



Chanukah



What & When:

The Jewish holiday of **Chanukah**, (also spelled: Hanukkah), is a celebration of light and freedom. *Chanukah* lasts for 8 days and occurs in the Hebrew month of **Kislev**. The holiday begins sometime between very late November and late December on the Gregorian calendar. *Chanukah* is celebrated with the lighting of the **Chanukah Menorah** each evening at sunset. In Hebrew, this special candelabrum is called a **Chanukiah**.

History & Story:

The Hebrew word *Chanukah* means "dedication". *Chanukah* celebrates the victory of the Jewish people, led by **Judah Maccabee**, over the Syrian-Greek King Antiochus IV in 167 Before the Common Era. Antiochus IV had forbidden Jewish people from practicing Jewish laws and customs. After triumphing over the king's army, "**The Maccabees**" recaptured Jerusalem and rededicated the Jewish Temple. Tradition tells us that when The Maccabees rededicated the Temple, they found only a small container of the pure oil required to keep the Temple's candelabrum perpetually lit. The *Chanukah* story tells, though, that the oil miraculously burned for eight days until it was possible to attain additional pure oil. This is the reason given why *Chanukah* is celebrated for eight days.

Observances & Traditional Foods:

Candles are lit each of the eight nights of *Chanukah*. On the first night one candle is lit, and the appropriate blessings are said. On each of the following seven nights, one more candle is added to the *Chanukiah* until all eight candles are lit. A separate candle, called the **shamash** (the helper), is used to light all the other candles. The *Shamash* is also placed on the *Chanukah menorah*. On the Friday during *Chanukah* candles are lit before sundown and before the *Shabbat* candles. On Saturday night, the *Chanukah* candles are lit only after sundown, after the end of *Shabbat*. It is often customary for children (and sometimes adults) to receive coins or gifts on *Chanukah*.

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If you have questions, please contact Susan Buchbinder, Director of Religious Life at 773-508-1695,
or Rabbi Michael Schorin, Chaplain at 847-929-3253

Traditional foods for this holiday are often fried in oil -- a reminder of the miracle of the oil that lasted in the Temple. Some favorite *Chanukah* foods are **latkes** (potato pancakes) and **sufganiot** (jelly doughnuts). A popular *Chanukah* game involves spinning a **dreidel**, a top with four sides.

From a religious perspective, *Chanukah* is a minor holiday, in that all normal work is allowed throughout the holiday. Aside from some additions to the prayer service during *Chanukah*, and lighting the *Chanukah menorah* each evening, few changes are made in the normal routine.

Perhaps due to the holiday's closeness to the Christian holiday of Christmas, *Chanukah* is now one of the more widely celebrated holidays among American Jews. The custom of giving small gifts at candlelighting time has been greatly expanded as many families feel pressure from the "hype" over Christmas holiday shopping. For some, Christmas music & decorations seem to be a constant reminder of being different - of being a minority. This time of year may also bring increased awareness of Jewish/non-Jewish intermarriages in the family, which may be difficult families wishing to spend the holidays together in a meaningful way.

CJE does not allow clients living in our residential buildings to light flames (real candles) in private rooms or apartments. Residents can use an electric *menorah* instead. Many of our residential buildings have a communal candle lighting ceremony each evening of *Chanukah*.

For more information check out this on-line resource:

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Hanukkah/Hanukkah_101.shtml?HYJH

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Recipe for Latkes:

Makes approximately 12 palm-sized latkes

- 5 medium potatoes
- 2 medium onions
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup *matzah* meal
- salt and pepper to taste
- vegetable oil

Shred the potatoes and onion into a large bowl. Press out as much excess liquid as you can. Add eggs and mix well. Add *matzah* meal gradually while mixing until the batter is doughy, but not too dry. Add salt and pepper to taste. (But don't literally taste the batter... -- 'till it is cooked)

Be prepared to fry the batter fairly quickly after shredding and mixing or it might turn brown in color. If this happens, though, don't worry. It won't affect the quality or taste.

Heat about 1/2 inch of oil to medium-high. Careful, though, don't let the oil burn! Use a wide pan if possible. Form the batter into thin patties about the size of your palm. Fry the batter in oil. Be patient: this takes time, and too much flipping will burn the outside without cooking the inside. Flip when the bottom is golden brown.

Place finished *latkes* on paper towels to drain. Eat ASAP with sour cream or applesauce. Some people like cinnamon and sugar.

If you like adventure, feel free to experiment: Add a handful of bell peppers, jalepeño peppers, parsley, carrots, or other vegetable to the batter to make veggie latkes! (You may need to add a third egg and some more *matzah* meal for these additions.)

Three time-saving substitutions: These will save you time in preparing the batter and cleaning up. Sorry, nothing I can do to speed the frying time. You can substitute any or all of these:

- Substitute 3-4 cups hash-brown style shredded potatoes for the potatoes
- Substitute 1 & 1/2 cup frozen chopped onions for the onion
- Substitute 3/4 cup egg whites for the eggs

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