

# Contemporary Symbols for the Seder Plate

Contributed by [Danielle Goldberg](#)

Source: Danielle Goldberg

**Orange.** The orange is the oldest of the modern Seder plate foods and the most widely used. The orange was introduced by Susannah Heschel, a Jewish feminist, and scholar, as a symbol that represents the inclusion of women, lesbians, and gay men in Jewish tradition in the 80's. Heschel offered the orange in rejection of the idea found in one feminist Haggadah which put a crust of bread on the seder plate. The bread was intended to say that there's as much room for a lesbian in Judaism as there is for a crust of bread on the seder plate. Heschel thought this took homophobia and misogyny as a forgone and unchanging conclusion in Judaism. Her compromise was to add an orange, that must have seeds, to her seder plate and this corresponding ritual for the orange is to eat a piece of the orange and spit out the seeds to symbolically casting out prejudice, homophobia, and misogyny.

-Paraphrased from many articles that talk about the orange on the Seder plate, including Heschel's 2003 interview with the Forward-

**Coconut.** The coconut represents those who are still locked inside their shell hiding from the world their inner beauty as an out and proud GLBTQ Jew. We notice that the shell is nearly impossible to crack with our bare hands and equally difficult for the beauty inside to escape on its own. - JQ International-

Fruit Salad: "In recognition of our collective potential, when we all work together, able to recognize each others' identities, we hold the fruit salad and inspect its components... In an ideal world, all people will be included in society as equal players able to contribute to society making it greater than before and able to give and receive freely as equal participants in our society." – JQ International-

**Flowers and Sticks:** "The path that brought us to who we are today is full of flowers we can see and smell. The flowers here on our Seder plate represent the beauty within each of us on this path of life, but we must recognize the sticks and stones that lay on our path to making us who we are today. For the members of our community that have suffered the pain and anguish of physical assault for being different and for those that have suffered verbal abuse and harassment, we bow our heads, close our eyes and reflect on our own experiences and how different our lives might have been had we been in your shoes. These sticks and stones have affected us and shaped our identities."-JQ International.-

Recommendation for the edible symbol: fresh or candied pansies and Spicy Gingerbread Twigs- recipe is available at online from Better Home and Gardens <http://www.bhg.com/recipe/spicy-gingerbread-twigs/>

Olives. "Why this olive?" according to the "Freedom Seder for the Earth" Haggadah. "Because for millennia the olive branch has been the symbol of peace, and we seek to make peace where there has been war." In light of current events, it is more important than ever to remember the olive branch as a symbol that life is possible even after turbulent change.- Freedom Seder for the Earth and Danielle-

**Bitter Chocolate.**

[A Kavannah \(Intention\) for Eating Fair Trade Chocolate](#)

Every generation learns that things are more than they seem. This chocolate I hold is more than just chocolate. This is a symbol of potential freedom, a realization that foods that give me delight can be made without child labor. Joy need not be accompanied by pain or oppression. May I experience the sweet flavor of this gift as a hint of the freedom that birthed it. May the world know liberation, one person at a time, mindful act by mindful act until all people are free.— Written by R. Menachem Creditor, Congregation Netivot Shalom

(Berkeley, CA)

**Pineapple**- Pineapples by nature are sweet and sour, so too is life if you face the effects of depression and anxiety. The pineapple has a hard, prickly shell that one must work through to receive the rewards of its sweet and acidic fruit. Let this be a symbol of those locked in the inner shell of depression, anxiety or any other illness that detracts from the joys of living life to the fullest. "Blessed are you God Who Sees Me, deliver all who suffer from our personal Egypts (Mitzrim-narrow places)."

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ, שְׂגוֹרָאֵל אוֹתָנוּ מִכָּל הַסּוּבְלִים מִמִּצְרַיִם שְׁלֵנוּ.

by Danielle Goldberg

List compiled by Danielle Goldberg on behalf of Temple Micha, Washington, DC and Temple Beth Emeth, Ann Arbor, MI