

# Chicago: Ruach in the Windy City

## CRC Hosts Mesorah Dinner: A Halachic Adventure

Orthodox Jews know what animals are kosher. We eat the meat of cows, sheep, deer (venison) and bison. We eat chicken, turkey, duck, carp, salmon and flounder, among others. But there are actually many more varieties of animals, fish, and birds that are kosher, even though they are not commonly eaten. Many species are kosher based on *mesorah* – the handing down of this information from generation to generation. There are many unique *mesoros* that originate in the East – for example, in Iraq or Turkey – where Jewish populations are dwindling.

Dr. Ari Greenspan and Dr. Ari Zivotofsky of Eretz Yisrael have established Halachic Adventures, an organization dedicated to exploring and uncovering these *mesoros* while those who hold onto them are still alive.

For example, Rabbi Chaim Yeshurun, an elderly Rav from Iraq, has submitted testimony that the partridge is kosher and that people in Iraq ate this bird

over 75 years ago. Other species, such as elk, require rabbinical examination and a *psak* to determine if they may be eaten.

On Sunday, July 24, the Chicago Rabbinical Council, under the direction of Rabbi Sholem Fishbane, hosted Drs. Greenspan and Zivotofsky for a *mesorah* dinner at Shallots Bistro – a unique opportunity to taste these exotic kosher foods. Similar dinners have been hosted by Halachic Adventures in Yerushalayim, and by the Orthodox Union in Los Angeles and New York.

“The purpose of the dinner was purely educational,” explained Rabbi Fishbane. “We want people to know what is really kosher.”

The dinner featured 14 courses, each consisting of a unique dish such as elk Wellington, cow udder Milanese, goose liver paté, braised squab (a type of bird), Szechuan-style tambaqui, Pacific hamachi, blue marlin, and citrus-glazed partridge. Each course

included a video or presentation by Dr. Greenspan or Dr. Zivotofsky explaining the *kashrus* of the particular dish. The four-hour dinner also featured presentations entitled “Significance of the *Mesorah*” by Rabbi Gedaliah Dov Schwartz, *Av Beis Din* of the CRC, and “The Making of the Chicago *Mesorah* Dinner” by Rabbi Sholem Fishbane.

Every attendee received a 263-page sourcebook with articles, pictures, and a halachic discussion of every menu item.

Some of these dishes, while not unique in terms of *mesorah*, had another type of halachic significance. For instance, cow udders present a unique situation that the milk found inside is of special status and is no longer considered *milchig*. Glatt kosher goose livers are very difficult to obtain since geese are force-fed to fatten them up, causing the liver to blow up. However, with great effort, the CRC was able to obtain glatt kosher cow udders and goose livers to serve at the dinner.

On the menu was a seven-grain panzanella salad featuring *fleishig* eggs and honey port wine vinaigrette. *She'eilos* surrounding the *kashrus* of honey were discussed.

Exotic forms of *esrogim* were featured as well, most notably the Buddha's fingers *esrog*, a variety with a mutant DNA that grows with extended fingers. The validity of using this *esrog* for *arbaah minim* was highlighted.

Preparation for the dinner was a monumental effort. All of the courses were approved by Rav Gedalia Schwartz, who spent hours determining which *mesoros* could be accepted.

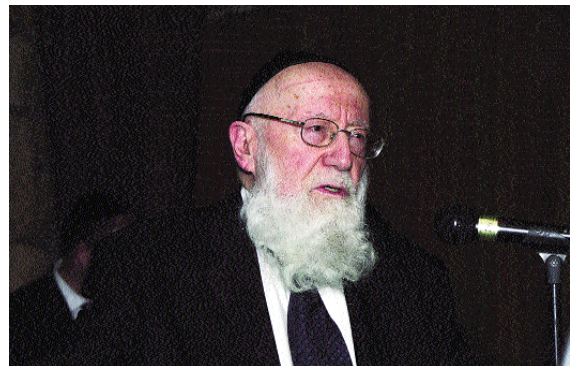
What about giraffe? “There is an absolute misconception that we do not eat giraffes because we do not know where to *shecht* them,” Rabbi Fishbane declared. “We wanted to serve giraffe, but the price was prohibitive. The real reason that we do not eat giraffe is because it just does not have good meat.”

Earlier in the day, an independent and fascinating *Mesorah yom iyun* was held, featuring a lecture and an audiovisual presentation given by Rabbi Schwartz, Dr. Greenspan and Dr. Zivotofsky, moderated by Rabbi Fishbane and Rabbi Dovid Cohen of the CRC, explaining the *kashrus* of these various unique species.



Deja Views

Rabbi Sholem Fishbane presents custom-made Mesorah Dinner cufflinks as a token of appreciation. L-R: Dr. Ari Greenspan; Dr. Ari Zivotofsky; Rabbi Sholem Fishbane; Rabbi Moshe Kushner, executive director of Chicago Rabbinical Council



Deja Views

Rabbi Gedalia Schwartz, *Av Beis Din* for the Chicago Rabbinical Council



Deja Views

A mutant *esrog*

“It was a fascinating day that illustrated a unique aspect of *Yiddishkeit*,” commented Rabbi Fishbane. “Everyone had differ-

ent reactions, but everyone ultimately found both the *yom iyun* and the dinner to be extremely enjoyable and informative.”

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