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Feels like home: Chocolate macaroons are my Passover must

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This Jewish baker finds that her sweet tooth ramps up during Passover and that she wants to eat her mother's kosher chocolate macaroons. Food restrictions during Passover make it harder to indulge, but where there's a will there's a kosher-way. (Sweet Chick)Source: Sweet Chick

By Renata Gortan

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Chocolate is a big part of Passover celebrations for Rebecca Balkin. The 28-year-old owner of the artisan bakery [Sweet Chick](https://www.thesweetchick.com.au) [https://www.thesweetchick.com.au] in Sydney looks forward to the Jewish celebration because of her mum's chocolate macaroons.

"All of us kids knew mum started making them a few days before and she kept them in the laundry, in big boxes, so we would sneak them," she says. "It was our favourite treat."

During Passover you can't have products with wheat, so her mum cooked desserts that didn't have any leavening agents in them. These include biscuits made from coconut, chocolate, eggs sugar and vanilla. It's simple but the melted chocolate packs much flavour.

"It's a very traditional Passover dessert, you can buy these iconic ones in a tin but we preferred mum's ones. A lot of Passover desserts have almond meal in them, but these are held together with coconut, they are really easy to make and can feed the masses."



Passover calls for chocolate macaroons.

Passover is a Jewish holiday that celebrates the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. This year it runs from 15 to 23 April. Kosher refers to food that adheres to Jewish dietary laws, one being that meat and milk don't mix. However, during Passover there are additional restrictions.

"Passover goes for eight days, everyone goes into panic mode and buys lots of food because you can't eat all the staples such as bread, rice, pasta and certain grains and legumes, the term is kitniyot," Balkin says.

Growing up, the Balkin family observed these restrictions, which lead to cravings for something sweet and comforting. "It's why we loved the chocolate macaroons, I find I always eat more sweets over Passover because I want a treat."

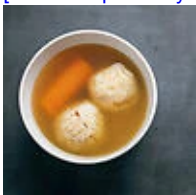
"I find I always eat more sweets over Passover because I want a treat."

While chicken soup and matzo balls aren't only eaten during Passover, the dish has a place on the celebratory menu. "The Seder refers to the two big family meals during the first two nights of Passover. We read the story of the Exodus of Egypt and mum goes all out with a four-course meal two nights in a row," Balkin says.

"There's a fish entrée, we have gefilte fish and chopped herring which my grandmother makes, chicken soup with matzo balls, a meat main course such as brisket or chicken with sides and then dessert. The cakes and biscuits tend to use almond meal and coconut as a base.

FOR PASSOVER

[\[/food/recipes/easy-chicken-soup-matzo-balls?cid=inbody:feels-like-home-chocolate-macaroons-are-my-passover-must \]](#)



Easy chicken soup with matzo balls

This wonderfully simple version of an iconic Jewish recipe - traditionally enjoyed at Passover but actually enjoyed all year round - originates from Melbourne's well known Balaclava Deli, famous for its wonderful soup and matzo balls.

There's also the Seder symbolic food plate. A bitter herb symbolises the bitterness of the exodus. An egg in salt water connotes renewal and rebirth (egg) and tears (salt water). Charoset is a sweet paste that resembles the clay used to build Egypt's pyramids. "Mum makes hers with walnuts, apple and wine. Shank or bone is the animal sacrifice and karpas is green vegetables such as lettuce and parsley, because they couldn't easily obtain them."

Every Jewish person thinks their mum's chicken soup is the best, but Balkin is certain her mum's is tops.

"We had it every Friday night during Shabbat. We had it when we were sick. Mum makes a big pot and boils it for hours. She uses chicken frames, beef bones, beef top rib, carrot and celery and serves noodles on the side," she says. "Mum puts soda water in her matzo balls for aeration, it helps make them lighter."

The balls are made using matza meal, finely ground matza crackers, which is a replacement for flour so that they can be eaten during Passover.

"Jews are prohibited from eating foods that are leavened during Passover, which are grains that rise when water is added. It's to commemorate the exodus of the Jews in biblical times, they didn't have time to wait for their bread to rise so they were left with unleavened bread, which is matza," Balkin says.

"Matza is like a cracker, it's made of wheat and water, but it's not allowed to rise. Matzo meal is finely ground matza and is used in place of flour, to firm things up and make things hold."

Balkin grew up in a family of bakers, so it's no surprise she opened a bakery. Sweet Chick sells a chocolate-chip marble cake made to her mother's recipe and a chocolate mousse that came from her grandmother. It is one of the few high-end kosher bakeries in Sydney and caters to customers during Passover, when the kosher requirements go up a notch.



"Sweet Chick is already kosher and then we are kosher for Passover," Balkin explains. This means her team cleans out the kitchen entirely and removes all products. Then a kosher supervisor cleans all the stainless steel surfaces with boiling water or a blowtorch to kill bacteria or grains of flour that could still be on the surface.

"We bring back the kosher products such as cake tins and utensils that are kept in storage the rest of the year. It's a huge undertaking, for example I can't get the usual coconut I source, I have to get the coconut that's kosher for Passover, which means it's been made in a kitchen or factory especially for Passover."

It's a big undertaking, but having grown up eating kosher food, Balkin finds it satisfying to supply the Jewish community in this way. There's a stigma that kosher food is not as nice, but a lot of our customers don't know we're kosher, they just like what we do."

Love the story? Follow the author here: Twitter [@RenataGortan](https://twitter.com/RenataGortan) [<https://twitter.com/RenataGortan>] and Instagram [@renatagortan](https://www.instagram.com/renatagortan/) [<https://www.instagram.com/renatagortan/>].

Passover chocolate coconut macaroons

Makes 16

Ingredients

- 150 g good quality dark chocolate, melted
- 3 egg whites
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 ½ cups desiccated coconut
- 1 tsp vanilla

Method

1. Preheat fan-forced oven to 160°C.
2. Whisk the egg whites until frothy; gradually add the sugar and salt. Whisk until stiff peaks form.
3. Gently fold in melted chocolate, followed by the coconut and vanilla; fold until just combined.
4. Place tablespoon-sized rounds onto a baking tray and bake for 15 minutes.

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Reliving history during my family's Passover Seder feast

When Jewish people like us migrate, we stick to traditional dishes, leave some behind and borrow others — and Passover symbolises that.

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Victoria Wein loves family Passover Seder dinners, but she mostly looks forward to her grandfather's Passover pancakes.

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A gentile's guide to Passover

You've probably heard of Passover, one of the biggest events in the Jewish calendar, but do you know what it's about (and that you're supposed to serve wine to religious "ghosts")? Alana Schetzer, a self-proclaimed 'Cultural Jew', taps into the spirit of Jewish humour to explain the holiday.

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