

The Artichoke on the Seder Plate

Contributed by [InterfaithFamily.com](#)

Source: [Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael, Five Interfaith Passover Readings You Can Add to Your Haggadah](#)

The seder plate holds the main symbols of a traditional Passover seder-- the shank bone, egg, karpas, charoset, and maror. The Kabbalists of the Middle Ages added hazeret, another kind of bitter lettuce. And in recent years feminists have added an orange on the seder plate to symbolize women's leadership roles and full empowerment in Jewish life.

The artichoke however is a new development. What is an artichoke? Surely a work of God's imagination! Many petals, with thistle and a heart. To me this has come to represent the Jewish people.

We are first of all, very diverse in our petals. We call people Jews who are everything from very traditional Orthodox Hassidim, to very liberal secular. We are Reform, Reconstructionist, Orthodox, traditional, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Renewal, and, of course, post-denominational. We are social justice activists and soldiers; we are Israelis and Jews of the Diaspora. We are young, old, single, married. Many are vegetarian, while others swear by Hebrew National. Our skin can be white as Scandinavian, dark black as Ethiopian, and we now welcome many Chinese and Latin American adoptees. Lately we add another category, that of interfaith.

Like the artichoke, which has thistles protecting its heart, the Jewish people have been thorny about this question of interfaith marriage. Let this artichoke on the seder plate tonight stand for the wisdom of God's creation in making the Jewish people a population able to absorb many elements and cultures throughout the centuries--yet still remain Jewish. Let the thistles protecting our hearts soften so that we may notice the petals around us.