

ב'טאבאבון! = BON APPÉTIT



A table set with sweets and a seder plate for Passover.

by Mary-Carel Verden

When *Bountiful Cupboard* decided to do an article on Passover food, we realized we didn't know where to start. So we started asking friends who we should interview. Again and again we got the same answer that led us to a delightful couple who were gracious, helpful, and patient enough to give us a brief overview, Ron and Sara Ben-Ami of B'Tayavon! Catering. They also turned out to be the people to turn to for delicious Passover desserts and much more.



Ron and Sara Ben-Ami

be used instead of wheat flour. "You can substitute it for regular flour in most recipes, just use a little less," says Sara. She creates delicious flourless cakes and cookies as well as other sweets such as meringue cookies and macaroons. There are also many Passover delights based around ground nuts.



Baked goods at Passover are more than just Matzo. Cookies, cakes, and other desserts also find their way to the table.

Ron and Sara were both chefs long before they became caterers. They met in Philadelphia where Madison-raised Sara and Israeli-raised Ron were both working for the restaurant in the Stock Exchange. They married and eventually left Philadelphia to live in Israel for three and one-half years. When they returned to the U.S., they came to Madison where Ron became head chef for Ovens of Brittany-Shorewood. Sara continued to bake, often providing the sweets for Bar and Bat Mitzvahs catered by restaurants who didn't specialize in baked goods. Sara recalls how it all started. "One day, we had a friend who was planning a Brit (also called a Bris; it is the ceremony welcoming an infant boy into the covenant). She was having trouble finding a caterer. We agreed to do the catering along with the baking. I told a friend who was planning a Bat Mitzvah (a coming of age ceremony for Jewish girls), and she asked if we could cater her party, too. That's how B'Tayavon! Catering got started."

B'Tayavon! caters the community seder at Temple Beth El. "There are usually 100+ people there," states Sara. "It's a great way for people who don't have family in the area to share Passover."

When it comes to Passover, many people are intimidated by trying to create sweets for this special celebration. "We do a huge business in Passover baked goods," explained Sara. "We do some seders but for the most part what I get orders for are bakery. I prefer to have people call, so we don't have a website. That way we can find out what our customers are looking for and make arrangements for pickup."

With all their business generated by word-of-mouth, B'Tayavon! is a well-kept secret. They are especially appreciated by Conservative Jews since Ron and Sara understand and follow strict dietary laws concerning kosher foods. But they serve far more than just the Jewish community. They do a lot of work for UW-Law School and others who have tasted their wonderful food. They offer a variety of cuisines including Middle Eastern and kid-friendly meals. It's clear that with B'Tayavon!, which means "bon appétit" or "Have a good meal" in Hebrew, you really will have a good, good meal.

The basic rule at Passover is to use no leavening agents. Matzo, the foremost symbol of Passover, is unleavened bread that is actually more like a cracker. And Matzo is ground into flour that may

• FOR MORE INFORMATION •

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An on-line extra!

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The Seder

The seder is the tradition-filled meal served for thousands of years on the first night of Passover. It is a meal of celebration and remembrance commemorating the Exodus, the liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. The retelling of the Exodus, to children is the main purpose of the seder. The six foods on the Seder Plate evoke the two themes of slavery and freedom and are either eaten or referred to.



Karpas is a vegetable other than bitter herbs, usually parsley, that is dipped in salt water and eaten at the beginning of the seder. The next two items are Maror and Chazeret, bitter herbs that symbolize the harshness and bitterness of the slavery to which the

Jewish people were subjected. Horseradish is typically used for the Maror and romaine lettuce for the Chazeret. Both are also eaten. Next is Charoset, a sweet fruit and nut mixture that is eaten, symbolizing the mortar used by the enslaved Jews to build the storehouses of Egypt. Then a lamb shank, the Z'roa, representing the Passover sacrifice offered in the Temple of Jerusalem and roasted and eaten at home as part of the seder. Lastly, Beitzah, a roasted egg that is a symbol of mourning for the loss of the Temple.