

GLBT Seder Plate In Depth - The Orange, The Coconut, Sour Foods, Fruit Salad, Flowers, Sticks & Stones

Contributed by [JQ International](#)

Source: JQ International GLBT Haggadah

HaCarah – The conscious recognition of those not completely seen

Tapuz v'Ko'kos – The Orange and Coconut

Why do we have an orange and a coconut on the Seder Plate?

Speaker 1: In our own day as in the ancient days of our tradition, an event becomes a story, a story is woven with new legends, and the legends lead the path into new teachings. So it is with the orange on the Seder plate.

Speaker 2: To begin with in the early 1980's, while speaking at Oberlin College Hillel, Susannah Heschel was introduced to an early feminist Haggadah that suggested adding a crust of bread on the Seder plate, as a sign of solidarity with Jewish lesbians (there's as much room for a lesbian in Judaism as there is for a crust of bread on the Seder plate). Heschel felt that to put bread on the Seder plate would be to accept that Jewish lesbians and gay men violate Judaism like *chametz* violates Passover. So, at her next Seder, she chose an orange as a symbol of inclusion of gays and lesbians and others who are marginalized within the Jewish community.

Speaker 3: Heschel offered the orange as a symbol of the fruitfulness for all Jews representing lesbians and gay men and their contributions as active members in Jewish life. In addition, each orange segment had a few seeds that had to be spit out – a gesture of spitting out, repudiating the homophobia of Judaism.

Speaker 4: While lecturing, Heschel often mentioned her custom as one of many feminist rituals that have been developed in the last twenty years. She writes, "Somehow, though, the typical patriarchal maneuver occurred: my idea of an orange and my intention of affirming lesbians and gay men were transformed. Now the story circulates that a MAN said to me that a woman belongs on the *bimah* as an orange on the Seder plate. A woman's words are attributed to a man, and the affirmation of lesbians and gay men is erased. Isn't that precisely what's happened over the centuries to women's ideas?"

Speaker 5: We place an orange on our Seder plate to symbolize the affirmation of lesbians and gay men, and to ensure we continue to cherish that growth of Judaism. Tonight all the excluded of our people – lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender, women, Jews by choice – and all who have felt left out – take their full and rightful place in shaping the future of our people and traditions by placing the orange on its own Seder plate. Our two Seder plates represent the duality of symbolism as we sit here at our GLBT Passover Seder; the Jewish traditions that we embrace since ancient days and our transformation as GLBT Jews into equal contributors to the growth of our people's traditions.

Speaker 6: So why an orange? Because the orange carries within itself the seeds of its own rebirth. So have gay men and lesbians, bisexuals, women, Jews by choice within Judaism given birth to their own inclusion.

Speaker 7: Also because an orange provides both food and drink – it alone could sustain life for quite some time. So have queer Jews and others on the outskirts of the tradition had, at times, to sustain themselves until others understood and chose to welcome and include instead of turning away.

Speaker 8: This year we'll do more than let the orange sit upon the Seder plate as a silent symbol,

unconsumed. Tonight we will say the blessing and taste the sweetness of our orange and use it to add flavor to our *Charoset* to remind us that we are all a part of the mortar that binds our people. Take note how the flavor of our *Charoset* changes when we are able to taste the sweetness of integration.

Speaker 9: Tonight the orange is joined by the Coconut which represents those who are still locked inside their shell hiding from the world their inner beauty as an out and proud GLBT 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.

Pass Coconut around the table

Speaker 10: We all know from experience that once a coconut is opened up the richness of its inner essence pours out almost with excitement of its long awaited liberation. Tonight we hold up our coconut and recognize the struggle of coming out as something most of us have experienced personally. I ask; should anyone like to try to open this coconut with their bare hands, do so now!

Speaker 10 continues: Otherwise we wait patiently for those who struggle silently within their shells to join us here, hopefully next year to celebrate our GLBT experience as free and out people.

Peel orange and break into sliced segments to distribute

For both the orange and the coconut, we make a conscious decision to recognize those who have not fully been seen by everyone in our society. We take a piece of orange and imagine a piece of coconut and recite:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'Olam, bo'ray p'ree ha'etz

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

Chamutz - Eating of the Sour Foods

Traditionally on Passover, all liquids which contain ingredients or flavors made from grain alcohol or vinegar (other than cider vinegar) are prohibited. Consequently, pickled foods are uncommon and undesirable for those observing the dietary guidelines of Passover. Equally undesirable in our world is the sour flavor of hatred, bigotry and homophobia. We take our sliced cucumber piece soaked in cider vinegar and lemon juice and recite:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'Olam, bo'ray p'ree ha'adamah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

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. Each piece of fruit is different from the other and regardless of which fruit it is, together the diversity of textures and flavors work together to make a collective entity that is greater than anyone piece. 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.

HaDerekh - The Path

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. Today we remember the many crossroads, vistas, cracks and divots along the way.

We take the sticks, stones and flowers and recite:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'Olam, she-ha-kol ni-h'yeh bid-va-ro.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, by whose word everything comes to be.