

Special Seder Plate Symbols

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Source: Compilation By Brandi Ullian



The foods on the Seder plate are meant to elicit questions that lead to the telling of the story of the Exodus. Tonight, as we retell our story of liberation and pledge to bring freedom to all people, we must also consider the freedoms of others – both realized and denied. We represent these experiences in the other symbols on our Seder plate: the orange, potato, chocolate, olive and artichoke.

Orange: We include the orange in order to accept and acknowledge freedom and diversity in our community. As we said earlier, the Jewish people left Egypt with “a mixed multitude” of people attracted to a vision of social transformation. Just as the orange is naturally made up of many pieces – none of which are identical to the other – so, too, is the world made up many different and unique people and cultures. This fruit serves as a new symbol of acceptance for all the races, cultures, creeds, genders and identities that surround us, both alike and different, and a symbol of equality for all men and women throughout the world. By welcoming others with our hearts and minds, we celebrate the liberty everyone everywhere deserves.

Potato: We’ve added the potato to remember the plight of migrants and refugees, an addition inspired by Israel’s 1991 Operation Solomon mission, a covert plan to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel. When these famished immigrants arrived in Israel, many were so hungry and ill that they were unable to digest anything but simple boiled potatoes and rice until their systems could take more food. This potato also represents the present-day exodus of all immigrants who are fleeing their homeland to seek a life without war and oppression.

Chocolate: The chocolate symbolizes the fair trade movement, which promotes standards that aim to bring empowerment, economic development, social development and environmental stewardship to farmers and workers around the world. Many companies exploit their workers by paying them unfair wages, and forcing them to work day and night under horrific conditions, practices many have compared to the 21st century form of slavery. Fair Trade-certified products are made by standards that prohibit the use of forced labor, and we include it to remind us that, although *we* escaped from slavery in Egypt, forced labor is still very much alive today.

Olive: For millennia, the olive branch has been the symbol of peace. We place the olive on our Seder plate as a symbol of hope for peace between the Israeli and Palestinian people, and for all peoples in the midst or caught in the crossfire of conflict.

Artichoke: The artichoke is another new addition to the plate, which represents the acceptance of the interracial and interfaith. Until 1967, it was illegal in many parts of the United States to marry outside of your race, but the landmark case of Loving vs. Virginia changed that. The Lovings were Mildred Loving, a black woman, and Richard Loving, a white man who had been sentenced to a year in a Virginia prison for marrying Mildred. The Supreme Court's unanimous decision determined that this prohibition was unconstitutional, ending all race-based legal restrictions on marriage in the United States.

An artichoke has many petals, thistles and a heart. The thistles are on its outside, representing how some many still oppose and question the stability of interracial and interfaith marriages. We remove those thistles tonight, only keeping the heart and surrounding petals, to represent the shedding of those prejudices, and emphasize that we don't need to all look the same on the outside or have the same belief system to love and respect one another: it's only what's in one's heart that is important.