festive” than other Jewish festival meals. We can see this in at least four ways: in the attention called to adding “side dishes” to the main course; or to main entrees that include the sides in one dish (according to what I call the “chicken Marengo principle” a la Mary Douglas); adding ingredients that

make the base foods seem richer, and Jewish recipe book authors' recommendation of other dishes (Jewish or not) previously not associated with Sukkot as "Sukkot foods" because they fit these principles. The Ashkenazic dish *tzimmes*, a sweet cooked dish of root vegetables and dried fruits, is pretty much universally designated as a Sukkot dish by modern Jewish cook books, no doubt in part due to its seasonally appropriate harvest ingredients, and its sweetness symbolizing a hope for a "sweet New Year." However, even its name calls attention to its being an "added dish," if Gil Marks' suggested etymology for *tzimmes*, from the Yiddish, *zum essen*, is correct.⁴ In other words, *tzimmes* basically means "side dish." Marks also suggests that the carrots in *tzimmes*, *mehren* [meaning both "carrots" and "more" in Yiddish] also symbolize abundance, and that the Yiddish expression *machen a tzimmes fun...* ("making fuss about something") refers the extra effort and added ingredients Eastern European housewives devoted to their Sukkot *tzimmeses*.⁵ In other words, to use another Yiddish expression, a Sukkot *tzimmes* is more *ongepotscht* than other ordinary foods. Hence, typically, one adds meat, usually brisket, to a *tzimmes* for Sukkot to make it richer, like the recipe for a *fleishig* "meat" *tzimmes* Marks provides in the entry "tzimmes" his *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food*.⁶ Thus, *tzimmes* exemplifies the practice of adding ingredients to simpler dishes to make them more festive according to the grammar of Jewish meals. Similarly, raisins or other dried fruits are often added to the challah for Sukkot and the High Holidays. Thus, these festival challahs, which are usually baked in a round shape, are differentiated from "ordinary" Sabbath challahs (the classic oblong braided "Jewish egg twists), which are themselves differentiated from ordinary daily bread made from coarser, darker flours. In addition, one should place *two* whole loaves of challah on the festive table in the sukkah.⁷ Yes, the

doubled challah loaves and their raisins symbolize “plenty,” and the round shape the seasonal cycle, but at base Sukkot bread is a variation and expansion of ordinary bread.⁸

Typical Sukkot foods are often stuffed, or especially one-dish meals or casseroles, because they too symbolize abundance more or less according to what I’m calling the “chicken Marengo principle.” According to Mary Douglas. “the features which a single copious dish would need to display before qualifying as a meal... would be something like the famous chicken Marengo served to Napoleon after his victory over the Austrians,” which earned its fame precisely because it “combine[d] the traditional soup, fish, egg, and meat courses of a French celebratory feast in a *plat unique*.”⁹ Thus an Ashkenazic meaty *tzimmes* of brisket, carrots, dried fruit, sweet and white potatoes like the one for which Gil Marks provides a recipe is not just a side, but a “main course” for Sukkot,¹⁰ because it basically recapitulates the Jewish festive meal of meat, savory vegetable side, starch, and sweet side in a single dish. Similarly, the variation with *knaidlach* (matzo balls), a specialty which my wife’s bubbe used to make for Passover— *tzimmes mit a knaidl* (“Because,” as she explained deadpan, “it’s a *tzimmes* with a *knaidl*”), includes the “bread course,” appropriately replacing the leavened bread with a starch made of matzo meal and eggs. The Moroccan *pastilla*, a phyllo dough pie, filled with chicken, sweet ground nuts, beaten eggs, and a mixture of savory and sweet spices, is a Sephardic one-dish meal made also especially for Sukkot and other Jewish holidays.¹¹ Of course, pies like this and “meal-in-one stews” are popular for Sukkot also because they can be conveyed outside to the sukkah and kept hot easily.¹² Stuffed foods are characteristic fare for Sukkot, just as indeed they signify the idea of abundance in the foods of harvest celebration banquets in many other cultures. Marks lists numerous stuffed foods from a variety of Jewish cultures

around the world as typical Sukkot foods, such as “Ashkenazic...stuffed veal breast or poultry, knishes, filled dumplings, fruit and cabbage strudels...Sephardic...filled phyllo pastries...and Bukharan...*oshee tos kadoo* (stuffed pumpkin) and *samsa* (turnovers).” And under “Sukkot” in his index, Marks lists among others such stuffed foods as *boreka*, *bulemas*, *dolma*, *fluden*, *knedliky*, *sambusak*, strudel, stuffed cabbage, and stuffed peppers.”¹³ Even if these stuffed dishes don’t always recapitulate the whole meal (like *pastilla*), they still signify abundance by combining other components of the meal: bread/starch and sweet and savory sides, bread/starch and meats, vegetable sides and meat and/or starch, etc.

Finally, I think the most telling expression of the internalized grammar of Sukkot meals appears in modern Jewish cookbooks when they suggest adapting and applying the “rule” for appropriate Sukkot foods to dishes that previously were not part of the Sukkot or even Jewish culinary repertoire. Thus for example, Gloria Kaufer Greene in her *Jewish Holiday Cookbook* recommends one Cuban Jewish family’s recipe for *Papas Rellenas* (Meat-stuffed Mashed Potato Croquettes) “because they are in keeping with the tradition of eating stuffed foods on Sukkot [though the family] often eat[s] them on Shabbat as well.”¹⁴ And I particularly like her rationale for including “Orange Glazed Turkey with Fruit-Nut Stuffing” as a Sukkot dish. She explains,

Some say that the American holiday of Thanksgiving may have been influenced by the Jewish one of Sukkot. As both are festivals celebrating an abundant fall harvest, this is indeed possible. Interestingly, modern American Jews have turned the tables (so to speak) on the Pilgrims, and now serve many typical Thanksgiving foods, particularly stuffed turkey, during Sukkot... The following turkey recipe features a unique fruit-nut stuffing and orange glaze that are quite in keeping with the Sukkot tradition eating fruit and nuts.¹⁵

Greene's "translation" of the "language" of American festive meals into the language of Jewish festive meals works because the "syntax" of adding or stuffing ingredients to signify "abundance" is so similar in both, not to mention the shared seasonal and "sweet" symbolism of the ingredients. To be sure, there are other things going on here in Greene's *Jewish Holiday Cookbook*, which reflect the complex strategies of negotiation of modern American Jewish identities.¹⁶ One is the assimilation of "Jewish" food *per se* to "Jewish holiday food." That is, American Jews often eat stereotypically *Jewish* food on *Jewish* holidays, "American" or other ethnic foods on all other days. Or when Jews eat stereotypically American holiday foods – like stuffed turkey, that in effect makes them *Jewish* holiday foods. A second is the exoticization of Sephardic Jewish foods by many American Jews who come primarily from Ashkenazic, Eastern European Jewish backgrounds. Thus, eating and cooking Sephardic Jewish foods allow Jews to eat "ethnic" (the Other's) food and Jewish (our "own") food at the same time. So "adding" Sephardic foods to the "default" Ashkenazic culinary repertoire, and especially for Jewish holiday meals, is another way marking them as special, and different from other "ordinary" Jewish meals. For example, though my family is Ashkenazic, I know I often cook "foreign" Middle Eastern or Sephardic Jewish dishes (such as a rich savory vegetarian couscous with end of summer vegetables and a sweet garnish of caramelized onions and raisin for Sukkot¹⁷) when we invite guests to our Jewish holiday meals. But there's more to making Sukkot the pre-eminently festive festival than the variation and multiplication of the courses and components of the foods we *eat*.

Superabundant Sensory Experiences: More than Food that Just Tastes Good

Certain rituals specific to Sukkot alone are added to signify abundance or extravagance beyond the way the special foods and practices of other Jewish holidays do. There are “foods” specifically prescribed in the Bible for Sukkot, the citron or “*etrog*” (called the *pri etz hadar*, “the fruit of the beautiful tree” in the Bible),¹⁸ and the leaves of the date palm, the *lulav*, to be enjoyed not through the sense of taste, but through their fragrant smell, visual beauty, feel, and sound when they are waved together with the other two of “the four species,” myrtle and willow leaves. Indeed the following midrash brought by the modern Israeli Jewish educator Ephraim Kitov to explain their symbolism stresses not only that their taste is not their sole pertinent quality, but also that they are “metonymic foods.”¹⁹

Our Sages expounded (Vayikra Rabbah 30):

The fruit of a beautiful tree – this refers to Israel, for just as the *etrog* [*sic*] has both taste and scent, so too are there Jews who both possess Torah learning and good deeds.

The branch of the palm tree – This refers to Israel, for just as the *lulav* has taste [i.e., dates] but lacks scent, so too are there Jews who possess Torah learning but lack good deeds.

A bough from the “avos” tree – This refers to Israel, for just as the *hadas* has scent but lacks taste, so too are there Jews who possess good deeds but lack Torah learning.

Willows of the stream – This refers to Israel, for just as the *aravah* lacks both taste and scent, so too are there Jews who lack both Torah learning and good deeds.

What does God do with them... God says, “Bind them together, and they will atone for each other!”²⁰

These foods which stand for the different components of the Jewish people, are brought together and “consumed” not through the mouth and the sense of taste, but by smelling, touching, seeing, and hearing them when one holds them together and waves them in six different directions.²¹ In this ritualized metaphor, it is a prerequisite to bring the Jewish people together symbolically “to atone for one another” each day before one eats their

meal in the sukkah. That is, one must perform the ritual of taking and waving the four species, before one is even permitted to eat a festive meal in the sukkah.²²

Where one eats the festive Sukkot meals enhances them by drawing attention to their visual appeal, as well as to their taste. To fulfill the scriptural verse “This is my God and I shall exalt Him (*anvayhu*, literally, I shall make Him *naveh* – “beautiful”, Ex 15:2), Jews are encouraged to decorate the *sukkah*, the booth they build for the holiday, with colorful seasonal foods (like gourds, Indian corn, and cranberries where I live in New England).²³ The post-Biblical commandment to make the sukkah and the other ritual objects beautiful is called *hiddur mitzvah*, “beautification of the commandment,” and the criteria that makes them beautiful are especially features of their visual appearance, which Jewish tradition carefully specifies.²⁴ Taking these visual aesthetic experiences together with the other special tastes, scents, textures, and sounds of Sukkot, one enjoys the festival when abundance and extravagance is to be experienced in multi-sensory, synaesthetic ways.

Superabundant Expenditure

One can spend even beyond one’s means for the sake of *hiddur mitzvah*.²⁵ The plot of the 2004 Israeli movie *Ushpizin* turns on this tradition. The protagonist, Moshe Bellanga, a poor Hasidic Jewish man living in the ultra Orthodox neighborhood Mea Shearim in Jerusalem with his childless wife, Malli, don’t have enough money to purchase food for the week of Sukkot, not to mention a sukkah and the other ritual items for the holiday. They pray for a miracle and one occurs. They’re given an anonymous donation of \$1000, and a Sukkah. But then Moshe uses up most of the money to buy an expensive, perfectly formed *etrog* (unbeknownst to his wife, who becomes furious at him when she

discovers this), only to have one of his guests in the sukkah cut it up and put it in a salad in his unwittingly disastrous attempt to reciprocate his host's hospitality.²⁶

Superabundant Guests: Ushpizin

The very custom of going out of one's way to entertain "*Ushpizin*" -guests both invisible (the ancestors Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc., and the mystical divine *sefirot* to which they correspond) and visible – the poor, those without a place to celebrate, is also a ritual expression of extravagance. For the invisible *Ushpizin*, there are ritual formulas to "invite" each supernatural guest into the sukkah on their appropriate day, some set a chair at the table, or put up pictures of them in the sukkah to suggest their presence.²⁷ Our family custom is to improvise on this. We paint and post pictures not only of the traditional male *Ushpizin*, but also female Biblical heroines (like Miriam, Esther, Sarah, etc., to suit our egalitarian perspective), and at the table ask our guests to think of people whom they would wish to have at our meal if they could choose them from any place or time. As for the visible guests, Jewish tradition suggests inviting the supernatural guests not with the expectation that it's not necessary to feed them, but rather, one prepares extra food for them, and invites the actual poor in to eat it.²⁸ Moreover, for these real *Ushpizin*, another tradition urges that the host be personally involved in the preparation of the food for these meals in the Sukkah, even if he or she has many servants.²⁹

The movie *Ushpizin* dramatizes the how far out of one's way observant Jews might go to in their efforts to observe the mitzvah of entertaining guests for Sukkot. As the movie review in the New York Times describes what happens,

The guests arrive just in time for dinner. Chowing down like famished dogs, they proceed to eat and drink the Bellangas out of house and home. *But the hosts are thrilled. The appearance of guests during a holiday celebrating hospitality must be another sign of divine beneficence.* And when Eliyahu and Yossef make no signs

of leaving, the hosts adjust their thinking and gratefully accept the boorish behavior of the men who came to dinner as a divine test with a reward at the end.

Unbeknownst to the Bellangas, Eliyahu and Yossef have just escaped from prison and are actually hiding from the police. Eventually, the guests go too far. After demanding money from Malli to buy meat, they set up an outdoor grill, blast pop music on a portable sound system and dance around wildly, incensing the neighbors.³⁰

And as I mentioned, these impossible guests cut up the exorbitantly priced etrog in a salad for their host. But the point is that, at least at first, Moshe and Malli believed that the addition of guests to their meals in the sukkah “during a holiday celebrating hospitality must be another sign of divine beneficence.”³¹

Superabundant Memories

On Sukkot, it is also customary to evoke certain parts of what I shall call for the purpose of this paper “the Jewish collective memory” that speak of the loss or fleetingness of abundance, namely *Simhat Bet Ha-Sho’evah*, the water libation festival imagined nostalgically to have been celebrated at Sukkot long past in the time of the Temple, and the reading of the world-weary book of Ecclesiastes (Koheleth) said to have been written by an old King Solomon, on the Sabbath that falls during the seven days of Sukkot. In many observant Jewish communities it is the custom to gather in synagogues and houses of study on the nights of Sukkot “to rejoice together through music, song, and remembrance of the *simchas beis ha-sho’evah*.”³² Why this long past celebration in particular? The rabbis praised this celebration of *Simhat Bet Ha-Shoe’evah* superlatively: “Whoever never witnessed *Simhat Beit Hashoevah* has never in his life seen true joy,” and with hyperbolic accounts of people singing in the streets, dancing atop magnificent pillars, lamps lit and shining so brightly from one end of Jerusalem to the other, so that the night seemed like the day.³³ By celebrating with water, sustenance common to all, this festival

called for God to spread His blessing of the fruitful rains to all the inhabitants of the world, Jew and non-Jew alike. We add to our joy by recalling past experiences of exceedingly abundant joy, though with that memory comes an undercurrent of regret and loss, at the remembrance of abundance *past*.

Finally, the prescribed Sukkot synagogue reading of Ecclesiastes (an almost desperate summons to enjoy feasting in the shadow of death), expresses the mood of the harvest season. It's an explicit *memento mori*, a parable calling our attention to the meaning of the harvest's abundance in the face of the impending chill of the winter, the precarious of the sukkah exposing its diners to the elements, and the last gasp of autumn's colorful leafy exuberance. "Leaves become most beautiful when they're about to die."³⁴ Or as Ecclesiastes itself puts it, "To every thing there is season...a time to be born, a time to die," and

Go, then, eat your food and enjoy it, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart: for God has already accepted what you have done...Enjoy life with a woman you love all the days of your allotted span here under the sun, futile as they are.³⁵

One might think the sentiments of Ecclesiastes put a limit on the joy in our temporary abundance. Not so! Paradoxically, evoking death in the midst of feasting is the ultimate symbol of abundance, of extravagance, and excess – intimating that our joy transgresses even the boundary of our own mortality. As George Bataille says in his essay "Joy in the Face of Death,"

Those who look at death and rejoice are no longer the individuals destined for the body's rotten decay, because simply entering into the arena with death already projected them outside themselves, into the heart of the glorious community of their fellows where every misery is scoffed at. Every instant dispelling, and annihilating the preceding one, the triumph of time seems to them bound up in their own people's conquering action. Not that they imagine they can thus escape their lot by substituting a community that is more durable than their persons. Quite the contrary...the feeling of cohesion with those who have chosen each other

to share their great intoxication is...only the means of perceiving all of the glory and conquest signified by the loss, all of the renewed life, the rebounding, the “allelulia” signified by the dead person’s fall...One must have experienced, at least once, this excess of joy to know to what extent the fertile prodigality of the sacrifice is expressed in it.³⁶

In other words, when we celebrate, our *awareness* of less, is *more*. The grammar of joy, the syntax and symbolism of abundance can be spoken even in the language of memory, the memories of meals (and those with whom we shared them) we missed and still miss.

Conclusion

Extravagance and variety of food and guests, *multisensory* enjoyment of festive “foods”, the impulse to beautify, the impulse to sacrifice, and “joy in the face of death,” are what make Sukkot the most festive of Jewish feasts. But wouldn’t these components make any meal festive, not just Jewish ones? The rabbinic discussion of how to be joyous (and the passage that was my original impetus for the idea of this paper) is instructive. In the Babylonian Talmud some time back in the fourth to six centuries CE,

The Rabbis taught: A person is obligated to make his children and the members of his household happy on Yom Tov, as the verse says, and you shall be joyous in your holiday. And how does he make them happy? With wine. Rebbe Yehuda said: men with what is appropriate for them and women with what is appropriate for them. Men with what is appropriate for them - with wine. And women with what? Rav Yosef taught: in Bavel with colored clothing and in Eretz Yisrael with pressed flax clothing. We learned in a Braita: Rebbe Yehuda ben Beteira said: when the Beit Hamikdash is standing simcha is only with meat, as the verse says and you shall slaughter peace offerings and eat them there and be joyous in front of Hashem your G-d, and when the Beit Hamikdash is not standing simcha is only with wine, as the verse says, and wine shall gladden the hearts of man.³⁷

Even in the Jewish legal discussions of joy, there's room for improvisation, as long as one knows how to express joy in one's particular language of meals. Jewish meal language clearly employs a syntax and symbolism of abundance to signify joy and celebration. But I think this is also the "generative grammar" as it were of Mary Douglas' "grandest meals," and so, I suspect, of harvest festivals in general, like the North American Thanksgiving feast. In short, Sukkot is not only the paradigmatic Jewish celebration feast, but also, can be a paradigm for understanding how to express joy in the languages of other meal systems in other cultures.

¹ Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedalus* 101, no. 1 (January 1, 1972): 67.

² Jewish law defines the word "dwell" in the Biblical commandment "Dwell in sukkot for seven days" (Lev. 23:42) to mean one should eat all their *meals* in the sukkah, drink in the sukkah, and have convivial conversations with one's friends in the sukkah. Kitov explains that Jewish law not only defines the basic "fixed meal" as bread, or some other baked grain product, but also "drinking": namely, "sitting down with friends in a formal manner to drink wine, beer, or some other beverage (Eliyahu Ki Kitov, *The Book Of Our Heritage*: *The Jewish Year And Its Days Of Significance*, ed. Dovid Landesman, trans. Nachman Bulman, 3-volume pocket ed., [Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1999]: 1:130-1).

³ R. Isaiah Horowitz, *Shnay Lulhot Ha-Brit: M. Sukkah Ner Mitzvah* 31. There is no *simhah* ["joy" or "celebration"] without meat, or wine. But see also Rabbi Michael Zylberman, "The Mitzvah of Simcha on Yom Tov," *YU Torah Online - Sukkot To-Go* 5769 (2008): 59-62. <http://www.yutorah.org/togo/5769/sukkot/>.

In his opinion, the commandment to "rejoice in your festivals ... and you should be exceedingly happy" [Dt. 16:14,15: *ve-samahta ve-hagekha...ve-hayita akh sameah*, a signature phrase and song typically sung during Sukkot] refers to a "subjective" experience of joy, for which eating meat is but one of several means to that end. He says,

Everyone has to attain a state of joy, but the way that one does so may depend on his ability, wealth, and personal preferences. For men it may be through eating meat and drinking wine; for women it may be through getting new clothing; and for children it may be through new toys (p. 60)

and infers "that if a person enjoys other kinds of food more than meat, he may fulfill his obligation of simchat Yom Tov with the foods that he enjoys." (p. 61).

⁴ Gil Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food* (Hoboken, N.J: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), p. 598.

⁵ Marks, pp. 599-600. In other words, *tzimmes*, can be a pretty basic dish, "as simple as cooked carrots and honey," but one *potschkies* with it by adding lots of extra ingredients to make it special for the holidays.

⁶ Ibid., 600.

⁷ Kitov, p. 1:178.

⁸ The two loaves, which are also required for Sabbath meals, are also an allusion to the double portion of manna, the miraculous bread from heaven the Israelites received in the desert on the day before the Sabbath, so that they wouldn't violate God's prohibition against work on the Sabbath, that is, by "harvesting" the fallen manna resting on the ground (Ex 16:22-26ff).

⁹ Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedalus* 101, no. 1 (January 1, 1972): 68.

¹⁰ Marks, p. 599.

¹¹ Marks, pp. 448-9.

¹² Marks, p. 569; Gloria Kaufer Greene, *The Jewish Holiday Cookbook: An International Collection Of Recipes And Customs*, 1st ed. (New York: Times Books, 1985), p. 107.

¹³ Marks, 654.

¹⁴ Greene, p. 115. She points out that they are very similar to an Iraqi Jewish recipe

¹⁵ Greene, pp. 121-2. I'm guessing from the sentence concluding the quotation that this recipe is her own invention or innovation.

¹⁶ See Laurence Roth, "Toward a Kashrut Nation in American Jewish Cookbooks, 1990-2000," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 28, no. 2 (2010): 65-91, for an incisive account of identity formation and strategies of acculturation in modern American Jewish cookbooks, though what I say about them is my own interpretation of how they're played out in the "language" of Jewish holiday meals.

¹⁷ A sort of hybrid derived from recipes in Gil Marks, *Olive Trees And Honey: A Treasury Of Vegetarian Recipes From Jewish Communities Around The World* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Pub., 2005) and Sally Pasley, *The Tao Of Cooking* (Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 1982).

¹⁸ The types of citrons used on Sukkot look like lemons, and are not the Buddha's hand citron, though they are related and have a similar assertively pleasant fragrance. See Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food*, 180.

¹⁹ On "metonymic foods" and the formation of group identities, see Jordan Rosenblum, *Food and Identity in Early Rabbinic Judaism* (New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp. 45-75, based on Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993).

²⁰ Kitov, 1:161-2.

²¹ Kitov, 1:157.

²² Kitov, 1:150.

²³ Kitov, 1:129.

²⁴ Kitov, 1:153-156: e.g., the etrog "completely clean of spots, the *pitom*," [its nipple-like protuberance] unbroken and "centered on the top...and parallel to the *oketz* [the pointed end where the fruit was originally connected to the tree]; the lulav (palm branch) "should be green and no evidence of dryness from top to bottom...straight like a rod without twists or bends on any side," etc.

²⁵ Kitov, 1:157-160. To illustrate his point, Kitov tells a story not unlike the one dramatized in the movie *Ushpizin*.

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- ²⁶ This is more or less the basic plot line of the story Kitov tells, too.
- ²⁷ Kitov, 1:139.
- ²⁸ Kitov, 1: 144.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 1:109.
- ³⁰ Stephen Holden, "Guess Who is Coming for Sukkot? Unbelievers," *New York Times*, October 19, 2005, sec. Movie Review, <http://movies.nytimes.com/2005/10/19/movies/19ushp.html>, emphasis mine.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Kitov, 1:176.
- ³³ B. Sukkah 51a.
- ³⁴ Regina Spektor, "Time is All Around" *Far* (Sire Records, 2009).
- ³⁵ Ecclesiastes 3:1-2; 10:7,9.
- ³⁶ Georges Bataille, "Joy in the Face of Death," in *The College of Sociology (1937-39)*, ed. Denis Hollier, trans. Betsy Wing, *Theory and history of literature* □; v. 41 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988): 322-28.
- ³⁷ B. Pesahim 109a.