

The Passover Plate

Contributed by [No More Deaths/No Más Muertes](#)

Source:

On our Seder plate we find some the traditional items of a Seder. Each item has special significance in the context of the Borderlands. We also find some new and different items. Each of us will hold up each item as it is discussed.

Matzah

“This is matzah, the bread of liberation, of rebellion, that our foremothers baked and ate in a time when they had to be organizing more and cooking less.”

-from Workmen's Circle Seder, 2011

Egg:

“The egg is a symbol of springtime, fertility, and the giving of life. We are reminded of Pharaoh's threat to kill newborn Jewish babies, and of the courageous midwives who refused to carry out his orders.”

-from Workmen's Circle Seder, 2011

Paschal Yam:

Tradition directs us to hold up a roasted lamb bone which is symbolic of the animals sacrificed during the exodus. Today, we have a Paschal Yam on the Seder plate, to acknowledge our ancient traditions as well as the mitzvah of caring for species other than our own, and the ethical and ecological concerns regarding the eating of meat.

- adapted from Workmen's Circle Seder, 2011

Maror:

The maror represents the bitterness of slavery and oppression in all of its forms.

- adapted from Workmen's Circle Seder, 2011

Salt Water:

The salt water represents the tears of all who have been or who are currently enslaved.

- adapted from Workmen's Circle Seder, 2011

Charoset is a mixture of apples, nuts, wine, and spices, or in some other Jewish cultures, dates, figs, apricots, prunes, or oranges, peanuts, and bananas, that are made into a paste. It symbolizes the mortar that our ancestors used to build pyramids. Our charoset tonight is made of apricots, dates, apples, cinnamon, and wine in the Sephardic tradition of my family. The sweet taste of the Charoyes also reminds us that in the bitterest times of slavery, people have always remembered the sweet taste of freedom.

- adapted from Workmen's Circle Seder, 2011

Ear of corn:

Since our Seder is not, in all respects, traditional, we have decided to also include mazorca, an ear of corn, on

our Seder plate tonight. Although considered chametz, corn is eaten during Passover in the Sephardic tradition. More importantly, however, is the significance that corn holds for so many indigenous and migrant communities. It is intertwined with the land's history and culture.

Corn for Mexicanos in particular is central in the struggle for land rights. As discussed by Angus Wright, the 1917 Mexican constitution was radical in the rights it gave to farmers. It granted ejidos – communally-owned and communally-worked parcels of land– to many farmers. “Emiliano Zapata stood by the principle that the ‘land belongs to those who work it,’” (*The Death of Ramon Gonzalez*, page 151).

However, with a growing capital interest in corn, agricultura Mexicana began to change. “[the Mexican agricultural revolution was] able to reshape rural society in ways contrary to the initiatives for rural change that had been developing out of the social upheavals and conflicts...of the twentieth century in Mexico” (*ibid.*, page 142). Corn moved from a subsistence food source to an extractable and exploitable resource which has been at the forefront of conflict after the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the subsequent flooding of México with cheap, subsidized, GMO corn from the Midwestern US. Many indigenous communities, such as the Zapatistas, have since taken up arms in resistance against the Mexican government and the neoliberal interests it represents, and are now in control of sovereign territory in Chiapas, México.

We put an ear of corn on our Seder plate tonight to recognize its significance in the Borderlands and to stand in solidarity with all those who have been harmed by neoliberal colonialism. We stand with them in their resistance and their struggle for the right to their own subsistence.

Written by Julian Cranberg