



Chef Alex Hadidi, owner of Marquez Deli, photo Luis Sánchez Saturno/*The New Mexican*

"I'm tired of paying \$60 to go out to dinner. That's fine for places that cater to tourists, but we're here for locals."

— Alex Hadidi's business partner Crae Kaplan

THE STORY OF HANUKKAH, ABRIDGED

Around 200 BCE, Judea (the Land of Israel) was controlled by Antiochus III, the Seleucid king of Syria. He allowed Jews to practice their religion, but his son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, outlawed Judaism. In 168 BCE, he massacred tens of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem and erected an altar to Zeus in the city's holy Second Temple.

An elderly Jewish priest, Mattathias, and his five sons resisted Antiochus and the Seleucid monarchy. Mattathias' son, Judah Maccabee, took charge when his father died in 166 BCE and drove the Syrians out of Jerusalem. He and his followers rebuilt the altar in the Second Temple and lit the menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum representing knowledge and creation that was supposed to be kept burning every night.

This is when what is known as the miracle of Hanukkah happened, according to the Talmud, one of Judaism's central texts. Even though there appeared to be only enough untainted oil to keep the menorah's candles burning for a single day, the flames stayed lit for eight nights. The annual eight-day holiday of Hanukkah is celebrated by Jews around the world with food, gifts, and family parties. Many of the foods are fried in oil to symbolize the miracle.

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you have lamb shank," Hadidi said as he placed the dish on the table. "It has butternut squash, carrots, and potatoes, and a side of couscous salad. The lamb has the ras el-hanout. It's cooked in the oven for about seven hours, at a very low temperature."

It was unlike anything I've eaten in a Santa Fe restaurant, slightly sweet but largely savory, with a slow revelation of flavors that grew more complex with each bite. The lamb was fall-off-the-bone, melt-in-your-mouth tender.

The tagine was followed, finally, by a single latke, served on a saucer and topped with sour cream and applesauce. The pancake was the same shade of dark gold as the falafel, with no visible shredded potatoes at its edges, as if the batter were entirely smooth. It tasted like a latke, though, with a slightly earthier, more pungent flavor due to the green onions and leeks. It struck me as a more refined version of the latkes I make at home, which definitely have a hash-brown quality.

In between courses, Hadidi, Kaplan, and I talked about the differences and similarities among Jewish people around the world. A topic of import: How to spell "Hanukkah." Should it have two n's or one k? And does it begin with an "H" or a "Ch"? (Hadidi and Kaplan grew up in "H" families, whereas I come from a "Ch" culture.) We came to no firm conclusions. We agreed that Hanukkah is the most festive, family-oriented of the Jewish holidays. I joked about how, when I was a kid, the best gifts came at the beginning, at the big family party, followed by a week of socks and underwear. Hadidi said that in Algeria, Hanukkah is a slow build, with the big party held on the last night.

"The whole idea of Hanukkah is the lamp that burned for eight days instead of just one night. On the eighth day, when all the candles are lit, that's usually when people from different towns go to the main family's house. People bring pastries, and the person throwing the party does the main food," he said. "Everyone wants to taste the other person's

fingers, which means the pastries that they made with their hands."

Dessert was a jelly-filled svenj, or Moroccan doughnuts. Svenj are similar to the Israeli doughnuts served at Hanukkah, called sufganiyah (sof-yin-YOD) in Hebrew, but they're less dense. The jelly symbolizes a sweet life. Mine was raspberry, although Hadidi said that in Algeria, they would use fig. "Because we have a lot of fig trees. We dry the figs and eat some in the winter, and then others are poached and jarred.

"It's all about what's available," he said. "Hanukkah dishes are the same everywhere, but the ingredients are different because you use what's available. In Algeria, we don't even use matzo meal in our matzo balls. We use semolina because that's what we have. Matzo balls are like dumplings. That's kind of German. We learn from everyone." ◀

AN INCOMPLETE GUIDE TO JEWISH ETHNICITIES

Ashkenazim: Originally, the Jews of Germany and Northern France. The term now refers more generally to Jews from Central and Eastern Europe.

Ethiopian: A Jewish community in Ethiopia, the Beta Israel, has existed for at least 15 centuries. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, many Ethiopian Jews emigrated to Israel.

Kaifeng: Kaifeng Jews are an ethno-minority in the Henan province of China, descended from Jewish settlers that arrived through the Silk Road during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127).

Mizrahi: Mizrahi Jews have Middle Eastern ancestry. The earliest, largest communities date from Late Antiquity in modern Iraq, Iran, and Yemen.

Sephardim: The Jews of Iberia and the Spanish diaspora. When Jews were expelled from Spain in the 15th century, some went to Turkey, some went to Europe, and many went to North Africa.