

Karpas - Green Vegetable

Contributed by [MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger](#)

Source: Mazon: Hunger Seder

Karpas is from the Greek word karpos, which means "fruit of the soil." When spring comes we note with pleasure the bounty of vegetables and fruits in the market. Yet in communities and neighborhoods across the country, instead of a seasonal bounty there exists persistent scarcity.

Nearly 5 million seniors in the U.S. currently struggle to put enough nutritious food on the table. With 10,000 baby boomers turning 65 every day—many of them aging into poverty—hunger among seniors is quickly becoming a dire situation nationally. Our federal government provides programs that help seniors get the nutritious food they need, but funding for programs such as Meals on Wheels and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) have simply not kept pace with need or inflation. This year, advocacy to support and strengthen these programs in the Older Americans Act is critical so that we can properly care for the growing number of seniors struggling with food insecurity.

Our values call on us to care for our elders, and adequate nutrition is essential to ensuring their health and well-being. Hunger leads to the sick getting sicker, and increases risk for injury. We can no longer ignore the intersections between hunger and health.

We must be mindful of seniors from marginalized populations, and those with childcare responsibilities; they will face unique needs, and they will need equally unique solutions. However, older Americans are significantly less likely to participate in nutrition assistance programs than other groups. Only forty percent of eligible seniors are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). As a community, we must ensure that all older Americans receive the nutrition assistance they need, whatever barriers they—or we—may face.

We dip our green vegetable into salt water, a symbol of our ancestors' tears and of the injustices for which we weep in our own day. Together we recite the blessing:

Baruch ata Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'adama.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, creator of the fruits of the earth. May the blessings of Your bountiful harvests be enjoyed by all of humankind.