

Celebrate The Season

A Passover With Panache

by Victor Schoenfeld
(NAPSA)—While many families and their friends have special ways to commemorate the joys of freedom at Passover time, this look at one family's traditions and innovations may prove inspiring to people of all beliefs.

When I was young, back in the 1960s, we generally had about two dozen people at our seder, which is how many we could fit in our living room once we moved in the ping pong table.

One family peculiarity was the hard-boiled eggs. They resembled normal eggs about as much as a Frank Lloyd Wright house resembles a garden shed. Cracked open, these bronzed, variegated beauties looked like earthtone marbles—and the flavor: a rich, roasted character with notes of caramelized onion and aromatic spice. It took a lot of willpower to eat just one.

Another important part of the seder was the Hillel sandwich. The ritual sandwich consists of two small pieces of matzo with a few shreds of grated horseradish.

In my family, the sandwich resembled a quarter pounder and the horseradish had to be as hot as possible. Eating it required strategy. One way was to jump right in, get kudos for bravery and face an uncertain heat load. The other was to watch the brave ones and see how they reacted so you'd know what you were in for.

The redness of one's ears was the accepted measurement of horseradish heat. Coughing, gasping and screaming were generally frowned upon.

I have to admit the wine back then left something to be de-



One elegant way to end a Passover seder is with a fine dessert wine.

sired. But nowadays, many top-quality kosher wines are available to please the most sophisticated palate. I like starting with a sparkling white, such as Yarden Blanc de Blancs. It's fittingly celebratory and its lightness makes it a natural to head off the line-up.

After that I like going to a white with some body to it, such as Yarden Gewürztraminer or Yarden Chardonnay served with a rich vegetable soup or gefilte fish. With the main course of boeuf bourguignon or lamb with roasted vegetables, a full-bodied red is in order, such as Yarden Cabernet Sauvignon. To finish, we enjoy Yarden Heights Wine.

One of the hits of my seder table today is my wife Aviv's chocolate-pecan torte.

Chocolate-Pecan Torte

- 2¼ cups pecan pieces
- 7 oz. highest quality bittersweet chocolate
- 8 large eggs, separated
- 1 cup granulated sugar, divided
- 2 tablespoons brandy
- Confectioner's sugar
- Pecan halves for garnish

Preheat oven to 400° F. Grease 10-inch round spring-form pan. In a food processor with knife blade attached, blend pecans and chocolate until coarsely ground. Set aside.

In large bowl with electric mixer at high speed, beat egg whites until soft peaks form. Gradually add ½ cup sugar, 2 tablespoons at a time, until whites stand in stiff peaks. Set aside. In large bowl with same beaters, beat egg yolks, remaining ½ cup sugar and brandy until mixture is lemon-colored and doubled in size. Gently fold whites into yolk mixture; stir in pecan mixture just until blended. Spoon mixture into prepared pan.

Bake 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 300°F. Continue baking 45 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool on wire rack 10 minutes.

Carefully remove cake from pan. Cool completely.

To serve, sprinkle torte with confectioner's sugar. Garnish with pecan halves.

• A native of California, Mr. Schoenfeld is now chief winemaker of Israel's acclaimed Golan Heights Winery. The Yarden wines are available locally at prices ranging from \$9 to \$75 per bottle.