From Alsace to America: The Development and Migration of Ashkenazi Jewish Cuisine from its origins in Eastern France

Angela Hanratty
Technological University Dublin

Follow this and additional works at: https://arrow.tudublin.ie/tfschcafdis

Part of the Jewish Studies Commons, and the Other Arts and Humanities Commons

Recommended Citation

This Theses, Masters is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License
From Alsace to America:
The Development and Migration of Ashkenazi Jewish Cuisine from its origins in Eastern France

A thesis submitted to Technological University Dublin in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts in Gastronomy and Food Studies

by

Angela Hanratty

Supervisor: Diarmuid Cawley
Technological University Dublin
School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology

May 2021
Declaration of Authorship

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of the Master’s in Gastronomy and Food Studies is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations of Technological University Dublin and has not been submitted in whole or in part for an award in any other Institute or University.

The Institute has permission to keep, to lend or to copy this thesis in whole or in part, on condition that any such use of the material of the thesis be duly acknowledged.

Signature: Angela Hanratty                                Date: 10th May 2021
Abstract

This research examines the historical development of a distinctively Ashkenazi Jewish cuisine from its roots in the Alsace region of France, through the Jewish settlements in Eastern Europe, and the mass immigration to America in the 19th and 20th centuries. The aim of the research was to come to an understanding of how global perception of what is considered to be quintessentially Jewish food (as evidenced in American Jewish delicatessens, Jewish homes, and in popular culture) has been shaped by developments in Alsace. Long standing views were held that Ashkenazi food developed in Eastern Europe, specifically Poland and the former Russian Empire. While aspects of the cuisine were adapted after migration, this research demonstrates that a number of key dishes in the Ashkenazi tradition can be traced back to the Alsace region of present-day France, a territory of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire in the early medieval period when the Jewish community developed. Through a combination of desk research, oral history interviews, and analysis of recipe collections and delicatessen menus from New York, links between Alsace, Eastern Europe, and America were investigated and developed to determine the historical provenance of Ashkenazi food. The findings show that eight key dishes that are considered to be quintessential to Ashkenazi tradition developed or were adapted in Alsace, migrated to Eastern Europe with members of the Jewish community seeking refuge in the Polish commonwealth, and eventually crossed the Atlantic with further waves of migration. The research demonstrates how some of the most iconic Jewish foods that became signifiers through popular culture have their origins in Alsace in the early Middle Ages.
Acknowledgements

Sincerest thanks go to my supervisor, Diarmuid Cawley, for his help and support throughout the process of writing this thesis.

I would like to pay tribute to the late Diarmuid Murphy, who encouraged me to pursue my interest in Jewish food history after reading the class paper that was the original inspiration for this research.

My research would not have been possible without the help of the many wonderful members of the Jewish community in France, Dublin, and New York City, who spoke to me about their food heritage and culture. Thank you for giving of your time so willingly and with such enthusiasm.

Much love goes to Lottie, Francesca, Georgia, and Jonathan, who sacrificed hours of family time without complaint. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Finally, Gerry, for the endless proof-reading, and for your unwavering belief in me – thank you.
Table of Contents
Declaration of Authorship......................................................................................................................... i
Abstract.......................................................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements......................................................................................................................................... iii
Table of Figures .............................................................................................................................................. viii
Chapter One: Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Definition.................................................................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Justification ............................................................................................................................................. 1
  1.3 Historical Scope....................................................................................................................................... 3
  1.4 Jewish Food in Popular Culture .......................................................................................................... 7
  1.5 Dietary Laws........................................................................................................................................... 8
  1.6 Main and Sub Research Questions .................................................................................................... 10
Chapter Two: Literature Review ................................................................................................................ 11
  2.1 General/Ashkenazi Origins .................................................................................................................. 11
  2.2 History of the Region............................................................................................................................. 11
  2.3 Links with Germany .............................................................................................................................. 12
  2.4 Chopped Liver/Foie Gras/Geese ........................................................................................................ 13
  2.5 Challah/Barches ................................................................................................................................... 15
  2.6 Gefilte Fish/Carp..................................................................................................................................... 16
  2.7 Herring .................................................................................................................................................. 17
  2.8 Cholent .................................................................................................................................................. 17
  2.9 Pastrami.................................................................................................................................................. 18
  2.10 Choucroute ......................................................................................................................................... 18
  2.11 Emigration/America ........................................................................................................................... 20
  2.12 New York Delicatessens ..................................................................................................................... 21
Chapter Three: Research Methodology ..................................................................................................... 24
  3.0 Introduction............................................................................................................................................ 24
  3.1 Research Focus....................................................................................................................................... 24
  3.2 Methodology.......................................................................................................................................... 25
    3.2.1 Secondary Research ...................................................................................................................... 25
    3.2.2 Primary Research .......................................................................................................................... 26
  3.3 Oral History Interviews......................................................................................................................... 26
    3.3.1 Interviewees..................................................................................................................................... 27
  3.4 Qualitative Research............................................................................................................................... 28
    3.4.1 Data Analysis.................................................................................................................................. 28
  3.5 Limitations ............................................................................................................................................ 29
  3.6 Philosophical Considerations ............................................................................................................... 29
Chapter Four: Data Analysis ....................................................................................................................... 31
  4.1 Introduction............................................................................................................................................ 31
  4.2 Background of Participants/Sources.................................................................................................... 31
5.1 Introduction..................................................................................................................................................45
5.2 How did a distinct Ashkenazi cuisine develop in Alsace after Jewish migration to the region in the medieval period? ..........................................................................................................................45
  5.2.1 Geographical Considerations ..............................................................................................................45
  5.2.2 Chopped Liver/foie gras/geese .............................................................................................................45
  5.2.3 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls (Kneidlach).......................................................................................46
  5.2.4 Challah/Barches ..................................................................................................................................46
  5.2.5 Gefilte Fish/Carp .................................................................................................................................46
  5.2.6 Herring ................................................................................................................................................47
  5.2.7 Cholent ................................................................................................................................................47
  5.2.8 Choucroute .......................................................................................................................................47
  5.2.9 Pastrami ..............................................................................................................................................48
5.3 What dishes with historical links to the Alsace region constitute the current interpretation of quintessentially Ashkenazi Jewish food? .........................................................................................48
  5.3.1 Chopped Liver/Geese ..........................................................................................................................49
  5.3.2 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls (Kneidlach) ....................................................................................49
  5.3.3 Challah (Barches) ...............................................................................................................................49
  5.3.4 Gefilte Fish and Carp ..........................................................................................................................49
  5.3.5 Herring ................................................................................................................................................50
  5.3.6 Cholent ...............................................................................................................................................50
  5.3.7 Choucroute .......................................................................................................................................50
  5.3.8 Pastrami ............................................................................................................................................51
5.4 What links can be identified between the Alsace tradition and the Ashkenazi culinary practices that evolved in eastern Europe? .................................................................................................................51
  5.4.1 Chopped Liver/Geese ..........................................................................................................................51
  5.4.2 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls (Kneidlach) ....................................................................................52
  5.4.3 Challah (Barches) ...............................................................................................................................52
  5.4.4 Gefilte Fish and Carp ..........................................................................................................................53
  5.4.5 Herring ................................................................................................................................................53
  5.4.6 Cholent ...............................................................................................................................................54
  5.4.7 Choucroute .......................................................................................................................................54
  5.4.8 Pastrami ............................................................................................................................................54
5.5 What evidence can be found in contemporary Jewish food culture in America to support the existence of an Alsatian legacy? .................................................................................................................56
  5.5.1 Chopped Liver/Geese ..........................................................................................................................56
  5.5.2 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls .........................................................................................................56
  5.5.3 Challah (Barches) ...............................................................................................................................56
  5.5.4 Gefilte Fish and Carp ..........................................................................................................................56
  5.5.5. Herring ...........................................................................................................................................57
  5.5.6 Cholent ..............................................................................................................................................57
5.5.7 Choucroute .............................................................................................................. 57
5.5.8 Pastrami .................................................................................................................. 58

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations .......................................................... 59

6.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 59

6.2 Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 59

6.3 Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 62

References: ....................................................................................................................... 64

Appendix A – Edited Interview with Mireille Israel (17th February 2021) ....................... 69
Appendix B – Edited Interview with Lynn Jackson 13th March 2021 ................................ 79
Appendix C – Edited Interview with Karen Marder (20th March 2021) ........................... 88
Appendix D – Edited Interview with Françoise Klein (19th March 2021) ....................... 97
Appendix E – Edited Interview with Carolyn Collins (22nd March 2021) ....................... 100
Appendix F – Edited Interview with Fran and Bobby Kolin (25th March 2021) ............... 114
Appendix G – Edited Interview with Celia Vimont (29th March 2021) ............................ 133
Appendix H – Edited Interview with Lou and Arlene Marder (2nd April 2021) ............... 142
Appendix I – Edited Interview with Elaine Lavine (5th April 2021) ............................... 159

Attachment 1:................................................................................................................. 169
Attachment 2:.................................................................................................................... 173

Appendix K – Email correspondence from Jean-Pierre Lambert (5th September 2020) .... 175
Appendix L – Email correspondence from David Schnée (12th April 2021) ..................... 177
Appendix M – Matzeknepflich Recipe from Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne ............................ 179
Appendix N – Carpe à la Yete Recipe from Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne ............................ 180
Appendix O – Pickelfleisch Recipe from Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne ............................... 181
Appendix P – Herring Salad Recipe from Françoise Klein ............................................... 182
Appendix Q – Choucroute Recipe from Françoise Klein ................................................... 183
Appendix R – Excerpt from Recipe for Kouglof from Françoise Klein ............................. 184
Table of Figures

Figure 1.1: Alsace within the Holy Roman Empire (c.10th Century CE) .........................4
Figure 1.2: Alsace within French borders today ................................................................4
Figure 1.3: Partition of Poland in the 18th Century .............................................................6
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Definition

This thesis will examine the historical development of a distinctly Ashkenazi Jewish cuisine from its roots in the Alsace region of France, through the Jewish settlements in Eastern Europe, and the mass immigration to America in the 19th and 20th centuries. The aim is to come to an understanding of how global perception of what is considered to be quintessentially Jewish food (as evidenced in American Jewish delicatessens, Jewish homes, and in popular culture) has been shaped by developments in Alsace. The study will begin with Jewish migration to Eastern France during the First Crusade of the 11th century and trace the evolution and dispersion of culinary traditions established in the region through Eastern Europe and on to America. While many studies of Sephardic Jewish cuisine are available (Nathan, 2017; Ottolenghi and Tamimi, 2012; Roden, 1999), information on the development of the Ashkenazi tradition is limited, and with the exception of a few chapters in Nathan’s study of French Jewish cuisine (2010), no previous study in the English language has focused specifically on the Alsace region. When asked to define Jewish food, historian Aaron Gross explains “it’s an ongoing discussion, it’s an argument, it’s a debate . . . it’s a construction of a narrative” (Schenker, 2019, minute 15:37-15:44). As a contribution to the historic and ethnographic record of the Jewish people, this work will add to the canon of research on Jewish food culture and provide a more detailed explanation of its Alsatian origin than is currently available.

1.2 Justification

On the subject of historical significance, Christine Counsell notes that it “is not a property of the event itself. It is something that others ascribe to that event, development or situation” (2005, p. 30). As such, the migration of the Jewish people is the historical event; however, the adaptations and developments brought about in their cuisine have huge significance for food historians. While the troubled history of the Jewish race has been the focus of myriad theses, it is only in recent years that an examination of its culinary traditions has begun – more specifically, a recognition that there have been many regional influences over the centuries that have influenced what we now understand to be Jewish cuisine. This recognition is in itself a complicating factor: in the words of Gil Marks “defining Jewish cuisine is no easy task” (1996,
The majority of research on Jewish food history emanates from America where there is a tendency “to divide the Jewish world into two groups – Ashkenazim, who originated in France and Germany, and Sephardim, who originated in Iberia” (Marks, 1996, p.1) However, this is further complicated by the labelling of the entirety of Eastern Europe and Russia as Ashkenazi. My research will be important therefore in identifying the origins of the Ashkenazic tradition and tracing how the adaptation of ingredients necessitated by Jewish migration from the Alsace region in the medieval period is hugely significant in the evolution of Jewish food culture. Indeed, this focus on developments in the Alsace region and their worldwide ramifications meets the 5 Rs of Counsell’s criteria for historically significant and valid research in that these events are remarkable, remembered, resonant, revealing and resulting in change (2005, p. 32). This research will impact future scholarship in this area as it will offer a detailed cross-disciplinary (historical, ethnographic, anthropological, socio-economic, and political) examination of specific events and their ramifications. While other studies have taken Central and Eastern Europe as the homeland of Ashkenazi cuisine, this seems much too broad a focus. Even a cursory glance at Jewish cookbooks (Marks, 1996; Raphael 2005; Nathan, 2010) demonstrates the huge national and regional variations to be found in recipes that span a tract of land from Alsace to Ukraine and beyond. By taking the microcosm of the Alsace region as its focus, this study will forge clear links between the evolution of Jewish food in the early modern period and that of 21st century America, whilst identifying adaptations developing from Jewish migration eastward prior to the mass emigration to the United States in the 19th century. Hasia Diner (Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 2020) remarks that “this is a subject of unending interest; it will never be exhausted . . . and if I was going to sketch out what I think future research will be was [sic] increasingly more and more comparative work”. This comparative study will therefore be an important and necessary addition to current research conducted in the English language.

While cookbooks are the best source in determining a canon of Ashkenazi recipes, they also present challenges for the food historian given that cooks and food writers rarely cite their sources, relying seemingly on an oral tradition passed down through generations. On the other hand, academic studies focus on the social history of the Jewish people with an emphasis on Talmudic (dietary) laws, without specifying exact recipes. Hence, this research intends to bridge the gap in Ashkenazic Jewish food history by identifying specific dishes that originated in Alsace and were subsequently adapted through migration to Eastern Europe, eventually
crossing the Atlantic to become stalwarts of Jewish menus both in the domestic kitchen and in delicatessens.

1.3 Historical Scope

To begin an exploration of Jewish Alsatian cuisine it is necessary to understand how the Jews came to populate this area. Jewish involvement in France stems back to the Roman Empire. The first recorded settlers came with the exiled King Antipas, son of Herod, who settled in Lyon (Nathan, 2010). After the Siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of its temple in 70 CE, Jews were banished from their holy city and dispersed around the known world (Spieler, 2002). Many relocated to Rome from whence they travelled to Gaul which had been conquered by Julius Caesar. As merchants and peddlers, these immigrants established communities and utilised the produce of the region in their diet. For hundreds of years the Jewish community developed, particularly under the rule of Charlemagne who granted special privileges to them due to their involvement in the trade of spices, grain, and dried fish. Nathan quotes Pirenne on this special status: “if the Jews were so favoured, it was only because they were indispensable” (Nathan, 2010, p.10). With economic stability came increased investment in education and culture and so Talmudic scholars dispersed throughout France and Germany from the 8th century, establishing centres of learning. The most prolific of these was Rashi, whose writings inform much of what is known about Jewish communities in France during the early medieval period. However, with the First Crusade at the end of the 11th century a wave of anti-Semitic attacks and pogroms began.

Many Jews left the South of France and moved northwards. Blumenkranz and Catane identify that “the first evidence of Jews in Alsace is reported by Benjamin of Tudela who mentions (c. 1170) Jews in Strasbourg” (2019). While there seems to be a range of explanations for the term ‘Ashkenazi’, Nathan distinguishes this variant of Judaism as stemming from the “group of Jews [who] settled in Ashkenaz, the valley between the Rhine River and the Vosges Mountains extending into present-day Germany, and developed the Yiddish language, a corruption of German and Hebrew” (2010, p. 14). It is important to note that national territories of medieval Europe prior to the unification of kingdoms had very different boundaries in comparison to the modern map. Hence, Alsace in the 12th Century was under the jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Empire (Fig. 1.1), and for much of its history it would move between the rule of Germany and France. The resultant cultural dichotomy will be reflected in this research.
where both French and German influences will become apparent in the cuisine of the Alsatian Jewish community (Fig. 1.2).
The influx of Jews into the Alsace region prompted persecutions and pogroms, with records of mass murders of families, including the infamous St. Valentine’s Strasbourg massacre of 1349. David Green (2013) points to the general anti-Semitism that existed in Europe due to the financial acumen of the Jews, a sentiment that was exacerbated by the onset of the bubonic plague in 1348. Due to a variety of reasons (ghettoization, non-reliance on public water sources, superior hygiene due to dietary laws and rituals) the Jewish communities were less affected by the disease and were blamed for poisoning the wells to kill Christians. However, the Strasbourg Massacre occurred before the plague arrived in the city, at which stage half of the 2000 strong Jewish population had fled, and half had been burned to death. Jews were not to return to the city until 1520 (Green, 2013), settling instead in the surrounding rural area. A further blow to the French Jewish population came in 1394 with Charles VI’s expulsion order. Where did these communities go? Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus (2019) identifies Poland and Lithuania as two key locations for Jewish migration, but the diaspora eventually spread; “Most of the Franco-German Jews having settled in Austria, Hungary, Romania, the Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic states” (Marks, 1996, p. 2). With them they took their traditional recipes and culinary practices and settled in harsher climates, adapting familiar dishes to include unfamiliar ingredients.

It is worth delving deeper into the history of Jewish settlement in Poland to explain the association of Ashkenazi traditions with this region and the former Russian Empire in particular. At a time when the persecution of Jews in Western Europe began to gather momentum, Poland offered sanctuary. The Statute of Kalisz in 1264 gave Jews permission “to settle, follow their religion, be protected from harm, engage in various occupations, and even play a role in the minting of coins” (Wójcik, 2021). This charter was ratified and expanded upon by King Kazimierz (Casimir the Great 1310-1370). Such was the attraction eastwards that “by the mid-16th century, eighty percent of the world’s Jews lived in Poland” (‘Poland Virtual Jewish History Tour’, 2021). The Jewish Virtual Library notes that those fleeing from the Alsace region and Germany in general brought their particular mix of Hebrew and German, spreading the Yiddish language in the process (‘Poland Virtual Jewish History Tour’, 2021). Polish expansion accounts for an increased Jewish presence in Russia. In 1569 Poland and Lithuania unified, after which Poland annexed the Ukraine. Jews were sent to populate these regions (‘Poland Virtual Jewish History Tour, 2021). Later in the regions’ history, the Polish Commonwealth began to lose power after the Khmelnytsky uprising (1648) and eventually was carved up between Russia, Prussia, and Austria in the period from 1772 to 1795 (Wójcik,
2021). Hence, these countries inherited the large Jewish population (Fig. 1.3), with the Jewish community in Russia alone rising from 50,000 to 610,000 (Wójcik, 2021). Waves of persecution followed, prompting many families to make the decision to cross the Atlantic to seek a better life.

Figure 16: Partition of Poland in the 18th Century

Hasia Diner notes that in 1880 only one-sixth of the Jewish population of the United States came from the region east of Germany, but the years up to 1924 (when the National Origins Act effectively closed mass immigration) saw an influx that “transformed American Jewry into an east European outpost” (Diner, 2001, p.2). According to Ellis Island records, by 1924 the Jewish population numbered 3.6 million with 1.7 million of these in New York City (Save Ellis Island, 2018). The proliferation of Jewish delicatessens in cities across the United States and their continued success in the modern era stand as testament to the demand for traditional Jewish food which began nearly two hundred years ago.

It is the purpose of this research to identify and elucidate how the traditional Jewish dishes of the Alsace region shaped what is now considered to be Ashkenazi cuisine of Eastern European tradition, and which has in turn shaped global perception of quintessentially Jewish food, as evidenced in Jewish homes and delicatessens in America. Gil Marks observes that “since the ancestors of the majority of Ashkenazim came from the Slavic regions of eastern Europe (Poland and the Ukraine), it is this form of Ashkenazic cooking that is most widespread and that most Americans associate with Jewish food” (1996, p.2). However, its roots in eastern France seem largely forgotten and this is worthy of further research. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2010) recognises that “the distinctiveness of Eastern European Jewish foodways arises from . . . the historical legacy of early Western Ashkenazic traditions . . .[and] regional variations specific to Eastern Europe”. This study traces this legacy directly to the Alsace region of France, thus forging indisputable links between early modern France and present-day America.

1.4 Jewish Food in Popular Culture

Asked whether New York Jewish delicatessens are reflective of Ashkenazi food traditions (during an interview as part of this research), Elaine Lavine reflected that “In New York . . . some of the delis are almost tourist destinations. And I think it’s just about sampling what is considered New York typical food rather than from the Ashkenazi tradition” (Appendix I, 19:37). How did these delis achieve such prominence in popular culture that they have become synonymous with the essence of the city itself? In his history of the Jewish deli, Ted Merwin notes that “no ethnic group was more involved and invested in popular culture than were the Jews . . . and no New York eateries were more emblematic of show-business culture than were the theater-district (sic) delicatessens” (2018, p. 59). Merwin explains that this stems from the
1920s onwards when Jewish immigrants to New York began to both write and star in plays that were attended at first by a mainly Jewish audience (2018). As the years passed, Jewish involvement in showbusiness increased, leading to “an increasing number of plays and films that centred on New York Jewish life” (2018, p. 64). With advances in technology, it soon became possible for a global audience to appreciate the nuances of Jewish culture, particularly through the genre of comedy, with early Jewish actors such as the Marx Brothers paving the way for the likes of Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, Joan Rivers and Bette Midler, and later Billy Crystal, Fran Drescher and Adam Sandler. Merwin notes that “it was almost de rigueur for comedy sketches and scenes that centred on Jewish life to take place in delicatessens” (2018, p. 66), and cites a number of examples from the early years of the film industry. However, probably the best-known example in recent history is the famous scene in When Harry Met Sally (1989) which was filmed in Katz’s Deli in New York City. Other well-known television shows have included Seinfeld, Everyone Loves Raymond, The Nanny, and Friends, in which half of the characters are Jewish. Through the entertainment industry Jewish cultural norms came to be understood by a worldwide audience. In terms of what has come to be considered as quintessential Jewish food, that understanding is largely focused on traditional Ashkenazi staples of the Jewish delicatessen. Merwin relates the story of a 1970 advertisement for the iconic American soft drink, Coca-Cola, in which a New York taxi driver is pictured with an overstuffed corned beef sandwich in one hand and a bottle of Coke in the other. The tag line “‘It’s the real thing. Coke’, in the context of the ad implies that the corned beef sandwich is the “real thing” as well – that it is an authentic symbol of New York” (Merwin, 2018, p. 141). David Sax considers New York to be the “most dynamic metropolis on earth because there is no single dominant ethnic group” (2009). Yet he also notes that “only in this city would the celebrated French chef Joël Robuchon make his New York debut in the Four Seasons Hotel, and the first dish on the menu would be “Le Pastrami” (2009). Both examples demonstrate how Jewish deli food has not only become synonymous with New York but has shaped a global understanding of quintessential Jewish food through popular culture.

1.5 Dietary Laws

A brief and basic outline of some of the laws of Kashrut, the Jewish dietary laws, is useful in elucidating the adaptations that were necessary as the Jewish people moved away from the Mediterranean towards the colder climatic regions of Alsace and, later, Eastern Europe. Only
Kashrut laws relevant to the foods under discussion in this research will be examined here, but others exist.

For food to be kosher, or allowed to be eaten by observant Jews, it must follow the laws of Kashrut in all stages of production. The Jewish Virtual Library advises that “Of the "beasts of the earth" . . . you may eat any animal that has cloven hooves and chews its cud (Lev. 11:3; Deut. 14:6)” (Jewish Dietary Laws (Kashrut), 2021). Therefore, pork or any pig products are forbidden. This extends to the use of pork fat for cooking. Similarly, fish that do not have both fins and scales are forbidden or ‘parve’. Animals must be slaughtered in a certain way by a kosher butcher and “all blood must be drained from the meat or broiled out of it before it is eaten” (Jewish Dietary Laws (Kashrut), 2021). Meat and dairy, or fleishig and milchig in Yiddish, cannot be mixed due to the fact that “on three separate occasions, the Torah tells [us] not to "boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Ex. 23:19; Ex. 34:26; Deut. 14:21)” (Jewish Dietary Laws (Kashrut), 2021). Again, this has implications for the use of butter as a cooking fat. As will become clear later, with limited access to olive oil outside the Mediterranean, Jewish cooks in the Alsace region and beyond came to depend on schmaltz, goose, or chicken fat.

Specific rules apply during Passover. For eight days Jewish people cannot consume any yeast or leaven and must abstain from any grains that could produce leaven when fermented. The exception to this is wheat used in the unleavened bread, matzah (Rules for Passover, 2021). All foods must be certified ‘Kosher for Passover’.

Food preparation is also subject to a number of rules. Of particular relevance to this research is the prohibition on cooking on the Sabbath. Chabad.org notes that “Many traditional Shabbat foods have their origins in the Shabbat laws, including cholent, a warm dish which has been cooked prior to Shabbat, and gefilte fish, which has had all bones removed during its preparation” (Food Preparation on Shabbat, 2021), and as both dishes are central elements in this research it is important to understand the considerations that led to their inception.
1.6 Main and Sub Research Questions

This thesis seeks to address the following main research question:

**MRQ:** What evidence can be found that medieval Jewish migration to the Alsace region contributed to the evolution of a distinct Ashkenazi cuisine in Eastern Europe and modern America?

The answers to the following sub-research questions will feed into the overall findings:

**SRQ:**

1. How did a distinct Ashkenazi cuisine develop in Alsace after Jewish migration to the region in the medieval period?
2. What dishes with historical links to the Alsace region constitute the current interpretation of quintessentially Ashkenazi Jewish food?
3. What links can be identified between the Alsace tradition and the Ashkenazi culinary practices that evolved in eastern Europe?
4. What evidence can be found in contemporary Jewish food culture in America to support the existence of an Alsatian legacy?
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 General/Ashkenazi Origins

To date, Joan Nathan is alone in carrying out significant research into the history of Jewish food in France (2010; 2011). Her work traces the evolution of the diet of the Jews after their migration from the south of France during the First Crusade. While there seems to be a range of explanations for the term ‘Ashkenazi’, Nathan distinguishes this variant of Judaism as stemming from the “group of Jews [who] settled in Ashkenaz, the valley between the Rhine River and the Vosges Mountains extending beyond into present-day Germany, and developed the Yiddish language, a corruption of German and Hebrew” (2010, p.14). Dietary laws and a colder climate necessitated improvisation; however, “Jews have always improvised and adapted to new diets as they moved from place to place, and in the process have developed a tradition of cooking that blends the influence of their dietary proscriptions with the flavors (sic) of the country in which they are living.” (2010, p.7).

2.2 History of the Region

For the purpose of this research, the territorial claims that have influenced the Alsace region need to be clarified. It is difficult to source a modern history of Alsace that deals with the period before 1871. However, Brittanica.com tells us that the region was conquered firstly by the Romans in the 1st century BCE, then by the Alemanni in the 5th century CE, and later by the Franks in 496 CE (‘Alsace, 2017’). C.C. Eckhardt, writing in 1918, explains that “when the Empire of Charles the Great was finally divided by the Treaty of Mersen in 870, Alsace and Lorraine became a part of the German Kingdom” (p. 431), adding that both regions were German speaking. Alsace remained as part of the Holy Roman Empire until the Thirty Years War in the 17th century (‘Alsace, 2017’). Daniel Blumenthal continues the story of the region’s history, stating that “in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, Alsace was ceded to France in exchange for services which the King gave to the German Protestant princes fighting against the Catholic Empire” (2012). However, Eckhardt considers the re-nationalisation process a slow one; “Whatever attempts France made to assimilate these German-speaking people previous to the French Revolution were not very successful” (1918, pp. 432-3). He opines that it was the principles of the revolution that “aroused in the Alsace-Lorrainers a French sentiment” (p. 433) and concludes that it is only since 1815 that the Alsatian people have
considered themselves truly French. Hence, while Alsace is now a region of France, for much of the period outlined in this research it was part of Germany and therefore references to German language and culinary practices abound in the available literature on the topic.

2.3 Links with Germany

Gil Marks recognises that “Alsatian cuisine reflects a strong German influence” (1996, p. 116). Claudia Roden (1996) advances this further, noting that Ashkenazi culture “was born in the Middle Ages in Western Europe, and most particularly Germany” (p.15) and that just as Yiddish adapted, so too “the culinary repertoire of the Jews grew from a medieval German base with old French and Italian influences and eventually drew in dishes from many parts of Eastern Europe” (p.39). Hence, the constant migration of the Jews ever further east saw the development of a cuisine that has its roots firmly in the area known as Alsace today: foods that “originated in Germany, such as hallah bread, gefilte fish, chopped liver, cholent . . . were transported all over Eastern Europe” (Roden, 1996, p. 44). This has shaped the current understanding of Ashkenazi cuisine with little acknowledgement of its true origins in Alsace. Gil Marks supports this theory, identifying Austria, Hungary, Romania, the Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltic states as the destination for migrating Franco-German Jews (1996). Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus (2019) adds Lithuania to this list, with all these countries now being identified as the heartland of the Ashkenazi tradition. Marks develops this idea further as he considers that “Alsatian Jewish cuisine, lacking the Slavic influences of eastern Europe, is closer to the original Ashkenazic fare” (1996, p.116), a significant statement in establishing the French roots of one of the major branches of Jewish culinary tradition.

How does this account for the large Ashkenazi Jewish tradition that traces its roots to Russia? Sanford Sternlicht explains that “in the eighteenth-century Poland was “devoured” by its three giant neighbors (sic): Russia, Austria, and Prussia. As a result, the Polish Jewish community, by far the largest in the world, was divided into three parts, the biggest of which came under the rule of the Russian Empire” (2004, p.3). Hence, the links between Alsace and Eastern Europe extended even further.
2.4 Chopped Liver/Foie Gras/Geese

Joan Nathan makes a compelling case for Alsace as the origin of both chopped liver and foie gras. She explains that the practice of force-feeding geese (gavage) can be traced back to the Egyptians, with hieroglyphic representations adorning some of the tombs of Pharaohs (Nathan, 2010). Enslaved by the Egyptians, the Jews learned and developed the technique, eventually bringing it to France. Nathan notes that Jews were considered to be the best producers of foie gras and were the preferred source for Bartolomeo Scappi, chef to Pope Pius V in the 16th century (2010). Gil Marks supports this view, stating that while pâté de foie gras was invented by chef Jean-Pierre Close in the 17th century, the goose liver used was raised by Alsatian Jews. Although foie gras was a lucrative by-product of the need to source kosher fat, the Jews and their gentile neighbours both enjoyed the resulting meat. As a delicacy, foie gras was in greater demand at Christmas, so roast goose became a common choice for both the festive Christian table and the Jewish Hanukkah feast. Nathan cites Leon Cahun, writing in La Vie Juive, who provides an example of this cross-community celebration of food in Alsace in 1886; “everybody visited neighbors (sic) to admire their Passover geese, the volume of their livers, the amplitude of their fat, the fineness of their skin, the care with which the ritual slaughter was done. A good aroma of melted goose liver filled the Jewish home, and many Christian neighbors (sic) came to the Jewish kitchens” (1989). Marks states that the Jews of the Rhineland became “particularly proficient” at raising geese (1996, p.87). Freddy Raphaël is in no doubt as to the importance of geese to the Jews of Alsace, remarking that at Hanukkah every family killed a goose and that every part of the bird was utilised (2005).

On the subject of using the entire goose, another quintessentially Jewish food can be traced to the production of foie gras, as detailed by Joan Nathan in her address to the Library of Congress in 2011. Despite their expertise in producing the delicacy, the amount of cooking required to remove all trace of blood from goose liver in accordance with kashrut rules rendered the meat so tough that it was inedible. An alternative was found in chicken livers, yet they too needed to be thoroughly cooked. By the addition of chopped egg, onion, and goose or chicken fat (schmaltz), the meat was made edible and traditional Jewish chopped liver was born. Gil Marks again supports Nathan’s theory, stating that the dish “dates back to the medieval Alsatian communities, renowned for the soft livers of their force-fed geese” (1996, p.17). From its origins in Alsace, this dish travelled around the world with the Jewish diaspora and remains a staple at many Friday Shabbat tables, a tradition acknowledged by Michael Wex; “Often served
today in delicatessens, chopped liver is among the oldest Jewish dishes still being eaten” (2016).

Geese also proved to be the solution to a distinctly Jewish problem. Michael Wex observes that “one of the consequences of the dietary laws is to make food preparation somewhat more complicated for Jews than for other people” (2016). The Jews who settled in the Alsace region after moving from the South of France faced a difficulty regarding cooking fat. As Gil Marks explains “whereas in the Mediterranean region, olive oil was ubiquitous, in northern Europe oil of any sort was expensive or unavailable” (1996, p.109). While their Christian neighbours used lard, the Jewish community had to look for a kosher alternative. That alternative came as a by-product of geese. Wex (2016) explains how the geese were killed in the winter so the resultant goose fat, or *schmaltz*, was stored in jars and used over the course of the year. This original goose fat *schmaltz* has now been replaced by chicken fat, but the transition only came in the twentieth century according to Wex, who adds that “the goose retained its prestige for a very long time, in part because of its schmaltzy moistness, but economics and convenience . . . eventually turned the [chicken] into the default Jewish bird, the inexhaustible mine of those who moil for edible gold” (2016). Claudia Roden identifies that the practice of using goose fat was common to both the Rhineland and Eastern Europe, opining that “once upon a time, the smell of rendered goose fat permeated every Jewish home, clinging to the walls and furniture” (1996, p. 55). Hence, the research to date verifies that the Alsatian tradition of raising and consuming geese has had an impact on shaping several aspects of the Ashkenazi Jewish diet, both in Eastern Europe and further afield.

### 2.5 Chicken soup/Matzah balls

Gil Marks considers that “from the outset, soup has been an enduring part of Jewish cooking” (1996, p.53), tracing its importance back to the biblical story of Esau who sold his birth right for a pot of lentil pottage. Marks also discusses the French practice of having a pot of soup constantly simmering near the fire, the traditional *pot-au-feu*. Joan Nathan writes about her experience of a traditional Sabbath meal in the Paris home of Alsatian born Anita Hausser, which began with foie gras followed by Alsatian *pot-au-feu*, remarking that this dish is still “traditionally made in Jewish homes for Rosh Hashanah [Jewish New Year] and the Sabbath” (2010, p. 206). Closely linked to the tradition of the *pot-au-feu*, a stalwart of the American Jewish kitchen that has earned the alternative title of ‘Jewish penicillin’ and which Darra
Goldstein (UPenn Jewish Studies Program, 2020) considers to be the most iconic dish of all, is chicken soup. Marks attributes the popularity of chicken soup to European Jews who used it as a means of cooking a hen that had ceased to produce eggs. The modern Jewish dish of chicken soup with matzah balls has important links to the Alsatian tradition. Claudia Roden traces matzah balls, or kneidl, to Germany in the early Middle Ages, explaining the etymology of the Yiddish word knaidl as having its roots in the German knödel (1996). Freddy Raphaël sees both pot-au-feu and soupe aux quenelles (soup with dumplings) which he terms marikkneffe, as traditional Alsatian Sabbath dishes. Matzah is another example of the impact of Alsatian Jewish foods on the cuisine of the region. Such was the demand for it that an Alsatian Jew, Alex Singer, was prompted to devise a matzah dough rolling machine in 1838 (Nathan, 2010). Of the four companies producing matzah up to recent times in France, two were Alsatian, the Neymann family being in business since 1850 (Nathan, 2010), with many more in contemporary America to meet demand.

2.6 Challah/Barches

Just as matzah production was concentrated in Alsace, so too has traditional challah been adapted from a regional variety. Alsatian barches is a plaited poppy seed bread eaten on the Sabbath. Colmar baker Daniel Helmstetter explains that the “braid represents the tribes of Israel . . . and the poppy seeds, the manna in the desert” (Nathan, 2010, p.120). Gil Marks explains that berches, or barches, originated in Germany and traces the origin of the name to a corruption of the Yiddish term for blessings – broches, and the German term for braid – bercht (1996). Michael Wex sees the influence of the non-Jewish community on the development of challah; “A braided wheat-flour bread made with sugar, eggs, and oil, the chala (sic) . . . seems to have been adapted from German breads baked for special occasions” (2016). This characteristic plaited bread eventually “made its way eastward, becoming the most prevalent form of Sabbath bread among eastern Europeans” (Marks, 1996, p.276), and took the biblical name of challah, a premise supported by John Cooper who identifies the arrival of challah into Poland and Lithuania with the migration of German Jews, while barches remained the favoured term in Alsace (1993). Jody Myers agrees that braided Sabbath bread loaves were adapted from German cuisine (2019).
2.7 Gefilte Fish/Carp

Claudia Roden considers *gefilte fish* to be “the most famous and most representative of Jewish dishes” (1996, p.95), and while it may not be familiar to a Western European audience, it still remains a favourite on American deli menus as an Ashkenazi holiday staple. Interestingly, Michael Wex opines that “gefilte fish is probably the Jewish dish most closely associated with Jews by people who aren’t Jewish” (2016), a view which seems somewhat at odds with Roden’s estimation. Both Roden and Gil Marks agree that *gefilte fish* originated in medieval Germany (which would have included the Alsace region at that time), Marks estimating the fourteenth century (1996), whilst also explaining the origins of the title: *gefullte* means stuffed in German. Joan Nathan diverges from this theory, remarking that “by and large, gefilte fish came to France with waves of emigrants from Eastern Europe” (2010, p.156). Roden disagrees, the reason being that unlike Nathan’s citation of a 1691 recipe which uses carp (2010), the earliest *gefilte fish* recipe used pike (Roden, 1996). Marks agrees, stating that “pike was the most prevalent freshwater fish in Germany and thus the type commonly used for making gefilte fish” (1996, p. 72). Jody Myers offers more evidence to support this adaptation from the German pike to carp or whitefish in Eastern Europe (2019).

Carp, however, had a role to play in the development of Ashkenazi cuisine. Kashrut considerations extend to the variety of fish that can be consumed, with only those having fins and scales acceptable. Like pike, carp is one such fish. Nathan attributes its introduction to France to the Jews, explaining that it was “unknown west of the Rhine until the middle decades of the thirteenth century” (2010, p. 152). Despite limited modes of transport, Jewish traders managed to populate French rivers and lakes with carp brought from China, leading to it becoming “the most popular fish in Europe during the Middle Ages, and the Sabbath fish par excellence for the Jews of Alsace Lorraine” (Nathan, 2010, p. 152). Gil Marks agrees that “from Alsace to the Balkans, Jews were instrumental in spreading and breeding this newcomer: thus, it became associated with Jewish cuisine” (1996, p. 74). The tradition continues today in Alsace in *Carpe à la Juive*, a dish that involves two contrasting sauces used in the Middle Ages but which are virtually unheard of in combination now outside Alsace; sweet and sour, and parsley sauce (Nathan, 2010). Freddy Raphaël cites a commentator writing in 1886 who noted that on Friday mornings, Alsatian Jewish women would prepare both carp and pike for the dish: “écaille vigoureusement une carpe et un brochet pour préparer le Jede Fech, la carpe à la
juive” (2005, p.22), while Marks identifies three Alsatian variants that have been included in Larousse Gastronomique (1996).

2.8 Herring

Still a popular choice in American Jewish delicatessens, herring can also be traced back to the Alsatian tradition. Freddy Raphaël identifies the tradition of eating marinated herring for breakfast on the feast of Tisha be-av observed by Jews in the Alsatian city of Wintzenheim, and also that Alsatian Jews consumed “des harengs saur ou des harengs fumés” – pickled herring or smoked herring, at the celebration of Yom Kippur (2005, p. 27). Gil Marks (2010) explains that due to its high fat content, herring needs to be preserved quickly after being caught and that in the fifteenth century Dutch fishermen developed a process called gibbling, which saw the fish salted and layered into barrels. He remarks that “herring's importance to Dutch, German, and Eastern European Jews after the fifteenth century, both financially and gastronomically, cannot be overemphasized. . . Jews were prominent in trading the fish through central and Eastern Europe” (2010). While the consumption of preserved herring was not confined to the Jewish community it became an important part of Alsatian Ashkenazi food heritage. Interestingly, Claudia Roden (1996) notes that herring was sold by pushcart peddlers, a tradition that would cross the Atlantic with East European Jews and eventually develop into the delicatessen trade.

2.9 Cholent

Another dish that will be familiar to Ashkenazi Jews worldwide is the slow-cooked Sabbath stew known as cholent. Gil Marks identifies cooking as one of the thirty-nine categories of work that is forbidden on the Sabbath in Talmudic law, so it was incumbent on Jewish families to find a way to prepare a hot meal in advance. Claudia Roden proposes that it is related to the French dish of cassoulet, the word cholent stemming from the French words for hot (chaud) and slow (lent), justifying this by explaining that “the Jews in the region of the Languedoc, where cassoulet originated, were expelled in 1394 and headed for Germany” (1996, p. 42). John Cooper agrees with this assumption, specifying Alsace-Lorraine as the destination for the Languedoc Jews (1993) and as the centre for the knowledge of “the slow stewing process” (1993, p. 107). Michael Wex seems to disagree, terming the French explanation as a folk etymology and adding that ““Cholent” is a simple translation of khamin, and comes ultimately
from the Latin *calentem*, the present participle of a verb meaning “to be warm,” as filtered through Jewish versions of Old French that predate Yiddish” (2016). Yet he acknowledges that it seems to have originated in France, and that it is what he terms “the ground zero—the big bang, if you ask those who eat it—of East European Jewish food, the primal ooze from which many of the best-known, most-characteristic Yiddish dishes emerged” (2016). Hence, there is agreement among researchers that *cholent* is a French dish which travelled eastwards with the Jewish community as they migrated, eventually making the journey to America.

2.10 Choucroute

A resident of Strasbourg, Liselotte Gorlin’s family have lived in Alsace since at least 1700. When her children come for the Sabbath they expect *choucroute garnie* for lunch (Marks, 1996). A dish associated with the Alsace region, the Jewish migrants adapted it to suit their dietary laws. Joan Nathan sees *choucroute* as originating in the tradition of the Sabbath slow cook, the addition of cabbage to *cholent* resulting in a variation particular to Eastern France. Madeline Kamman identifies that “the real difference between Alsatian Jewish and non-Jewish cooking is the meat and the fat used” (Nathan, 1989), so by simply substituting pork with duck legs, chicken sausage or corned beef, kosher *Choucroute à la Juive* was created (Nathan, 2010, p. 216) and became an alternative to the Sabbath stew. Freddy Raphaël (2005) also identifies smoked meat in *choucroute* as a typical traditional Alsatian Sabbath meal. *Choucroute* is the French name for sauerkraut, the pickled cabbage that was a staple in Alsatian food. Gil Marks explains that the process of pickling vegetables was introduced to Germany from the Slavic lands in the medieval period and replaced the salting method of the time (2010). While not exclusive to the Jewish community, it became an important staple for migrating Jews as they moved further east and is still popular in American delicatessens today.

2.11 Pastrami

Central to establishing the link between an Ashkenazi tradition originating in France and eventually crossing the Atlantic with Eastern European Jews is the origin of pastrami, perhaps the most quintessential element of all New York Jewish delis. Ted Merwin observes that for “most of the twentieth century, a pastrami sandwich was more likely than a piece of fruit to trigger thoughts of New York” (2018, p.3), such was its iconic status. While Merwin acknowledges that “cured meats and sausages entered the Jewish diet during the eleventh and
twelfth centuries when Jews were living in the Alsace-Lorraine region of France” (2018, p. 20), he goes on to claim that pastrami originated in Turkey and became a speciality in Romania. Claudia Roden is one of the few to dispute this commonly held view, calling pastrami “one of the great inventions of the American deli” (1996, p. 72). She explains that Romanian pastrama is salted mutton, while the pastrami served in America is brisket which has been salted, smoked, and steamed (Roden, 1996). David Sax (2009) sees pastrami as “not so much a food as a method of preparation that involves a heavy dry rub of salt and spices to cure and season the meat, and later smoking to cook it fully”. Gil Marks acknowledges elements of both arguments. While he admits that “Modern pastrami is a relatively recent American innovation” (2010), he recounts the tale of a Lithuanian Jewish immigrant, Sussman Volk, storing a trunk for a Romanian friend and being rewarded with the recipe for a cured meat called pastirma, eventually selling it in his shop. Marks notes that the first recorded use of the term pastrami was in the Syracuse Herald in 1916, although he qualifies this by suggesting the term had been in use for some time before this (2010). Sax seems dubious about the tale, but acknowledges that Volk’s delicatessen became “no longer just Jewish, or Yiddish, but American” (2009).

Michael Wex has much to say on the subject, including the input of Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem who he refers to as the Yiddish equivalent of Shakespeare or Dickens, yet in his 1909/10 writing on pastrami, “the explanation makes it clear that [he] was a little vague as to what went into pastrami and how it was made, as well he should have been” (2016). Interestingly, Wex claims that neither pastrami nor corned beef are traditional Ashkenazi foods; “Corned beef, pastrami’s main rival . . . was as unfamiliar to the mass of East European immigrants as the Romanian pastrami that was often sold alongside it” (2016). There is clearly an element of doubt and guesswork as to the origins of this much-loved staple of the American Jewish deli, and this necessitates further research.

Where does this tradition of cured meats come from? Claudia Roden quotes Ed Levine’s view that “By definition, a deli must serve pastrami, corned beef, brisket” (1996, p. 117). She explains that the need to preserve kosher beef led to a wide range of Jewish charcuterie, and that “Alsace in particular is known for its Jewish specialities” (1996, p. 116) which include beef pickelfleisch, the word originating from the German words for pickle and meat. David Sax attributes the charcuterie that is the hallmark of American Jewish delicatessens to the “German medieval practice of pickling meat to preserve it [which] gave way to pickled tongue and corned beef”. Interestingly, Freddy Raphaël, the expert scholar of Alsatian Jewish culture,
writes that for the Jewish holiday of Purim Alsatian Jews traditionally ate *choucroute*, but a necessary part of the feast was a smoked beef that he calls *homen*; “En Alsace, le festin de Pourim . . . comprenait une choucroute garnie et, nécessairement, de la viande de boeuf fumée, appelée Homen” (2005, p. 24). This will be an important link to my objective of establishing a connection between Alsatian tradition and modern American delicatessens in New York.

### 2.12 Emigration/America

While the earliest Jewish immigrants to arrive in America were from the Sephardic tradition (Diner, 2006), the focus of this study will be the Ashkenazi Jews originating in the Alsace region who subsequently migrated east and then emigrated in waves from Central and Eastern Europe during an extended period beginning in the early 18th century. Hasia Diner estimates that by 1720 these Ashkenazim constituted the majority of American Jews (2006). As to the reason for two and a half million Jews leaving their homelands, several factors come into play including war, high taxes, and persecution. Diner gives the example of the earliest of these immigrants who fled Poland because “the combatants in the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648), the Catholics and Protestants, had savagely turned on the Jews, who suffered an intense period of persecution” (2006, p. 29). Sternlicht (2004) cites the European revolutions of 1848 as a reason for Ashkenazi German Jewish migration. Yet Diner also identifies perhaps the most pertinent factor – poverty, food poverty in particular. She suggests “the search for work that would enable them to buy good food propelled the exodus . . . they knew America as a place of plentiful food, where pre-migration hierarchies tumbled” (2001, p. 76). Put simply, “America meant freedom and food” (Diner, 2001, p. 180). Jody Myers observes that a “consequence of the contrast between American plenty and old country deprivation was that immigrant Jews placed hearty eating at the centre of Jewish social life” (2019, p. 121). What is significant for a lasting Jewish legacy on American foodways is that unlike the gender-based emigration from Italy and Ireland, entire Jewish families tended to emigrate together and once they arrived there was no going back (Diner, 2001). Darra Goldstein is just one of many historians who considers New York City’s Lower East Side to be the destination for the majority of migrating Ashkenazi Jews (UPenn Jewish Studies Program, 2020). As such, a process of cultural assimilation took place to a certain extent, with many Jews choosing to ignore some of the stricter Kashrut restrictions, either through lack of availability of kosher food or a desire to embrace all America had to offer. Both Bloch-Raymond (2014) and Diner (2001) give primary source accounts testifying to this. However, Diner’s observation that the
less observant tended to emigrate, while the “most traditional stayed put” (2001, p. 176) can be said to play a role in this. Central to this study is Diner’s recognition that “Food still lay at the heart of their culture, but it, like the culture itself, went through a process of regeneration” (2001, p. 76). Hence, while Sabbath dinner continued to hold important significance, other aspects of traditional Jewish cooking and eating became more difficult. This accounts for the advent of the Jewish delicatessen which provided an opportunity to enjoy traditional foods outside the home.

2.13 New York Delicatessens

David Sax identifies New York City as “the de facto world capital of Jewish delicatessen” (2009). Darra Goldstein considers delicatessens to be “by far the most iconic . . . and the most beloved” of Jewish food outlets (UPenn Jewish Studies Program, 2020). Ted Merwin agrees, remarking that it is “difficult to overestimate the importance of the delicatessen” (2018, p. 4), opining that the “history of the delicatessen is the history of Jews eating themselves into Americans” (2018, p. 1). Conversely, Merwin also acknowledges that this cultural transmission is a two-way street, with delis providing “a comfortable space for non-Jews to sample Jewish culture” (2018, xiii). David Sax uses the example of the Reubens sandwich to exemplify this. Clearly not kosher, with its combination of “hot corned beef, sauerkraut, and Russian dressing on grilled dark rye with a layer of melted Swiss cheese”, not many deli owners were concerned “if a little sacrilege was required to gain a level of acceptance and appreciation for their food and culture that Jews had never known before” (2009). Darra Goldstein goes even further on this subject, identifying the almost cultural appropriation of a Jewish delicatessen favourite into a corporate brand: “This idea of chicken soup for the soul is so entrenched in American popular culture that a whole empire has been built out of the branded Chicken Soup for the Soul books” (UPenn Jewish Studies Program, 2020).

As previously mentioned, Goldstein identifies New York City as the locus for Jewish immigration, particularly the Lower East Side, giving an estimate of 500,000 Jews in a one square mile radius (UPenn Jewish Studies Program, 2020), although this is disputed by Hasia Diner who puts the figure at 60,000 between 1880 and 1890, and that in a twenty-block square (2004). By 1927, 44% of American Jews had settled in New York (Diner, 2004). When one considers that the next biggest settlement was in Chicago with only 8% (Diner, 2004), New York’s significance in the development of an American Jewish food culture is obvious. To use
David Sax’s expression, “Suddenly, the foods of a people dispersed for nearly two thousand years came together in one corner of Manhattan” (2009). There was a demand for Jewish food and one means of income for immigrants was to sell this food, beginning with a pushcart. Such was the popularity of these that “immigrants fought each other for prime spots on the busiest thoroughfares” (Sternlicht, 2004, p.22). These mobile shops could become a stationary stand if the business proved successful. The ultimate goal, “what everyone was dreaming of, was a brick-and-mortar store” (UPenn Jewish Studies Program, 2020), a delicatessen shop. Goldstein explains that delicatessens originated as kosher butcher shops specialising in cured meats, eventually branching out into serving food on the premises (UPenn Jewish Studies Program, 2020). She sees a particular link between New York and Ashkenazi food, stating that “one of the things it’s important to note about Ashkenazi food in America is how closely identified it is with New York . . . and what it means to be a New Yorker” (UPenn Jewish Studies Program, 2020). This is an important consideration when forging links between the Ashkenazi traditions established in the Alsace region in the Middle Ages and present day American Jewish cuisine. It provides verification for Hasia Diner’s belief that “East European Jews in America also retained a commitment to foods emblematic of their culture. Certain foods anchored them to the past and tradition. They celebrated those foods and waxed eloquent about their sensory satisfaction, even while pursuing novelty” (Diner, 2001, p. 178). Hence, the German Jews who arrived in the mid nineteenth-century found a market for “the cured, smoked, pickled and spiced meats of Jewish delicatessen, such as corned beef, pastrami, salami, knockwurst, and even tongue” (Sternlicht, 2004, p. 51). Ted Merwin sees various stages in the development of the delicatessen shops, remarking that they only really became places to eat out after the First World War when the Jewish immigrant community became more affluent (Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 2020). He also sees a division between kosher and non-kosher delicatessens, with the former being found on “every corner of the second-generation Jewish neighbourhood” and which offered Jews “a very powerful connection to their heritage” (Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 2020). Even the non-kosher delis helped the Jewish community to develop, according to Merwin, as they were meeting places for the many Jews involved in the entertainment industry. He sees the heyday of the delis as being the 1930s, giving a figure of 1550 kosher delis alone in the five boroughs of New York City, with this number declining after the Second World War. Interestingly, Merwin notes that the customers of delis today are mainly non-Jewish diners, and that “now you have foods that used to be characteristic of the deli, like pastrami, that are so mainstream that they’re not even really seen as Jewish food
anymore” (Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 2020), such has been the impact of the deli on American food culture.

For the purpose of this research it is important to acknowledge David Sax’s assertion that the Jewish delicatessen was not invented in New York City (2009). Sax goes on to explain the etymology of the word ‘delicatessen’, “a mix of French and German, vaguely meaning “delicious things to eat” or “delicacies”” (2009). Yet again, the links to the Franco-German heartland of Alsace are clear. Sax adds that the food of the delicatessen is the culinary legacy of those early Ashkenazi Jews, and that the role of New York has been to provide “the perfect incubator for the Jewish delicatessen to blossom into a vibrant symbol of Ashkenazi cookery and an outlet for the melding of Jewish food and American culture” (2009).
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study, namely a social historical method incorporating a qualitative approach with oral history narratives. Social historical research is “a perspective on historical research that attempts to understand and explain social life in historical settings as well as the historical context for our present” (Berg, 2017, p. 158).

3.1 Research Focus

The focus of this research is the historical development of a distinctly Ashkenazi Jewish cuisine from its roots in the Alsace region of France, through the Jewish settlements in Eastern Europe, and the mass immigration to America in the 19th and 20th centuries. The aim is to uncover evidence of how the Western world’s perception of what is considered to be quintessentially Jewish food (as portrayed in popular culture and evidenced in American Jewish delicatessens) has been shaped by developments in Alsace.

Within this study, answers to the following questions will be sought:

1. How did a distinct Ashkenazi cuisine develop in Alsace after Jewish migration to the region in the medieval period?
2. What dishes with historical links to the Alsace region constitute the current interpretation of quintessentially Ashkenazi Jewish food?
3. What links can be identified between the Alsace tradition and the Ashkenazi culinary practices that evolved in eastern Europe?
4. What evidence can be found in contemporary Jewish food culture in America to support the existence of an Alsatian legacy?

The findings from these sub-research questions will build on the evidence necessary to address the main research question as to:
What evidence can be found that medieval Jewish migration to the Alsace region contributed to the evolution of a distinct Ashkenazi cuisine in Eastern Europe and modern America?

Due to the vast nature of the topic, this research will focus solely on the Ashkenazic culinary tradition and will not include a history of Sephardic, Mizrahi or other Jewish foodways.

3.2 Methodology

We know that the past as a series of events is utterly gone; only its consequences have infiltrated the present. Some remnants remain like litter from a picnic, but these material leftovers never speak for themselves. In fact, they are inert traces until someone asks a question that turns them into evidence (Appleby, 1998, p. 12).

This research began as a class paper on an aspect of culinary world history which focused on the Alsace region, during which the ‘inert traces’ of the past (that Appleby eloquently highlights in the above quote) became apparent. As a historian, my curiosity was aroused and I felt strongly that the subject merited further investigation. Preliminary reading of secondary sources suggested that there was a gap in the available research, with Ashkenazi food culture predominantly identified as having originated in Eastern Europe with only fleeting reference to the Alsatian connection. Historical research is constantly evolving and the evidence from revisionism adds to our understanding of the past. Within the relatively new discipline of food history there is much to be discovered. Berg observes that “What should be of interest and importance to the social historian is the progression from the older image to the newer one” (2017, p. 160) and the methodology employed in this research has aimed to blend social history and historiography through a vibrant, flowing narrative that is revealing of the past and is supported by oral history testimonies from members of the Ashkenazi community.

3.2.1 Secondary Research

The secondary research as detailed in the Literature Review (Chapter Two) focused on the available accounts of global Jewish food history and its development. The information relevant to the Alsatian region was identified and categorised into the development of specific foods, the history of emigration, and the advent of the American Jewish delicatessen. While much of
this research represented analysis of written histories, some audio-visual accounts were also scrutinised.

3.2.2 Primary Research
The primary research involved examination of source documents including recipes and delicatessen menus and semi-structured interviews. The process began with a request for information to Joan Nathan, the only writer in the English language to have made a detailed study of Alsatian Jewish cuisine. She suggested contacting Anita Hausser who features in Nathan’s 2010 book, *Quiches, Kugels, and Couscous: My Search for Jewish Cooking in France*. Ms Hausser then put me in touch with her cousin, Frank Hausser, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Strasbourg. Professor Hausser suggested I join a social media group dedicated to the history and culture of the Jewish community in Alsace and Lorraine (*Site Internet du Judaïsme d'Alsace et de Lorraine*). Membership of this site with a verification from Professor Hausser led to a number of sources of information, including primary source documents and oral history interviews. Professor Hausser also sent me contact details for Professor Freddy Raphaël, the leading historian of Alsatian Jewish food whose work features in my secondary research, but unfortunately, he was not available for interview.

3.3 Oral History Interviews
The importance of oral history to social historical research is highlighted by Berg in his conjecture that official or traditional histories typically favour the viewpoint of the ruling classes, while social historical perspectives “look for evidence of the day-to-day circumstances of “the people.”” (2017, p. 167). He cites Griffith’s (1984) suggestion that “first-person accounts such as oral histories and biographies are necessary if a researcher is to understand the subjectivity of a social group that has been “muted, excised from history, [and] invisible in the official records of their culture”” (Berg, 2017, p. 168). This is particularly relevant to the legacy of Alsatian Jewish cuisine, as the dearth of references in the wider canon of Jewish food history suggests that the contribution of the Alsace region has been largely forgotten. While I initially intended to conduct structured interviews with a clear set of questions, I decided that a less formal approach would allow for greater depth and variety of information and a richer repository of evidence to draw from. Hence, the interviews were conducted in the fashion of oral history testimonies. Due to the relaxed nature of the conversations many of the transcripts
ran to considerable length. Those included have been edited to remove unnecessary expressions or information not relevant to this study. This has in no way impacted the rich content of the participants’ responses.

3.3.1 Interviewees

The interviewees were not selected using any specific criteria. They all volunteered to speak with me about their particular experience of Jewish food. Mireille Israel Lang, a Strasbourg native now resident in Paris, is a consultant on food and world cuisines with a particular expertise in Israeli wines. Mireille offered to speak with me after reading my appeal for information on the Site Internet du Judaisme d'Alsace et de Lorraine. The interview was conducted in English. David Schnée also contacted me from Strasbourg. He is the author of a new book entitled Rumplesbuch: Souvenirs, anecdotes et délicatesses chronicling his childhood experiences of food in rural Alsace, which he sent to me before responding to written interview questions. Françoise Klein offered to translate some of her mother’s recipes for me and agreed to talk about her food traditions. Jean-Pierre Lambert is President of the Société pour l’Histoire des Israélites d’Alsace et de Lorraine (SHIAL) and he contacted me after I requested information on my research topic from the Judeo-Alsatian Museum. My interviews with Jean-Pierre took place in a series of emails.

To identify links between Alsatian traditions and those of the Ashkenazi community in Eastern Europe it was necessary to speak to people from this background. Lynn Jackson is Education Officer with the Holocaust Education Trust of Ireland. Having worked with Lynn, I mentioned my research topic and she offered to speak to me about her family history and understanding of Ashkenazi food as the descendant of Jewish immigrants who fled Russia. Her friend Carolyn Collins also volunteered to talk with me about Polish traditions.

To adequately assess the transmission of Ashkenazi food culture to New York delicatessens and the existence of a quintessential Ashkenazi cuisine, I felt that my research merited the inclusion of American Jewish voices. With this in mind I spoke to Karen Marder about her perception of food traditions in New York and of what the Western world understands to be quintessentially Jewish food. Karen put me in touch with her parents Lou and Arlene Marder, and her aunt and uncle, Fran and Bobby Kolin. This led to other interviews with Celia Vimont and Elaine Lavine. All these interviewees are part of the Ashkenazi community in New York City.
3.4 Qualitative Research

Due to the paucity of primary source material from the Middle Ages and the necessity of relying on secondary and contemporary accounts, it was therefore appropriate to use a qualitative approach. Monaghan and Hartman define qualitative research as:

what most laypersons think of as "history": the search for a story inferred from a range of written or printed evidence. . . In qualitative history, the researcher inevitably draws inferences from what is all too often an incomplete body of data and makes generalizations (sic) on the basis of relatively few pieces of evidence (2000, p. 114).

Most of the qualitative data included in this research takes the form of recipes and American delicatessen menus. Several people offered to share family recipes and cookbooks with me. Michel Levy sent me his grandmother’s handwritten recipe book from 1930. Although he is resident in Dijon, his family have a long history in Alsace which he has documented on a website. The *Cahier de recettes de cuisines de la famille Blum Didiesheim*, also known as *Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne*, has been photographed and converted into a word document in memory of Michel’s grandmother who was transported from Alsace to Auschwitz during WWII and did not survive. As mentioned previously, David Schnée’s memoir contains traditional Alsatian Jewish recipes from his childhood. Many of the interviewees also sent on traditional recipes.

The delicatessen menus selected for scrutiny were done so based on recommendations as to the most popular and authentic Jewish delis from interviewees who live in New York. I had initially planned on focusing solely on delis that had been established in the early to mid-twentieth century. However, to gain an insight into what is considered typical Jewish food in the contemporary era, I felt that I needed to examine menus from delicatessens that have a shorter history, particularly those frequented by tourists. I aimed to identify the dishes that my secondary research and my interviewees had specified as quintessentially Ashkenazi dishes.

3.4.1 Data Analysis

The data collected underwent a process of thematic analysis based on the particular foods identified in my secondary research in Chapter 2, namely chopped liver, chicken soup with matzah balls (*kneidlach*), challah/barches, gefilte fish/carp, herring, *cholent*, *choucroute* and pastrami. After talking about family traditions and childhood memories of food, participants in the oral history interviews were asked to list the foods they considered to be quintessential Ashkenazi dishes. In cases where the interviewee did not mention one of the specified foods,
they were prompted to consider whether it deserved to be on the list. Similarly, recipe collections were examined for evidence of the eight dishes listed above. Members of the Ashkenazi community in New York City were also asked about the role played by delicatessens in supplying traditional foods. Participants identified seven key delicatessens in the city: Katz’s, 2nd Avenue Deli, Ben’s, Carnegie Deli, Sarge’s, Pastrami King, and Russ & Daughters. The menus of these delicatessens were also analysed for evidence of the eight foods identified in the oral history interviews.

3.5 Limitations

A limitation to this research has been the lack of primary sources from the medieval period and the fact that those in existence were written by the few members of the Jewish community who would have received an education, the Rabbis. Hence, these very rare accounts are written in Hebrew. Not having fluent French has meant that I have had to call on others to double check the veracity of my translations. However, the willingness of correspondents to communicate through English has made this less of a limiting factor than expected. This research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic and this introduced unexpected limitations on aspects of the research process, namely library access and travel to the Alsace region for research. Conversely, the almost universal use of Zoom as a means of communication in the Western world in 2021 has allowed me to easily hold conversations with members of the Jewish community in other countries.

3.6 Philosophical Considerations

Quoting Carl Becker, Appleby opines that the value of history is not scientific, but moral:

> by liberalizing the mind, by deepening the sympathies, by fortifying the will, history . . . enables us to control, not society, but ourselves - a much more important thing; it prepares us to live more humanely in the present and to meet rather than to foretell the future (Appleby, 1998, p. 1).

This is particularly relevant to the study of the history of the Jewish community, given centuries of persecution and migration. Indeed, Claude Fischler observes that:

> Food and cuisine are a quite central component of the sense of collective belonging. In some situations of migration or of minority cultures, it has been observed that certain features of
cuisine are sometimes retained even when the original language of the culture has been forgotten (1998, p. 280).

Through the social historical process involved in this research, the collective identity of a large swathe of the European and American Jewish community can be traced back to the Alsace region. This will be an important contribution to the historical records of the Jewish people. Monaghan and Hartman note that “History is a vital sign of any community's maturity, vitality, and growing self-awareness, and it provides the basis for a collective sense of direction and purpose” (2000, p. 109). As mentioned previously, the current interpretation of Ashkenazi food focuses on Eastern Europe. The nostalgia for the recipes and traditions of the shtetls that were home to millions of Jewish families prior to their emigration to America, has meant that the Alsatian roots of many of the dishes have been forgotten. Berg makes an interesting distinction between nostalgia and history: “In contrast to nostalgia, historical research attempts to systematically recapture the complex nuances, the people, meanings, events, and even ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present” (2017, pp. 158-9). Hence, this research will allow for a greater understanding of the historical development of the Ashkenazi Jewish community through their food culture and traditions.
Chapter Four: Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the data retrieved from a thematic analysis of oral history interviews, recipe collections, and the menus of seven key delicatessens in New York City. The data will be categorised under the following headings:

- Background of Participants/Sources
- Chopped Liver
- Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls (kneidlach)
- Challah/Barches
- Gefilte fish/Carp
- Herring
- Cholent
- Choucroute
- Pastrami
- Other relevant data

4.2 Background of Participants/Sources

4.2.1 Oral History Interviewees

Participants in the oral history interviews came from a variety of backgrounds. Four of the interviewees (Mireille Israel, David Schnée, Françoise Klein, and Jean Pierre Lambert) are part of the Alsatian Jewish community in France. Lynn Jackson lives in Dublin and can trace her family history back to the Russian Empire, while her friend and neighbour Carolyn Collins’ heritage stems from Poland and Lithuania. Karen, Lou, and Arlene Marder are of Polish descent and live in New York City. Celia Vimont’s maternal great-grandparents came to New York from Lithuania while her paternal grandfather and his family emigrated from Latvia. Elaine Lavine explained that her mother’s family came to New York from the region of Galicia, which she described as being “Eastern Poland or Western Ukraine, or on some of the passports . . . from that side of the family it was even called the Austro-Hungary Empire” (Appendix I, 00:07). This is supported by Britannica.com which lists Galicia as “part of Poland before
Austria annexed it in 1772; in the 20th century it was restored to Poland but was later divided between Poland and the Soviet Union” (‘Galicia’, 2014). Interestingly, Fran Kolin identifies her paternal grandfather and his family as coming from a small town in either “Austria or Hungary or Poland. Near Lvov” (Appendix F, 00:10), so it is probable that her roots are also in the region of Galicia (See Fig. 1.3). Given that Casimir the Great annexed the region in 1349 (‘Galicia’, 2014) it would make sense that this was an area of Jewish settlement. As alluded to by Lynn Jackson in her interview, “King Casimir in Poland . . . welcomed the Jews . . . consequently the huge settlement of Jewish people in Poland . . . that . . . corresponds with . . . medieval times and onwards” (Appendix B, 42:51). Another interesting revelation from Elaine Lavine is that her Galician ancestors had the surname Kirschenbaum, “a German name, but . . . they did not come from Germany” (Appendix I, 00:07), supporting the probability of migration eastwards. Elaine’s paternal ancestry stems from Lithuania. Bobby Kolin can trace his father’s family to the eponymous city in the Czech Republic, while his maternal grandfather came to New York from Riga in Latvia. The Marder and Kolin families settled in the Lower East Side of the city after immigration, a stronghold of the Ashkenazi migrant community. The period of immigration identified by all the interviewees was the mid-to-late 19th century and the early 20th century.

4.2.2 Delicatessen Menus

Seven delicatessen menus were examined for evidence of the Ashkenazi foods under scrutiny. The delicatessens chosen were exclusively based on the suggestion of the New York Ashkenazi interviewees in response to my request for recommendations for traditional Jewish delicatessens in the city. The seven delicatessens were:

- Katz’s
- 2nd Avenue Deli
- Ben’s
- Carnegie Deli
- Sarge’s
- Pastrami King
- Russ & Daughters
4.2.3 Recipe Collections

While Jewish Alsatian recipe collections were difficult to access, the four that I consulted yielded interesting information. While Freddy Raphaël’s *La Cuisine Juive en Alsace* (2005) was cited in Chapter Two as a secondary source on the history of the Jewish community in Alsace, it is also relevant to my primary research as it contains a recipe collection. David Schnée’s memoir *Rumplesbuch: Souvenirs, anecdotes et délicatesses* contained a significant number of recipes from his childhood, and David gave additional information on these via email correspondence. Gurwan Simenel translated some of Françoise Kein’s mother’s recipes and Françoise provided some additional information on Alsatian cuisine. My final recipe collection came from Michel Levy. As mentioned previously, the handwritten *Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne* (*Cahier de recettes de cuisines de la famille Blum Didiesheim*) has been scanned and converted to a Word document.

4.3 Chopped Liver

4.3.1 Oral History Responses

Chopped liver is so commonplace to Sabbath dinner and festival meals that a number of interviewees had to be reminded of it when listing quintessential Ashkenazi foods, having taken it as a given inclusion on the list. Jean Pierre Lambert used the Yiddish term *gehackte leber* while expounding his theory that the dish predates foie gras, which he identifies as being developed as a pâté in Strasbourg in the 18th century (Appendix K). Interestingly, while Jean Pierre and Mireille Israel spoke about the use of goose fat and its importance to Ashkenazi cooking (Appendix A, 15:41), (with it even being use in cake baking (Appendix A, 16:32)), geese were not mentioned by other interviewees. While all agree that the finished dish must include onion and eggs, participants in New York specified the use of chicken liver; “it’s almost always chicken liver . . . chopped liver is chicken liver” (Appendix H, 22:23). Lynn Jackson remarked that it was “traditionally chicken liver . . . and quite often it could be calves liver” (Appendix B, 38:24). Carolyn Collins makes chopped liver every Friday night and uses chicken livers due to the absence of a kosher butcher. However, she previously used beef liver (Appendix E, 24:24).
4.3.2 Delicatessen Menus
All seven delicatessens included chopped liver on their menu.

4.3.3 Recipe Collections
While chopped liver did not feature in any of the recipe collections, the importance of geese and goose fat was stressed. In a recipe for Gänshälsel (stuffed goose neck), Freddy Raphaël remarks “By tradition, the goose was the poultry of the Shabbat; we used our fat for the kitchen, we sold our feathers and its down, and its liver was used to make pâtés” (Par tradition, l’oie était la volaille servie au repas du Shabbat; on utilisait sa graisse pour la cuisine, on vendait ses plumes et son duvet, et son foie servait à confectioner des pâtés) (2005, p. 81). A recipe sent by Françoise Klein states that “during the Middle Ages, the Rhine Community were also the first to mix the liver with the onions and eggs. The simple minced liver would later inspire the Foie Gras” (Appendix R). David Schnée sees goose fat as important to Jewish cuisine in Alsace “in particular because it enters into the composition of matseknepfelich which holds an important place in the Judeo-Alsatian culinary tradition” (“notamment car elle entre dans la composition des matseknepfelich qui est un met qui tient une place importante dans la tradition culinaire judéo-alsacienne) (Appendix L). As will be explained below, matseknepfelich are matzah balls or kneidelach.

4.4 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls (Kneidlach)

4.4.1 Oral History Responses
“Chicken at every holiday meal and every Shabbat meal, every dinner. Matzah ball soup” (Appendix G, 09:46) - in this quote Celia Vimont succinctly summarised the importance of chicken to the Ashkenazi diet. Fran Kolin remarked “we never had anything else on a Friday night” (Appendix F, 21:31). Lynn Jackson has memories of her Yiddish speaking grandmother in the kitchen; “I remember the pots on the stove . . . simmering . . . it traditionally was, of course, chicken soup. It's all completed by Thursday evening” (Appendix B, 10:51). Lynn remembers the soup being allowed to cool in a larder so that the fat could be removed, leaving a clear broth (Appendix B, 10:51). Jean Pierre Lambert refers to soup cooking as ‘pot-au-feu’ and considered it a method of using all of the animal, wasting nothing (Appendix K). This practice is supported by Lynn’s memory of the use of a boiling fowl, a hen that had finished
laying (Appendix B, 10:51). Carolyn Collins also refers to the “hen out of the pot” (Appendix E, 38:49) and the modern practice of discarding the bird after the soup is ready: “the hen would be the meal . . . now today, with affluence, people say ‘Oh, I gave the hen to the dog’. But back in the day, you wouldn’t have given the hen to the dog” (Appendix E, 38:49). Carolyn discussed making her own kneidlach, or matzah balls, for the soup and the recent advent of a pre-prepared mix that would have been unheard of in her mother’s time (Appendix E, 31:12). However, she stressed the importance of matzah meal in Ashkenazi cooking: “You can’t live without that. I couldn’t live without matzah meal. It goes into everything” (Appendix E, 38:49). Mireille Israel linked matzah meal specifically with Alsatian recipes and verified that the first industrial matzah production took place in Alsace, with two factories originally in the region (Appendix A, 28:19). Mireille also makes matzah balls for chicken soup, but in the Alsace tradition she uses goose or duck fat rather than oil (Appendix A, 16:32).

At the start of his oral history, Lou Marder spoke about the importance of tradition to Ashkenazi families, with particular reference to chicken soup:

> It’s funny because all my grandparents had the same upbringing. They had that, and then they passed it along through the generations. . . we always had chicken on the Sabbath, which is Friday night and Saturday. Always. That consisted of chicken, chicken soup. And, you know, a side dish or something like, the style is pretty much like we would have it even now. It was boiled chicken with soup (Appendix H, 02:27).

4.4.2 Delicatessen Menus

All seven delicatessen menus included chicken soup. 2nd Avenue Deli, Ben’s, Sarge’s, and Pastrami King also included ‘Chicken in the Pot’.

4.4.3 Recipe Collections

David Schnée considers matseknepfelich (matzah balls) to be a traditional Alsatian Jewish dish as they “enhance[s] the broth of the pot-au-feu” (“qui agrémentent le bouillon du pot-au-feu”) (Appendix L). He adds that goose fat is important in the recipe for these dumplings (as mentioned above). Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne lists two different recipes for ‘Matse Knepflish’, one of which contains goose fat (Appendix M).
4.5 Challah (Barches)

4.5.1 Oral History Responses
Challah was mentioned in most of the oral history interviews but not elaborated on to a great extent. Some participants make their own challah for the Sabbath, but the majority buy it in. One interesting observation was the New York pronunciation of the word ending in a Y sound. I asked Lou Marder about this and he revealed that ‘challah’ is from Hebrew. “The ‘huh’ sound is strictly European. There is no corresponding part to the English alphabet. There is no letter. In Hebrew there is” (Appendix H, 03:34). Lynn Jackson explained the religious symbolism of challah and how the plaited bread can change shape according to the festival being celebrated, becoming a round plait at Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) for example (Appendix B, 16:05). The majority of the interviewees identified that challah remains a staple of the Ashkenazi Sabbath table.

4.5.2 Delicatessen Menus
Only Russ & Daughters included challah on their menu.

4.5.3 Recipe Collections
Freddy Raphaël includes a recipe for ‘Berchès’ in his collection (2005, p. 40)

4.6 Gefilte Fish and Carp

4.6.1 Oral History Responses
All interviewees considered gefilte fish a quintessential Ashkenazi dish. Karen Marder remarked “You can’t forget gefilte fish . . . we grew up eating it (Appendix C, 13:23). Lou Marder sees the dish as having developed over time; “It’s a combination of things . . . it’s probably a German word that means something that, over the course of time, has just become the product” (Appendix H, 17:27). While there seems to be a modern preference to buy it ready made in jars, some oral histories reveal a practice of making it from scratch. Carolyn Collins remembers her mother making gefilte fish with carp: “she used to make steaks. . . and it would have a hole in the top and they used to stuff that hole with the gefilte fish mixture” (Appendix E, 20:30). Lynn Jackson also specified carp as the fish traditionally used for gefilte fish. Elaine
Lavine heard stories of her maternal grandmother “particularly at Passover time . . . making gefilte fish . . . including the fish swimming in the bathtub until it was time to use it” (Appendix I, 16:11), a tradition that was also referred to by Mireille Israel in her explanation of the importance of carp, particularly for the Alsatian dish, Carpe à la Juive. Jean-Pierre Lambert sees carp as being of key importance to both dishes:

It is widely used in Jewish cooking where it is by far the most popular fish! As it was in France in the medieval period. We can think that French ingredients were migrating with Jews to Alsace and then to Germany and Poland. In fact, in Poland, carp is very popular, numerous recipes are used, sometimes more and generally less similar to Jewish gefilte fish (Appendix K).

Mireille explained that carp were so popular in Alsace because they could be caught in the Rhine. For Carpe à la Juive the carp needed to be alive as blood was added to the parsley sauce at the end of cooking to create a jelly, hence the practice of keeping live fish in tubs. The dish has an equivalent in Polish tradition, according to Jean Pierre Lambert, with the green Alsatian sauce being replaced by “a sweet sauce in Poland, both cold (to be eaten on chabbath) with jelly” (Appendix K).

4.6.2 Delicatessen Menus

2nd Avenue Deli, Ben’s, Carnegie Deli, Sarge’s, and Russ & Daughters included gefilte fish on their menu. Katz’s also list it but specifically as part of a ‘Holiday Package’.

4.6.3 Recipe Collections

Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne contains a recipe for “Carpe à la Yete”, which is explained in the list of contents as “carpe à la juive ou fish à la Yide” (Appendix N). David Schnée also referred to Yidefish, considering it as traditionally Alsatian, and describing it as “Jewish style fish which is distinguished from gefilte fish by a green sauce” (“le poisson à la juive (cf. yidefish) qui se distingue du gefiltefish par une sauce verte”) (Appendix L). Freddy Raphaël uses the term ‘Carpe Farcie’ for gefilte fish, explaining in his recipe that in the Middle Ages, German Jewish women minced and stuffed carp to serve on the Sabbath, hence the dish was served cold (2005, p.64). He also includes a recipe for Carpe à la Juive, or “Jedisch Fisch” (2005, p.63).
4.7 Herring

4.7.1 Oral History Responses
Herring was identified by most interviewees as a quintessential Ashkenazi dish. Jean Pierre Lambert considers salted herring to have become popular in Germany due to Jewish migration from France and Alsace (Appendix J). Lynn Jackson considers chopped herring to be “very traditional . . . made with salt herring and some pickled onions and chopped up with apple” (Appendix B, 39:11). Such was its importance that Lynn remarked, “You wouldn’t go into a Jewish house when I was growing up without being offered some chopped herring” (Appendix B, 39:11). Carolyn Collins was of the same opinion, opining that “herring would be a big thing. . . there was never a year went by that we didn’t have a bucket of herrings underneath the stairs” (Appendix E, 17:37). Carolyn described the process whereby her mother would layer the herring with kosher salt in a bucket, tie a brown paper lid on top, and leave it for a couple of weeks (Appendix E, 17:37). The resulting product is called schmaltz herring and Carolyn remembers her grandfather (of Russian origin) having it for breakfast when he came to her childhood home (Appendix E, 06:33). American interviewees also rated herring as an important Ashkenazi food, with two options for serving, a sour cream sauce and a wine sauce, although Elaine Lavine pointed out that the wine used is actually vinegar.

4.7.2 Delicatessen Menus
2nd Avenue Deli, Sarge’s, and Russ & Daughters offered herring on their menus.

4.7.3 Recipe Collections
A recipe for Salade de Harengs (Herring Salad) was contained in the collections of both Françoise Klein and Freddy Raphaël, with the latter specifying the use of pickled herring (2005, p. 61).

4.8 Cholent

4.8.1 Oral History Responses
Jean Pierre Lambert explained that “during migrations, many Jews bring their cuisine. This is the case of the French whose “Chaud-lent” (slow cooking) will become the Polish “Tcholent”!”
(lors de migrations, de nombreux juifs amènent leur cuisine: C’est le cas des français dont le "Chaud-lent" (cuisine mijotée) va devenir le "Tcholent" polonais!) (Appendix J). Lynn Jackson clarifies the spelling variants: “It’s usually either tch or just cholent. But these names all differ depending on your accent and which Yiddish you spoke” (Appendix B, 12:41). While most of the interviewees identified cholent as a traditional Ashkenazi food, Fran Kolin sees it as “the thing that stands out” (Appendix F, 15:54). Fran uses her sister-in-law’s recipe “straight from the old country” (Appendix F, 15:54) and told me about the tradition of the young child bringing the pot of cholent to the local baker on a Friday afternoon to cook overnight. She explained that “the thing about cholent is that almost all of the ingredients are optional” (Appendix F, 16:59), adding that “it really was way before cookbooks were ever invented and it was designed for people who had very, very little to be able to put together what they had. It was poor people’s food” (Appendix F, 18:05). Cholent was identified by participants as being associated with “religious observance” (Appendix I, 13:35) and being “very popular in orthodox families” (Appendix G, 06:08), with Lou Marder viewing it as a means of getting around “laws of hundreds of years ago” (Appendix H, 11:14). Jean Pierre Lambert considers cholent to be the “Jewish cassoulet” and summarises the “amazing” (étonnante) history of the dish: “First French, invented in the Middle Ages, it went to Eastern Europe to return . . . modified (with potatoes!) in the luggage of Russian and Polish immigrants” (D’abord Français, inventé au Moyen-Âge, il va parti ren Europe de l’Est pour revenir . . . modifié (avec des pommes de terre!) dans les bagages des immigrés venus de Russie ou de Pologne) (Appendix J).

4.8.2 Delicatessen Menus

2nd Avenue Deli was alone in offering cholent on its menu.

4.8.3 Recipe Collections

While Freddy Raphaël includes a recipe for ‘Tchoulent’, he uses the East European spelling of the dish. However, in the introduction he explains that the origin of the word is a transcription of the French “chaud-lent” (2005, p. 57).
4.9 Choucroute

4.9.1 Oral History Responses

*Choucroute* was alluded to only by the Alsatian interviewees. Mireille Israel considers it to be one of the most important Alsatian Jewish foods but made with beef charcuterie, not pork (Appendix A, 20:28). Jean Pierre Lambert considers it to be an adaptation of “local cuisine into kosher fashion” (Appendix J). Interestingly, however, Arlene Marder sees sauerkraut (a key element of *choucroute*) to be important: “Pickling is a major Jewish thing. Pickles and sauerkraut and things that are actually preserved vegetables because, again, there was no refrigeration. So, pickling was a big deal” (Appendix H, 31:43).

4.9.2 Delicatessen Menus

As *choucroute* is the French word for pickled cabbage, sauerkraut is considered to be the same product. Katz’s, 2nd Avenue Deli, Ben’s, and Sarge’s all included sauerkraut on their menus.

4.9.3 Recipe Collections

Françoise Klein sent me her family recipe for ‘*Choucroute à l’Ancienne*’, which on comparison contained roughly the same ingredients as Freddy Raphaël’s recipe for ‘*Choucroute à la Juive*’. However, while the latter used 150 g of goose fat, Françoise’s recipe calls for four slices of ‘smoked goose block’ (Appendix Q). David Schnée also noted that in his family “goose fat is also used to spice up sauerkraut” (“la graisse d'oie sert aussi à relever la choucroute”) (Appendix L). Cured meat was also used in two of the recipes and this will be discussed below.

4.10 Pastrami

4.10.1 Oral History Responses

All interviewees were asked about pastrami, particularly their opinion on its provenance. Participants from Alsace were specifically asked if they could see a link between pickelfleisch and pastrami. Mireille Israel feels that they are very similar; “In Alsace it’s pickelfleisch. In the other parts of the world it’s very often pastrami” (Appendix A, 03:07). Although Mireille felt that pastrami may have come from Romania, she added the proviso that it travelled there
via Germany (Appendix A, 04:20). Jean-Pierre Lambert described the process for creating what he terms "poeckel fleisch", or “Jewish ham”:

It consists of having the meat stored in a blend Sodium/Potassium nitrate + kitchen Salt + garlic for several weeks and then cooked in water + vegetables + herbs. Eat it cold or (better) warm. Taste is incredible, but in fact it is the only way of making something similar to ham. Is it Alsatian or German? Was it French and then migrating to the east direction? The medieval north European Judaism appeared in France around 700/800, followed by a migration toward German speaking regions (after 900), and then Eastern Europa. For me Poeckel is most probably the Jewish transcription of local practices in which pork was used (Appendix K).

Françoise Klein had never encountered pastrami before going on holiday to America (Appendix D, 04:13). However, she contacted Christophe Woehrlé, an Alsatian historian, who forwarded an article from Maison.com which claimed that “Cured beef, finely sliced and very popular with New Yorkers, pastrami has existed in Alsace since the dawn of time and in particular at the famous butcher-delicatessen Geismar” (“Viande de bœuf séchée, finement tranchée et très prisée des new-yorkais, le pastrami existe en Alsace depuis la nuit des temps et notamment à la fameuse boucherie-charcuterie Geismar”) (Soehnlen, 2014). The article goes on to refer to pastrami as the cousin of pickelfleisch, explaining it is “beef brisket salted in the old fashioned way and cooked in broth . . .The Geismar butcher and charcuterie, located in Alsace, in Turckheim, in the same house since 1784, cooks them, following the ancient tradition handed down from generation to generation” (poitrine de bœuf salée à l’ancienne et cuite dans un bouillon . . . La boucherie-charcuterie Geismar, située en Alsace, à Turckheim dans la même maison depuis 1784, les mitonne, suivant la tradition ancienne transmise de génération en génération) (Soehnlen, 2014).

On the question as to whether pastrami is an American invention, as per Claudia Roden’s conjecture, Lynn Jackson strongly concurs: “It’s definitely American. We didn’t grow up knowing about pastrami in my day. But we did have pickle meat. And pickle meat is very similar” (Appendix B, 41:05). Lynn explained that this meat was similar to corned beef but not the same. Similar to pastrami and pickelfleisch, pickle meat is made using brisket (Appendix B, 42:03).
Carolyn Collins agrees that pastrami is an “American thing” (Appendix E, 33:18), and something she didn’t encounter before visiting America. However, she feels that it is similar to salt beef, which is pickled brisket (Appendix E, 33:18) and which she prefers.

In New York, while pastrami is readily available as a deli meat, it does not seem to have been prepared in a traditional domestic kitchen. Lou Marder can never remember eating pastrami in his grandparents’ home (Appendix H, 24:08). Fran Kolin offered an interesting insight into the history and development of pastrami, opining “I couldn’t tell you whether it started here but . . . it seems to me that they must have come up with something, some idea . . . from the old country” (Appendix F, 34:51). Her husband Bobby explained:

You would look at the Lower East Side of Manhattan and say ‘that’s where the Jews are’. But on every block . . . when the Jews started coming over and settled on the East Side, each one would have their own synagogue . . . and the congregation of their own town. Such as if they came from Warsaw then you would have this synagogue. They would find each other. . . . There would be the synagogue and how did they prepare . . . the pastrami there. On the next block or maybe on the same block, how it was prepared in Vienna and, let's face it there, that the concentration of population of the Lower East Side was . . . the greatest population of . . . anywhere in the world in history. So . . . everything melded together and while somebody used this much garlic and somebody used that much pepper . . . when somebody opened up a delicatessen on that block they would make, they would prepare it for their, for the customers that were there (Appendix F, 32:41).

4.10.2 Delicatessen Menus

Russ & Daughters was the only delicatessen not to include pastrami on its menu.

4.10.3 Recipe Collections

*Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne* includes a recipe for “Pickle Fleish- recette d’André Mathieu” (Appendix O) which is very similar in both ingredients and process to that of ‘Beckelfleisch’ in Freddy Raphaël’s collection (2005, p.70). *Beckelfleisch* is also a component in Raphaël’s *Choucroute à la Juive*, as well as dürrfleisch which is described as smoked beef (“viande de boeuf fumée) (2005, p. 72). Françoise Klein’s recipe for choucroute calls for slices of “‘Pikel” or sliced pastrami” (Appendix Q). Yet another variant on pickled/smoked meat, as mentioned in the discussion of pastrami in Chapter Two, is *homen*. Throughout extensive research on
Ashkenazi cuisine, I encountered this term only twice; in Freddy Raphaël’s work (2005, p. 24) and in David Schnée’s memoir (2021, pp. 77-79), although a difference in spelling was evident. Extensive online searches yielding nothing, I asked David whether homen/haumen is the same meat. He confirmed that it is a smoked beef which garnishes sauerkraut on the feast of Purim in Alsace. David didn’t feel that homen is similar to pastrami as it is smoked, specifying salt beef as being closer (“Je ne pense pas que le pastrami soit similaire; pour ce que j’en connais le pastrami est une viande salée et non fumée; peut être que le bickel de boeuf (viande de boeuf salée au salpêtre) se rapproche plus du pastrami?” (Appendix L). David also listed the traditional charcuterie consumed by the Jewish Alsatian community as including beckelfleisch, and derfleisch (see above for dürrfleisch).

4.11 Other Relevant Data

4.11.1 Other Quintessential Ashkenazi dishes.
A range of other foods/dishes were identified by interviewees as being quintessential in the Ashkenazi tradition. Tzimmes, kugel, knishes, tongue, kishke, kasha varnishkes and latkes were all popular responses. However, for the purposes of this research, only those dishes with an apparent link to medieval Jewish settlement in the Ashkenaz valley between France and Germany were considered.

4.11.2 The Importance of New York Delicatessens to Ashkenazi Food Culture
To gain an insight into the role that New York Jewish delicatessens play in Ashkenazi food culture and the existence of an Alsatian legacy in the food they provide, interviewees from New York were asked about their experience of these delis. The general consensus was that the delis provide a service in supplying cured meats that are too labour intensive to be prepared at home, but are too expensive to be popular dining choices for the Jewish community. A further consideration was the detrimental health implications from consuming too much delicatessen food. Karen Marder opined “We will eat there, but it’s not like a part of the day-to-day diet. I think that most people know that food is not good for you. It’s so high in salt, it’s so much meat” (Appendix C, 15:35). Karen added that her family has always had, and continue to have, Jewish deli meats for Hanukkah, despite the expense (Appendix C, 06:49). Bobby and Fran Kolin agreed with both the health and financial considerations, with Bobby adding that
Jewish delis are in decline: “I would say in New York City maybe you would have 15 or 18 in the entire city, whereas it used to be the neighbourhood restaurant” (Appendix F, 40:12). Lou Marder concurred, terming the delis “a dying breed” (Appendix H, 28:24). Another factor that arose was the attraction of the delis for tourists. Celia Vimont remarked “You go to Katz’s deli even now during the pandemic, there’s a line out of the door. It’s always tourists” (Appendix G, 12:54). Elaine Lavine felt similarly; “Some of the delis are almost tourist destinations. And I think it’s just about sampling what is considered New York typical food, rather than the Ashkenazi tradition” (Appendix I, 19:37).

Despite the issues mentioned above, all participants had purchased some food from delis in the recent past, including chicken soup, chopped liver and pastrami, with some having a custom of buying traditional foods for the various Jewish festivals from the delicatessen. Elaine Lavine summed up the general feeling around the New York Jewish deli towards the end of her oral history interview: “When I go I do feel an awareness of a tradition and I think many of my friends, at least my contemporaries do, but I’m not sure that that awareness is carrying over into the younger generations” (Appendix I, 19:37).
Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction
This chapter will discuss and compare the findings from my primary and secondary research. The findings will be considered through the lens of the four sub-research questions outlined in Chapter One and will provide the necessary evidence that medieval Jewish migration to the Alsace region contributed to the evolution of a distinct Ashkenazi cuisine in Eastern Europe and modern America, as proposed in the main research question.

5.2 How did a distinct Ashkenazi cuisine develop in Alsace after Jewish migration to the region in the medieval period?

5.2.1 Geographical Considerations
As detailed in Chapter Two, the main historians of Jewish food (namely Nathan, Roden and Marks) agree that the term Ashkenazi stems from the area of the Rhine valley. Alsace’s turbulent history has seen it governed politically by both France and Germany during different historical periods. The histories of the region by Eckhardt and Blumenthal testify that it was part of German lands between 870 and 1648. Hence, Claudia Roden’s assertion that Ashkenazi culture “was born in the Middle Ages in Western Europe, and most particularly Germany” (1996, p.15) is accurate to the Alsace region. Perhaps the greatest affirmation of the link between Ashkenazi food traditions and Alsace comes in Gil Mark’s observation that “Alsatian Jewish cuisine, lacking the Slavic influences of Eastern Europe, is closer to the original Ashkenazic fare” (1996, p. 116).

5.2.2 Chopped Liver/Foie Gras/Geese
Both primary and secondary sources verified that chopped liver originated in the Alsace region, beginning as a consequence of the lucrative foie gras cottage industry, the Jews having learned the practice of gavage during their enslavement in Egypt. Classed by Michael Wex as one of the oldest Jewish dishes still in existence (2016), the original chopped liver was from geese, but the intense cooking required to bring the dish in line with Kashrut requirements rendered the meat inedible (Nathan, 2011; Marks, 1996). Oral history interviews in my primary research verified that chicken liver is the most popular choice for the dish today, and that the original
Alsatian practice of adding chopped egg, onion and *schmaltz* to the dish (as detailed in Joan Nathan’s research) persists (Appendix R). Although none of the oral history interviewees listed goose as a traditional Ashkenazi dish, all the Alsatian participants stressed the importance of goose fat to the cookery of the region. Secondary sources also identified that rendered goose fat was used by Alsatian Jews as a replacement for the oil used by Jewish communities in the Mediterranean regions (Marks, 1996; Wex, 2016; Roden, 1996), with Claudia Roden drawing links between its use in the Rhineland and Eastern Europe (1996).

### 5.2.3 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls (Kneidlach)

While chicken soup in itself is not distinctly associated with Alsace, the French practice of the *pot-au-feu* was identified by Marks (1996), Raphaël (2005) and Nathan (2010) as being traditional, with the latter being served Alsatian *pot-au-feu* as part of a Sabbath meal. In his correspondence, David Schnée identified *matseknepfelich* (matzah balls) as traditionally Alsatian due to their inclusion with *pot-au-feu*. *Livre Cuisine Marie-Ann* had two different recipes for matzah balls, one including goose fat, demonstrating their importance in the Alsatian Jewish kitchen. While a variety of terms for matzah dumplings were used in both primary and secondary texts, there is no doubt that the Yiddish *knaidl* stems from the German *knöde*, or dumpling (Roden, 1996). Thus, it can be deduced that chicken soup with matzah balls developed from an amalgam of French and German traditions in the Alsace region, adapted to the Jewish dietary laws.

### 5.2.4 Challah/Barches

Cooper (1993), Marks (1996), Wex (2016) and Myers (2019) all agree that the bread named *barches* originated in Germany, the name stemming from a mix of the Yiddish word for blessings and the German word for braid. Later taking the biblical name challah, *barches* remained in its original form in Alsace (Cooper, 1993), suggesting that the region was responsible for its development as an Ashkenazi staple at the Sabbath table.

### 5.2.5 Gefilte Fish/Carp

Both Roden (1996) and Marks (1996) agree that *gefilte fish* originated in Germany in the Middle Ages. Marks clarifies the etymology of the word *gefilte* as stemming from the German *gefullte*, meaning stuffed. Originally made with pike that were plentiful in the Rhine, the introduction of carp to Germany and France by Jewish merchants returning from trading in the
east signalled a change in the main component of the dish (Marks 1996; Nathan, 2010). Indeed, such was the popularity of carp that a variant of *gefilte fish, Carpe à la Juive* became particularly associated with the Alsace region (Marks 1996; Raphaël 2005; Nathan 2010; Appendix K). My primary research uncovered different variants of this, *with Livre Cuisine Marie Anne* listing a recipe for “*Carpe à la Yete*” or “*fish à la Yide*” (Appendix M) with David Schnée also referring to *Yidefish* (Appendix L), while Freddy Raphaël’s alternative term for the dish is “*Jedisch Fish*”. The common denominator is that all these dishes are associated with carp and are specific to the Jewish community in the medieval period in Alsace.

### 5.2.6 Herring

Raphaël (2005) specifies the eating of smoked or pickled herring as a tradition for Jews in the Alsace region for particular festivals. Jean-Pierre Lambert also indicated that the practice of salting herring became popular in Germany through movement from Alsace. Significantly, Marks (2010) notes that while the process of *gibbling* originated in Holland, it was the Jewish merchants in Germany, Alsace and beyond who were influential in trading the fish. The traditional Alsatian recipe collections of both Françoise Klein and Freddy Raphaël included herring salad.

### 5.2.7 Cholent

There seems little doubt that this slow-cooked Sabbath stew originated in France, the word originating in the French “*chaud*” (hot) and “*lent*” (long). Most significantly, both John Cooper (1993) and Claudia Roden (1996) trace its journey to Alsace to 1394 with Jews expelled from the South of France, specifically the Languedoc region, the home of cassoulet. Jean-Pierre Lambert also considers cholent to be the “Jewish cassoulet” (Appendix J), the Alsatian Jews adapting the recipe to use beef brisket which was slow-cooked over Friday night to provide a hot meal on the Sabbath.

### 5.2.8 Choucroute

*Choucroute Garnie* is an Alsatian dish which was adapted by the Jewish community in accordance with their dietary laws, replacing pork meat with beef, duck and goose. Joan Nathan relates its origin to *cholent* with the addition of the pickled cabbage popular in Germany (1989), while Freddy Raphaël identifies it as a traditional Alsatian Sabbath meal. This was echoed by the Alsatian interviewees, and also reflected in the recipe collections, with “*Choucroute à
I’Ancienne” containing goose meat, and “Choucroute à la Juive” using goose fat in the preparation, a practice also specified by David Schnée. This also reflects the historic importance of geese to the Alsatian Jewish kitchen as discussed above.

5.2.9 Pastrami

One of the most intriguing findings of this research has been the similarities between pastrami, which is reputed to have originated in Romania, and Alsatian pickelfleisch, and this will be further examined below. However, in terms of Alsatian tradition, David Sax attributes the practice of pickling meat to medieval Germany (2009), while Claudia Roden specifies Alsace as being renowned for Jewish charcuterie (1996). Jean-Pierre Lambert described “poeckel fleisch” as “Jewish ham” (Appendix K). Mireille Israel made the interesting comment that “In Alsace it’s pickelfleisch. In the other parts of the world it’s very often pastrami” (Appendix A, 03:07). The Alsatian recipe collections from my primary research included pickelfleisch, beckelfleisch, and dürrfleisch, all variants on the same theme and used as components of choucroute, with Françoise Klein’s English translation of her family’s traditional recipe specifying slices of “pikel”, or sliced pastrami” (Appendix Q). The connection, therefore, seems clear. Françoise also forwarded a very interesting article on the Alsatian origins of pastrami, with pickelfleisch cited as its cousin (Soehlten, 2014). In the final week of this research, a feature on France’s i24 News station also claimed pastrami originated in Alsace, in this case referring to pickelfleisch as the older brother (Valérie Abecassis Culture, 2021). In addition to this evidence, what was of particular significance to my research was Freddy Raphaël’s reference to a smoked beef that he called homen. David Schnée also included homen (haumen) in his memoir (2021). David felt that it was more similar to pickled beef than pastrami as he understood pastrami to be “une viande salée et non fumée” (Appendix L), salted but unsmoked. However, pastrami is identified as being different from corned beef precisely due to the fact that it is smoked. Together with the Alsatian claims detailed in my primary research, this provides compelling evidence that pastrami is indeed a derivative of Alsatian pickelfleisch.

5.3 What dishes with historical links to the Alsace region constitute the current interpretation of quintessentially Ashkenazi Jewish food?

From my secondary research, eight Jewish dishes were chosen as having particular historic relevance to the Alsace region since the Middle Ages. My primary research centred on
examining recipe collections, New York delicatessen menus, and oral history testimonies from the Ashkenazi community in Alsace, Ireland and New York City for evidence of the existence and adaptation of these dishes through a variety of migrant destinations.

5.3.1 Chopped Liver/Geese
Almost all interviewees agreed that chopped liver was an Ashkenazi staple. While it did not feature in recipe collections, goose fat and its importance were mentioned by the Alsatian participants. All seven New York delicatessen menus offered chopped liver. This demonstrates the status of chopped liver as a quintessentially Ashkenazi dish.

5.3.2 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls (Kneidlach)
All the oral history interviewees from the Ashkenazi tradition in Ireland and New York spoke about chicken soup and matzah balls. Alsatian participants referred to pot-au-feu and either matzah balls or matseknepfleisch, the Alsatian spelling for the dumplings. One Alsatian recipe collection, Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne, contained two different recipes for the latter. All seven delicatessen menus also included chicken soup. It is clear from this that the primary source evidence corroborates my secondary research, affirming that chicken soup (formerly pot-au-feu in Alsace) and matzah balls are quintessential components of what is considered to be typical Ashkenazi food.

5.3.3 Challah (Barches)
While challah was mentioned in most of the oral history interviews, it was not elaborated on. Only one delicatessen menu offered it for sale, and Freddy Raphaël was alone in providing a recipe for ‘Berchés’ in his collection (2005). However, my secondary research detailed how the Alsatian/German bread had taken on the biblical term challah as it migrated east and given that all the interviewees agreed that it is a staple on the Friday night dinner table, it can be considered a quintessential Ashkenazi food.

5.3.4 Gefilte Fish and Carp
As detailed in Chapter Four, all interviewees considered gefilte fish a traditional Ashkenazi dish and most respondents specified carp as the fish of choice for the recipe. Two respondents told stories of live carp being kept in bathtubs, a tradition that became popular in inland regions
to the east. Six of the seven New York delicatessen menus listed *gefilte fish*. Hence, it can also be considered a quintessential Ashkenazi dish.

5.3.5 Herring

While only three of the seven delicatessens under scrutiny offered herring on their menu, the majority of interviewees felt that it was an important part of Ashkenazi food tradition, specifically chopped herring, made with salted herring, or pickled and *schmaltz herring*. Of particular interest was Lynn Jackson’s comment that “You wouldn’t go into a Jewish house when I was growing up without being offered some chopped herring” (Appendix B, 39:11) and also Carolyn Collins’ remembrance of her grandfather eating *schmaltz herring* for breakfast. New York respondents concurred that herring is an important inclusion on the list of Ashkenazi foods. While preserving herring was important for the diet of the general populace in medieval Europe, pickled herring remains a favourite in Ashkenazi culinary tradition.

5.3.6 Cholent

From my primary research, *cholent* is certainly an Ashkenazi tradition for Shabbat, but it is mainly a dish that is produced at home, rather than something commercially available, with only one of the delicatessens offering it on their menu. Fran Kolin’s opinion that the dish is “the thing that stands out” (Appendix F, 15:54) and that “almost all of the ingredients are optional” (Appendix F, 16:59) are synoptic of the views of the majority of interviewees. Whether they loved the dish or hated it, all agreed that it was a traditional part of Ashkenazi cuisine that has been passed down through the generations.

5.3.7 Choucroute

The dish of *choucroute garnie* was spoken about by the Alsatian interviewees only. However, the French word *choucroute* translates to sauerkraut in German, and four of the seven delicatessens included sauerkraut on their menu. Arlene Marder in particular saw sauerkraut as being important in the Ashkenazi tradition in terms of preserving vegetables before refrigeration, so while the term ‘choucroute’ may not be familiar to Ashkenazi Jews worldwide, sauerkraut is certainly recognisable as a component in their food culture and tradition, although not limited to Jewish cuisine.
5.3.8 Pastrami

Pastrami is the most contentious of the quintessential Ashkenazi foods. As discussed above, its origins seem to be in the pickelfleisch of Alsace. Irish interviewees viewed it as an American invention. Participants from New York felt it was traditional to their recent family history, insofar as buying deli meats is a common practice, particularly for religious holidays. This is reflected in the fact that only one of the delicatessens under scrutiny did not offer pastrami. However, there was no collective memory of grandparents cooking pastrami, or any family tradition of making it in the domestic sphere. Hence, while there is no doubt pastrami is considered an Ashkenazi favourite, it seems to have originated in the Alsace region and undergone adaptation in Eastern Europe and in America. It can be said that pickelfleisch and its variants, bekelfleisch, dürrfleisch, and homen, were the forerunners of pickle meat and salt beef, which are in turn precursors of what is now known as pastrami, and therefore pastrami is the product of centuries of tradition in Ashkenazi communities beginning in medieval Alsace.

5.4 What links can be identified between the Alsace tradition and the Ashkenazi culinary practices that evolved in Eastern Europe?

Having determined the quintessential Ashkenazi foods that can be traced back to the Alsace region, it was then important to examine evidence of how these dishes were adapted after migration to Eastern Europe.

5.4.1 Chopped Liver/Geese

As discussed in Chapter Two and above, chopped liver originated in Alsace as part of the foie gras industry (Marks, 1996; Nathan, 2011). The dish adapted to use chicken livers due to the difficulty of kashering (making kosher) the goose liver due to its size. All the oral history interviewees of Eastern European descent spoke about chicken liver, cooked thoroughly and mixed with hard-boiled egg and onions. Carolyn Collins indicated a preference for beef liver (Appendix E), while Lynn Jackson acknowledges that calves’ liver was quite often used (Appendix B). As Lynn’s family came from Russia and Carolyn’s from Poland, it could be that this is an Irish variation given the beef industry here in the past, and assuming the presence of a kosher butcher in the Dublin community.
Using goose fat as *schmaltz* is identified by Roden (1996) as being prevalent in Eastern Europe after migration, with Wex (2016) noting that the fat would be stored in jars to last the year after the slaughter of the goose in the winter. One can assume that in the shtetls of Eastern Europe a goose was the equivalent of a pig to the Irish tenant farmer of the 19th and early 20th century; it was raised through the year and when slaughtered every part of the animal was either used or preserved. Wex also sees the transition to chicken *schmaltz* as occurring only as recently as the 20th century, due to “economics and convenience” (2016). Hence, both chopped liver and the use of goose fat underwent some adaptation as the practice travelled eastwards with migrating Ashkenazi Jews.

5.4.2 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls (Kneidlach)

Lynn Jackson has memories of her Yiddish speaking grandmother cooking chicken soup from midweek, cooling it in a cold larder, and removing the fat. The chicken used was a boiling fowl, a hen that had no more economic value as it had finished laying (Appendix B). Carolyn Collins has the same tradition, even though both families originate in different parts of Eastern Europe (Appendix E). Reflecting on the importance of chicken soup in his family tradition, Lou Marder mused that although his grandparents were from different families from Eastern Europe they all had the same upbringing – chicken soup for Friday night dinner, and they in turn passed this down to the next generation. He noted that “the style is pretty much like we would have it now” (Appendix H, 02:27). This was echoed by Celia Vimont who sees matzah ball soup as symbolic of every holiday and every Shabbat (Appendix G). Beginning life in Alsace as a variant of *pot-au-feu*, this Ashkenazi favourite has travelled through numerous generations and thousands of miles to remain on Shabbat tables even in the present day.

5.4.3 Challah (Barches)

All my secondary sources on challah (Cooper, 1993; Marks, 1996; Wex, 2016; Myers, 2019) confirm that the plaited bread originally known in Alsace as *berches* or *barches* travelled “eastward, becoming the most prevalent form of Sabbath bread among eastern Europeans” (Marks, 1996). Cooper (1993) specifies that its arrival into Poland and Lithuania was contemporaneous with the migration of German Jews. The bread is so important to Ashkenazi culture that it remains a centrepiece for the Sabbath table, as explained by Lynn Jackson in her interview, proving yet another link between Alsatian and Ashkenazi traditions.
5.4.4 Gefilte Fish and Carp

As previously mentioned, Claudia Roden considers *gefilte fish* to be the most representative of Jewish dishes (1996), an opinion echoed by all the oral history interviewees. Lou Marder’s observation that “it’s a combination of things . . . it’s probably a German word that means something that, over the course of time, has just become the product” (Appendix H, 17:27) seems apposite. As discussed above, the earliest recipes for the dish called for pike (Roden 1996). However, due to the introduction of carp into the Rhine by Jewish traders it soon became “the most popular fish in Europe during the Middle Ages, and the Sabbath fish par excellence for the Jews of Alsace Lorraine” (Nathan, 2010, p. 152). Moving forward in the historical timeline of the Alsatian Jews, Marks notes that “from Alsace to the Balkans, Jews were instrumental in spreading and breeding this newcomer; thus, it became associated with Jewish cuisine” (1996, p. 74). The migration of carp with the Jews is also testified to by the oral history interviewees. Carolyn Collins remembers her grandmother cutting carp into steaks and stuffing with a mixture of ingredients. Both Mireille Israel and Elaine Lavine referred to a traditional practice of carp being bought live at market and kept in a bathtub until ready to use. Jean-Pierre Lambert remarked that carp is still popular in Poland today, having migrated there from Alsace and Germany. Carp is also used for *Carpe à la Juive* as discussed above, this dish being interchanged with *gefilte fish* in the Alsace region. Jean-Pierre Lambert explained that there is an equivalent dish in Polish tradition which uses a sweet sauce, also eaten cold. Hence, the links between another Alsatian tradition and the Ashkenazi practices of Eastern Europe are clear from my secondary and primary research findings.

5.4.5 Herring

What was particularly striking about my primary research on the links between Alsatian and Ashkenazi cuisine was Carolyn Collins’ recollection of her father buying herring at Dublin fish markets to be taken home and prepared by her mother in a process identical to Gil Marks’ description of *gibbling* in the 15th century. Just as the fishermen layered the fresh herring with salt in a barrel, so too did Carolyn’s mother, but in a bucket with a brown paper lid tied with string. Carolyn’s comment that “there was never a year went by that we didn’t have a bucket of herrings underneath the stairs” (Appendix E, 17.37) is more than remarkable for this research, given that this was a process originating in Holland that travelled to Germany and Alsace with Jewish traders, and then onwards to Eastern Europe, where Carolyn’s Polish ancestors kept the tradition going. The adaptation of pickled herring to the ingredients available
further east is evidenced by the addition of sour cream, commonly served with the herring in Ashkenazi communities in New York.

5.4.6 Cholent
As detailed above and in Chapter Two, evidence abounds that the slow cooked Sabbath stew known as cholent originated in France and travelled to Alsace with Jews migrating from the Languedoc region. My primary research verified that cholent later migrated further east, the spelling of the dish altering in the process. Lynn Jackson explained that it can be spelled with the letter ‘t’ at the start, tcholent (the variant that Jean-Pierre Lambert terms as Polish) or in the original manner. Fran Kolin described the recipe she uses as being “straight from the old country” (Appendix F, 15:54) and described how the pot of cholent was sent to the local baker’s oven to cook in the residual heat over Friday night and collected the next day. Recipe collections did not list cholent, but this is not surprising given that, according to my interviewees, “almost all the ingredients are optional” (Appendix F, 16:59) and that this traditional Ashkenazi dish stems from “way before cookbooks were ever invented” (Appendix F, 18:05). Fran Kolin sees it as the food of poor people who put whatever they had into the pot in order to have a warm meal on the Sabbath when they were not permitted to cook. Lou Marder felt that the concept of the dish stemmed from an idea of getting around “laws of hundreds of years ago” (Appendix H, 11:14). As time passed, the beans that were added to the dish in France and Alsace were replaced by potatoes, and the vegetables used were those available in the particular area of Eastern Europe. Whatever the composition, the principle behind the dish remains the same. Jean-Pierre Lambert sees cholent as having an amazing history, having travelled from France in the Middle Ages to Poland and Russia and on to America. Acknowledged as an Ashkenazi tradition by all my interviewees of Eastern European descent, there is no doubt that cholent travelled there from France via Alsace to be passed down through generations.

5.4.7 Choucroute
Choucroute was spoken about by the Alsatian interviewees but not those of Eastern European descent. However, Arlene Marder spoke about the importance of pickling, considering it to be “a major Jewish thing” (Appendix H, 31:43). Arlene considered sauerkraut as a preserved vegetable, important before refrigeration was developed. Hence, while there is no evidence that choucroute migrated to Eastern Europe, the pickling process was an important part of
Ashkenazi culinary tradition and sauerkraut remains a popular side dish in Poland, Russia and in America.

### 5.4.8 Pastrami

From the beginning, I was determined to investigate Claudia Roden’s contention that pastrami is an invention of the American deli which stands in contrast to the commonly held belief that the recipe was the gift of a Romanian to Lithuanian Jewish immigrant Sussman Volk. As such, I was interested in the experience of the oral history interviewees of Eastern European descent. Lynn Jackson and Carolyn Collins both agreed with Roden’s view. It was particularly interesting to hear about the cured meat that was prevalent in each of their traditions, *pickle meat* and salt beef. As discussed above, both of these meats can be linked back to the Alsatian *pickelfleisch*. Chapter Two gives a detailed discussion of Michael Wex’s view of pastrami as a somewhat vague combination of ingredients and process, and one point he makes is particularly relevant to my findings. Wex sees neither pastrami nor corned beef as traditional Ashkenazi foods, opining that “corned beef, pastrami’s main rival . . . was as unfamiliar to the mass of East European immigrants as the Romanian pastrami that was often sold alongside it” (2016). Yet pastrami has become synonymous with American Jewish delicatessen culture and tradition. How did this happen? During my primary research, Bobby and Fran Kolin provided the most credible explanation. Fran considers that pastrami is based on an “idea . . . from the old country” (Appendix F, 34:51) and that within the migrant community in the Lower East Side, national and even regional enclaves of Jewish communities developed. Dependent on the country or city of origin, the cured meat would be prepared in a slightly different manner, and when delicatessens eventually opened, they prepared a meat that would appeal to all their customers. That meat became known as pastrami, but it is really an amalgam of the variety of cured meats that were developed in Eastern Europe in the style and tradition of Alsatian *pickelfleisch*. Therefore, in this sense, pastrami can be said to have links to the Alsace tradition and the Ashkenazi culinary practices that evolved in eastern Europe as a relatively modern fusion of a ‘pickled’ or cured brisket.
5.5 What evidence can be found in contemporary Jewish food culture in America to support the existence of an Alsatian legacy?

5.5.1 Chopped Liver/Geese
Michael Wex’s conjecture that chopped liver is one of the oldest Jewish dishes still being eaten has already been cited, and it is supported in the responses of the New York interviewees. Chopped liver is still a valued addition to the Sabbath or holiday table, more often being bought than made at home. Its popularity is attested by its inclusion on all seven New York delicatessen menus. As discussed above, chopped liver can be traced back to the Alsace region. Geese and goose fat were not mentioned by any of the New York interviewees or on the menus so this is one aspect of Alsatian tradition that has not crossed the Atlantic, chicken *schmaltz* and vegetable oil having replaced goose fat. However, chopped liver is certainly part of the Alsatian legacy evident in Jewish food culture in America.

5.5.2 Chicken Soup with Matzah Balls
Chicken and chicken soup with matzah balls seem to be the most popular choice for Friday night dinner amongst the New York Jewish community. All of the interviewees alluded to it, and all the delicatessen menus examined included it. Four menus also included ‘Chicken in the Pot’. As discussed above, both of these dishes stem back to the tradition of *pot-au-feu* in the Alsace region in the Middle Ages. Hence, both provide evidence of an Alsatian legacy in the food culture of the New York City Jewish community.

5.5.3 Challah (Barches)
The development of challah has been discussed above. The oral history interviews confirmed that it remains a staple at Sabbath dinner and is more often bought than made. As challah began in the Alsatian region as the bread known as *barches*, it can also be considered a legacy from Alsace in the food culture of Jewish Americans.

5.5.4 Gefilte Fish and Carp
Given that all the oral history interviewees considered *gefilte fish* to be a quintessential Ashkenazi dish, and that six of the seven delicatessen menus offer it, it is beyond doubt that it is part of American Jewish food culture. As it seems to be a dish that is bought rather than
made, and has become readily available commercially in a long-life jarred format, it is difficult to ascertain whether carp is still the fish of choice. However, as discussed above, *gefilte fish* can be traced back to the Alsace region in the Middle Ages, and its ongoing popularity in American Jewish food culture is evidence of an Alsatian legacy.

### 5.5.5. Herring

Rated by the oral history interviewees in New York as an important Ashkenazi dish, herring provides another example of an Alsatian legacy in Jewish food culture. The influence of Eastern Europe can be seen in the accompaniments to the dish, with the two most popular being a sour cream source and a wine (vinegar) sauce. Three of the seven delicatessens offered herring on their menu, with Russ & Daughters specialising as an ‘appetising’ deli, one which sells foods to be eaten with bagels, such as smoked and cured fish and salads. Interestingly, the history of the store describes how the founder, Joel Russ, a Polish immigrant started the business in 1907 “selling schmaltz herring out of a barrel to the throngs of Eastern European Jews on the Lower East Side” (Russ & Daughters, 2021). As discussed earlier, herring began being traded by German Jews in the Middle Ages and remains an important food among Alsatian Jews, having also travelled to Eastern Europe with migrants from the area, and on to New York City where it plays a significant part in Jewish food culture.

### 5.5.6 Cholent

While some of the interviewees from New York expressed dislike for the dish, there was consensus that *cholent* is a traditional Ashkenazi dish, associated in modern America as being more a preserve of orthodox and religiously observant Jews. This perhaps explains why only one of the seven delicatessens lists it on its menu. It may be that cholent will become less well known in the future; however, it is still prized by members of the New York Jewish community as evidenced by Fran Kolin’s description of it as a standout dish. The Alsatian origins of *cholent* have been documented above, and for as long as it remains an important part of Jewish food culture in America it will contribute to the legacy from medieval Alsace.

### 5.5.7 Choucroute

As detailed above, *choucroute* was discussed by the Alsatian interviewees alone. However, four of the seven New York delicatessen menus included sauerkraut, indicating that it plays a part in American Jewish food culture and contributes to the existence of an Alsatian legacy.
5.5.8 Pastrami

In Chapter Two I quote Ted Merwin’s view that a pastrami sandwich is more emblematic of New York City than an apple. As discussed previously, Claudia Roden believes that pastrami is one of the greatest inventions of the American deli, her cynicism about its origin not detracting from its success as an iconic and much-loved product. All of the interviewees from New York City mentioned pastrami and acknowledged it as a delicatessen favourite, something that is bought for holidays and special occasions, but not a dish that would have been traditionally prepared at home. The analysis of delicatessen menus proves pastrami’s popularity in contemporary Jewish food culture, with six of the seven menus including it. As discussed at length above, pastrami can be traced back to the pickelfleisch and homen of the Alsace region, having gone through name changes as they migrated with the Jewish community to Eastern Europe and across the Atlantic. Hence, the Alsatian legacy to contemporary American Jewish food culture is very much evident in pastrami.
Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will draw conclusions from my primary and secondary research to address my main research question as to the existence of evidence that medieval Jewish migration to the Alsace region contributed to the evolution of a distinct Ashkenazi cuisine in Eastern Europe and modern America. It will also include suggestions and recommendations for further research in this field.

6.2 Conclusion

Having examined the history of the Jewish people in Europe, it is indisputable that displacement and migration have been hallmarks of their shared experience for centuries. Following the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Jewish diaspora spread to myriad countries around the world. However, this research has focused on those who travelled first to the South of France and then to what is now the eastern border of France, the Alsace region, during the time of the First Crusade. An important consideration has been the changing territorial claims on this region. While Alsace is now governed by France, at the time of Jewish settlement in the Middle Ages it was under Germanic control. It should also be remembered that Germany was not unified as a country until 1871, so for much of the medieval and Early Modern era Alsace was under the protectorate of the Holy Roman Empire, which extended through the area now known as Germany and beyond. Hence, as evidenced in my research, many of the dishes under scrutiny have both German and French etymology. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the Yiddish language is a mixture of Hebrew and German, originating in the Ashkenaz Valley of the Rhineland, the area known today as Western Germany and Eastern France, incorporating Alsace.

Settling in the Alsace region brought the Jewish migrants far from Mediterranean staples that they had access to in the South of France. Olive oil, the kosher fat that they depended on, was not widely available and was expensive. Hence, a new source of fat for cooking had to be found. As explained in Chapter Two, the Jews had learned the practice of gavage during their enslavement in Egypt and had continued this after migration to France. Alsatian Jews in particular were considered experts in the production of foie gras. Hence, goose fat became a
substitute for olive oil, and the traditional Ashkenazi dish of chopped liver developed in Alsace, originally utilising goose liver but later changing to chicken liver as an easier product to kasher (make kosher). The French tradition of *pot-au-feu* melded with the Jewish propensity for soup-making which can be traced back to the Old Testament. Hens that had finished laying were destined for long, slow cooking to produce both soup and meat for Sabbath dinner, a tradition that is still very much alive as evidenced in both my primary and secondary research. Matzah dates back to biblical times, but matzah balls are an Alsatian/German creation, still referred to as *kneidlach* in Yiddish, stemming from the German for dumpling. As detailed in Chapter Four, the Alsatian Jewish community use the term *matseknepfelich* for these dumplings, which also include goose fat.

Another quintessentially Jewish food, challah, was originally a sweet bread baked for Christian festivals, as described in Chapter Two. It was adapted by Alsatian Jews to become a plaited loaf called *barches*, and travelled eastwards with migration, taking on the Hebrew word for portion, challah. *Gefilte fish* is a dish that began in an effort to feed a family on limited ingredients. Originating from the German word for stuffed, pike from the Rhine was later replaced with carp introduced by Jewish traders. My research has documented the importance of carp, both to Alsatian Jews and those who migrated to Eastern Europe and beyond, with anecdotal evidence of live carp being kept in bathtubs so it would be perfectly fresh. *Carpe à la Juive* is also a dish originating in Alsace that has been adapted as it moved eastwards. The practice of salting herring was developed in Holland but brought to Germany and the Alsace region by Jewish traders. My primary research detailed how one interviewee of Polish descent can remember her mother *gibbling* herring in a bucket in an almost identical fashion to that described by Gil Marks (2010) in his writing on the 15th century Dutch fishermen. Hence, it is clear to see how the preparation and consumption of herring spread from its introduction into Alsace by Jewish traders to Eastern Europe and beyond as the Jewish community migrated.

*Cholent* is a dish that stands testament to the migrating culinary practices of Jews from the South of France. It is also a simple but effective means of abiding by the religious prohibition of cooking on the Sabbath. Both my primary and secondary research confirmed that it is a derivative of the French bean stew, *cassoulet*, and that it travelled to Alsace with Jews migrating from the Languedoc region. Taking its name from an amalgam of the French words for hot and slow, *cholent* could contain whatever meat and vegetables were available, and was
either cooked over a dying fire or in the residual heat of a communal baker’s oven, providing a warm lunch meal for the Sabbath. While Joan Nathan views the Alsatian classic of *Choucroute Garnie* as a variant of this Sabbath slow cooking, my research did not reveal any evidence that it is considered a traditional Ashkenazi dish. However, sauerkraut, the pickled cabbage that forms the basis of the dish, was brought up in my primary research and is a legacy of the Alsatian/German practice of pickling vegetables to preserve them in the era before refrigeration, a practice that extended eastwards with Jewish migration. Pickling was not reserved for vegetables alone.

A major finding of this research has been the links between pastrami and the *pickelfleisch* and *homen* that originated in Alsace. Meat was a relative luxury in the Middle Ages, and with the additional requirement of kosher butchering for Jewish consumers the practice arose of using as much of the animal as was permitted under Kashrut law, and also preserving the meat for later use. *Pickelfleisch*, literally pickled meat, was the solution. Usually using brisket, the smoked version of this, *homen*, is specific to the Alsace region. It was particularly significant for my primary research to discover that the Russian variant of this was known in English as *pickle meat*, a direct translation of the Alsatian original. The salt beef explained to me by an interviewee of Polish descent was described as pickled brisket, adding further to the evidence of an Alsatian legacy in Eastern European Ashkenazi tradition.

Another facet of this research has been the links with the Ashkenazi diaspora in America, specifically New York City as it was the locus of Jewish immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries. Having determined that the eight foods discussed above were considered quintessential Ashkenazi dishes originating or developing in Alsace, it remained to be seen if they still form part of the food culture of the New York Jewish community that has descended from Eastern European immigrants. My primary research interviews and analysis of delicatessen menus revealed that these dishes, with the exception of *choucroute*, are still very much part of Jewish tradition - even if not consumed on a regular basis, they are considered part of Ashkenazi heritage. The problematic nature of the origins of pastrami and the question of whether it was an American invention was also further clarified during my primary research. Having determined that the selection of cured meats specific to the different Jewish communities of Eastern Europe were all derivatives of *pickelfleisch*, one of my New York interviewees offered an insightful and apposite theory. Brought up on the Lower East Side in
a family who owned two delicatessens, Bobby Kolin explained that while the area was the main location for Ashkenazi Jewish settlement, national and regional enclaves developed and within these the variants of cured beef most familiar to the inhabitants were produced and eventually sold in delicatessens. To ensure customer satisfaction and a wide consumer base these variants melded into what is now known as pastrami, brisket which is pickled and smoked in a process identical to the variant of Alsatian pickelfleisch, known as homen. Hence, while the term pastrami may be an American invention, to use Claudia Roden’s words, the picked and smoked brisket that constitutes the product began in Alsace centuries before European knowledge of America even existed.

In conclusion, my research has centred on the question of whether evidence can be found that medieval Jewish migration to the Alsace region contributed to the evolution of a distinct Ashkenazi cuisine in Eastern Europe and modern America. The findings from both my primary and secondary research have demonstrated not only that such evidence exists, but can be used to make a compelling and irrefutable case to dispel the widely held belief that Ashkenazi cuisine originated in Eastern Europe. This thesis has proven that the true roots of Ashkenazi food culture lie in the Alsace region, and the legacy of the medieval practices developed there can be seen not only in the Jewish food of Eastern Europe but also in the Ashkenazi food culture of modern America.

6.3 Recommendations

The international population of Jews is estimated at over 14.7 million people, with over 53% living outside Israel (‘Vital Statistics’, 2021). Hence, the scope of this research has been limited to the history and development of Ashkenazi food culture, and has made no reference to Sephardic, Mizrahi, or the other Jewish traditions outside of Europe. A possible area of further research might look at the impact migration from Alsace had on these traditions, particularly in Italy. Due to my focus on Alsace, the list of quintessential Ashkenazi foods was solely based on those that my secondary research had linked back to the region. However, there are many more Ashkenazi staples that were identified in my primary research and that would merit research into their origins and development, particularly the sausage called kishke which is popular among the New York Ashkenazi community.
Some areas of interest that arose through conversations for the oral history interviews might also offer interesting research possibilities. The suggestion was made that Ashkenazi culture in France is being eclipsed by Sephardic traditions, the impossibility of sourcing a fresh carp for Passover in Paris being cited as an example, so the causes and consequences of this development could be investigated. Across the Atlantic, the decline of the Jewish deli has already been documented in some of the texts used for secondary research on this topic. However, the oral history interviews revealed that within the Jewish community itself there is a concern about both the expense of deli food and the health risks associated with it. A related issue that was suggested is the amount of meat involved, a consideration for the environment-conscious consumer. Research on public perception of the nature of deli foods from both the Jewish and non-Jewish community would make an interesting read and perhaps lead to change in practices that might halt the decline of these iconic establishments. Closer to home, the interviews with two members of the Dublin Ashkenazi community revealed a wealth of information, not least the difficulty associated with keeping kosher in Ireland. Carolyn Collins explained how she has to kasher chicken livers to continue the tradition of making chopped liver for Friday night dinner, and in a follow-up conversation after the interview process, I discovered that the kosher shop that both ladies relied on had closed before Passover, causing huge difficulties in sourcing food for this very important Jewish festival. As modern life becomes increasingly secular, it is important to document and preserve traditional practices for the historical record, and a study of the development of Jewish food culture in Ireland would be a useful and worthwhile addition to the small canon of research available on Irish Jewish history.
References:


Appendix A – Edited Interview with Mireille Israel (17th February 2021)

Mireille Israel 0:25
Okay. You have, I think you have . . . in connection with David Schnée.

Angela Hanratty 0:32
He sent me his book. I have that now.

Mireille Israel 0:35
He sent me already . . . it's quite new . . . very new and it's very interesting about one example of an Alsatian family . . . Really, it's very, very interesting. And it's not exactly the same subject . . . I read with a lot of interest this one in English . . . Falafel Nation. It's more about Israel but it's very interesting to see the way the Israeli kitchen . . . cuisine as a making of national identity in Israel.

Angela Hanratty 1:29
Thank you. And who wrote that?

Mireille Israel 1:40
Yael Raviv. For me it was it was difficult English, but it was very interesting. And she speaks about some things they don't tell you at all, that the first Ashkenazi who flew to Israel after the Second War were very interested by their kitchen, but in Israel nobody wanted them or cooked like them . . . Terrible. I think, it was for them. It was Shoah kitchen. Shoah. It’s of the Shoah. And I was completely surprised because I didn't know at all that. It's very interesting. Really.

Angela Hanratty 2:45
Ok. I'll get that book. Definitely. I wanted, Mimi, to ask you in particular . . . thank you for sending me on your paper. And you mentioned pastrami?

Mireille Israel 2:59
As Pickelfleisch. Yes.
Angela Hanratty  3:03
Would you consider those to be the same thing?

Mireille Israel  3:07
It's just the differences . . . just the matter to cook them. But it's the same piece of meat, smoked meats. One it's in boiled water and the other in the oven. There is not a lot of difference. In Alsace, it's Pickelfleisch. In the other parts of the world it's very often pastrami, for, almost the same. In Paris, pastrami now, it's very, very fashionable from 10 years du pres.

Angela Hanratty  3:57
That's very interesting, because anything that I've read, it says pastrami came from Romania. But Claudia Roden in her book says that pastrami is nearly, you know, an invention of the American deli. You know, that . . . it didn't come from one place but all this difference.

Mireille Israel  4:20
I think it is from Romania. Romania, and via Germany. And after in America,

Angela Hanratty  4:30
via Germany

Mireille Israel  4:32
Yes, yes.

Angela Hanratty  4:37
It's possible then, do you think it's possible pastrami has its roots . . . a long, long time ago pastrami . . . started in Alsace?

Mireille Israel  4:52
I don't know exactly, but I am sure that in Alsace when it was young . . . years ago. We don't speak about pastrami, never, but always pickelfleisch. And I think it, pastrami, I had the first time in Israel. Mais, now there are a lot of places in in Paris where if I find pastrami . . . in a delicatessen you can. And not Jewish restaurants or not Jewish delis . . . in Paris in general
Angela Hanratty 5:33
Yes . . . And the other thing I wanted to ask you, do you see links with what became Eastern European Jewish food? And can you talk to me about that?

Mireille Israel 5:53
Yes. Because there are a lot of Polish people and so on. who come to Alsace. Very often in Germany, but before the Second World War in Alsace. In the middle of the 30 . . . mille cent trente . . . 10 years before the war, the second war. But it was difficult to stay in Germany or they came to Alsace.

Angela Hanratty 7:28
Okay. And do you think further back then, say in the Middle Ages, way back in time when Alsatian people started moving across to Eastern Europe, they would have taken their foods, their cuisine with them?

Mireille Israel 7:49
Yes. You know, my family was Alsatian, but the origins are the Rhine Valley. La Vallé du Rhin. Our family is also, is also from Switzerland. Switzerland and after Alsace, but not from Poland. You know, it's not the same . . . And a lot of Alsatian people are like that, it’s the origin of the family. It's Vallé du Rhin. Rhine Valley . . . we never speak Yiddish. Never . . . But now in Alsace, a lot of grandparents spoke Yiddish, but not the mother of my family.

Angela Hanratty 9:07
Okay. And from Freddy Raphaël’s book . . . a lot of the words for Jewish food . . . it's more like German. You know, some of the names of the food.

Mireille Israel 9:26
Yes. Because Alsatian and German are very close. Our family never spoke Alsatian because during the second war with all the problems . . . nobody spoke French because it was German and nothing else. After the Second War, the Jewish families in Alsace didn't speak German at all because of the war. My, my brother who has died now, was the first Jewish Strasbourg
pupil to learn German as a first language at school. It was really, you know, it was really like that. Germany, though. The world of the food is the same.

**Angela Hanratty 10:40**
Yes. Another one of the questions I had written down. You're an expert on, on Jewish food history . . .

**Mireille Israel 10:55**
I'm not an expert. It's not my first subject. I work about Israeli wines. And the Jewish Alsatian foods, because I am very interested that they survive. That it survives now. This is my idea. It's not finished . . . You know, I am very sure that it's possible to transmit, and to continue. This is my idea. It was this idea, not a melancholic one, you know, and it's, I don't know the word, it reflects an attitude against Israeli people who are, show that Ashkenazi habits died.

**Angela Hanratty 12:10**
Oh, really? That's interesting.

**Mireille Israel 12:11**
In France . . . But you know, in Paris, it's very difficult to have a circle of friends Ashkenaz.

**Angela Hanratty 12:12**
Oh, I didn't know that.

**Mireille Israel 12:37**
Yes. Well now it's very, very difficult. It's not like in London or in the other parts of Europe, it's very difficult. There is a big part of Ashkenazi people who don't practice at all now. A lot in Israel . . . Always, in the way of Sephardic, not Ashkenazi. And this is why it's difficult. I know that because my husband is completely fond of Ashkenazi music, and is a very, very good singer. But now, it is not interesting a lot of people and in Paris, we have a synagogue, an Ashkenazi synagogue but Ashkenazi are . . . The rabbi is but the other people not really. And we are very invested in B'nai B'rith. I don't know if you know, it's a Jewish organisation all over the world from America first. In Paris, we are very, very few Ashkenazi. Very.
**Angela Hanratty 14:21**
I didn't know that.

**Mireille Israel 14:23**
No, and now, as an example, very sad for us. It's impossible to find Siddur with Ashkenazi . . . You know Siddur, what it is? . . . A book of prayers. There is no new prayer book with Ashkenazi . . . it exists in London in English translation, but no more in French. This is a bad sign. And it's why I am very interested to the kitchen . . . the cooking.

**Angela Hanratty 15:16**
To keep the traditional

**Mireille Israel 15:21**
Try to fight for them, for that, that is true.

**Angela Hanratty 15:31**
Let me see what else did I want to ask.

**Mireille Israel 15:35**
Come again with a question about geese.

**Angela Hanratty 15:39**
Yes

**Mireille Israel 15:41**
The fat, the goose fat is very, very important to the Ashkenazi cooking habits; very, very important. Its recipes were with goose fat or canard, now just duck, because now even in Alsace it's difficult to find geese. It's very difficult even in Alsace.

**Angela Hanratty 16:23**
So it's not as important as it was. It's not any more? That's gone?
Mireille Israel  16:32
Very few geese. Always geese fat or duck fat for the kitchen. Because it's not like oil. The result is not the same. We have, we have a cooking group from Colmar but on WhatsApp . . . and there is this discussion about matzah balls, matzah balls with oil, or always fat for me. Only with fat. The young women say 'No, with oil it's okay'. For me it's impossible. It's not the same taste. Really this was a taste in the old times, older cook, older kitchen was with the fats like that. Never oil. In the, les gateaux. In the sweets. Even in the cakes.

Angela Hanratty  17:59
Right. Even in cakes. That's unusual. So where nowadays, where would you get goose fat for cooking? Do you buy it?

Mireille Israel  18:13
Yes. There is kosher or not kosher but it's easy to find it because in the west of France, en Ouest de la France . . . la foie gras is always in fashion and the fats came from there. There was a very important factory of foie gras and so on, 40 kilometres from Strasbourg, but . . . they transported the factory to Israel, and it was a very good success but now it's finished. Because it's not allowed. It's the same problem with foie gras, certainly in America. There are a lot of people who say that it's not good foie gras because the animals are malade, sick, and it's the same in Israel.

Angela Hanratty  19:49
Okay. If you had to say what are the most important Alsatian Jewish foods, what would you say are the very typical foods?

Mireille Israel  20:07
Foie haché

Angela Hanratty  20:19
Chopped liver.
Mireille Israel  20:28
 . . . choucroute, kosher choucroute. Not with pork but with beef. I don't know the word in English, la charcuterie, not meat but pastrami and sausages . . .

Angela Hanratty  20:53
Yes, cured meat.

Mireille Israel  20:54
 . . . was very important for the Jewish people because in the old times it was not expensive and you know, was very important and I know that Freddy Raphaël explained that . . . Do you know the name of Alphonse Levy?

Angela Hanratty  23:31
Yes. The painter.

Mireille Israel  23:57
There are a lot of example, like in his book. And for a lot of people it was the beginning of, of thinking about Alsatian cooking with plates. The plates, and so on. I have another example, but I don't know it in English. It's fish. Carp.

Angela Hanratty  24:20
Yes. Carp

Mireille Israel  24:22
Carp à la Juive. Almost impossible to do an Alsatian recipe of Alsatian carp. It's not gefilte fish. It's another one. This is a good example. It's with the fish in one.

Angela Hanratty  24:45
Yes, the whole fish.
Mireille Israel  24:47
And the carp were in the Rhine, and the recipe is very strange. Because old people put carp in the, not the shower but the baignoire

Angela Hanratty  25:14
The bath

Mireille Israel  25:15
The bath. Not dead but

Angela Hanratty  25:20
Alive

Mireille Israel  25:24
And when they need it for, for Shabbat or for Pesah . . . they killed it and, very important, the blood was important in the recipe of the carp. You put in a little of the blood when you cook the carp . . . And you cook the carp in a pan etc. with the persil, and what we do is very important. When it was finished it was important to drop the blood on the fish, to put in the fridge or to put on the balcony, and the blood and the sauce mixed was, you know, like a jelly. It's impossible without the blood. It's for these reasons that it was said it's impossible to do with frozen fish, and in Paris now it's impossible to make this plate. In Alsace I think that it's possible. In Paris it's finished. I tried to do it two years ago for Pesah and impossible to find the fish.

Angela Hanratty  27:20
That are fresh and alive.

Mireille Israel  27:25
This was typical Alsace, this is a good example. There is a recipe in the Freddy Raphaël book because it was important for Pesah, with matzah meal with mackerels in the recipe. So there are a lot of recipe with matzah meal. A lot of recipes, not only for Pesah, in the Alsatian cooking uses very often the matzah meal.
Angela Hanratty 28:10
And I read that the first industrial matzah production was in Alsace?

Mireille Israel 28:19
Yes. Two. Now there is only one, but you know the business now, it's in good health in this factory, but the Jewish department, it's very, very slow. Because matzah is very good for the health. And they sell a lot of matzah that's not kosher. And just for Pesah there is kosher . . . really, it's not now the first business, the Jewish matzahs.

Angela Hanratty 29:35
So, chopped liver, choucroute garnie, Carpe à la Juive.

Mireille Israel 29:45
Carp. It's a very good example.

Angela Hanratty 29:48
So, you think that they'd be the main Alsatian foods, recipes?

Mireille Israel 29:54
But, you know, really for me? I never know the difference between Europe and East and Alsatian and what I tasted in New York.

Angela Hanratty 30:07
Okay, that's interesting.

Mireille Israel 30:11
. . . I am sure that at the same time, there were more delicatessens in New York than in Paris. And in Alsace not at all, or just very religious example. Because, and this is perhaps important, it's cooking habits at home, but not in the restaurant. The Alsatian Jewish cooking, it's at home. Because it's dining for Shabat, for Rosh Hashanah, for Pesah, it’s at home. With the family and not outside. I think that it's important to have . . . I think it was never cooked for outside. I don't know if it's because it was not easy to be Jewish, perhaps. But we, my husband and me,
we are from Strasbourg, it was very easy 50 years ago to be Jewish kids in Strasbourg. Now in Paris perhaps it's more difficult. But for the Jewish recipes, it was at home that it was the best.

**Angela Hanratty 32:06**

Yes.

**Mireille Israel 32:11**

Yesterday evening, our group invited our Chief Rabbi from France. He's very interesting, and he speaks about the habits, about the culinary habits and he insists a lot on the transmission. It's exactly my idea, the most important is to transmit something. And to show, a grandmother must transmit to show the recipe really with the hands.

**Angela Hanratty 33:11**

Yes, practically. Demonstrate.

**Mireille Israel 33:34**

And this is the main idea. And I think that is a very good idea. It's not the mother, it's very often the grandmother. A good idea, I think, to explain the importance of how to make the recipe.

**Angela Hanratty 33:59**

Yes... Mimi, thank you so much. I really, really appreciate you taking the time to talk to me.
To start off, can you tell me about your family history?

My family history? Well, my father's family . . . my maiden name is Lynn Taylor, and my father's family were the Taylors. My grandmother or his mother, her name was actually Taylor. Back in Russia, they came from a small village called Glasmanka. And my grandmother Hodel was one, we have just discovered - we always thought she was one of eight siblings, and they all got to Ireland. I need to check the dates for you. But most of the Jewish community of my generation, their forebearers, either parents or grandparents, came out from Russia during the time of the Tsarist pogroms. So, between approximately, between 1880 and 1910, or 1920, there was a big influx of Jews from, when we say Russia, we're actually talking about the Russian Empire. So today, we discovered that people are from Lithuania and Latvia, and Estonia, these different places, but in fact, it was all Russia. As far as they were concerned, they were from Russia. And that's where most have come from. My grandmother Hodel. I remember her quite well. And she only spoke Yiddish. She didn't speak and never learned to speak English. And neither did her husband, my father's father, Israel, Isser. And Hodel, as I say, thought she was one. . .well, she was one of eight and the whole family got here. But it's only since my husband has started to look into genealogy, he's actually a statistician by profession. But he's, you know, doing like so many people of his generation in their seventies now looking into things like this. And he's discovered that Hodel was one of ten. And two did not come out of Russia at that time, didn't get out. And in fact, they perished in the Holocaust. So that was quite a revelation, and very close then to our own family. And my father, spoke of his father as having red hair and a red beard and not speaking English. But they started, as so many immigrants in so many places do, as peddlers. And my father was one of seven, four boys and three girls. And when he was 14, he was on the road selling and peddling and he had many stories to tell of the most popular items on his cart, were the holy pictures, the Catholic holy pictures, which is so amusing, nearly, that this is an Orthodox Jewish boy coming from a very traditional family, and he can't get enough of the Virgin Mary and other images that would be so popular and so familiar to many people in Ireland. And other tales of coming home on his first solo trip to, wherever it was down the country, coming home at the end of the week,
Thursday, in time to prepare for the Sabbath. And he, with triumph, informed his father that he had got a piano and it was on the cart, and when they went out to the piano it had no keys in it at all. It was an empty box. So there are tales from my own family but also from others that would be similar, starting as peddlers. And quite often then some of the Jewish immigrants who came had a profession, for instance, they were tailors. A lot of Jewish people were tailors, some were bakers, but things like very small craft professions, if you could call it that. Not so many intellectuals, it was the next generation when people came out. It was for their family. And it makes me stop and think very much about today... the story of immigration or emigration, whichever way you look at it, throughout history. You uproot, and you leave. Of course, you leave if there's persecution. And if you have the foresight, to, to understand where the force, where the persecution might go, might lead, you go with your family. So that was my father's family. And they all lived here in Dublin, we they were a traditional family. She was quite a matriarch, my Yiddish speaking grandmother, and very traditional, I won't say, ultra-orthodox to the extent that nothing burned, but I remember the pots on the stove, simmering. They would be on, completely cooked and on simmer from early Friday afternoon. Because, as you're probably familiar, it's against, the Jewish law to light a fire during the Sabbath, and all festivals, all days that are marked in Jewish tradition, are marked from sundown to sundown. So, from sundown on Friday, if you observe the Sabbath, and then... when the Sabbath goes out, when there are three stars in the sky, the Sabbath goes out and you can light a flame again. So, I remember all of that. And I remember also for any of the festivals, very prominent part in our entire existence. We only talk about food, and it's very much imbued into Jewish people all about food and the different foods and, depending on what the situation was. I mean, for Jews in the shtetls of Russia, those who left, it was sometimes very hard in some towns and villages, there was a strong 50-60% Jewish community, usually poor, not always, but usually very poor. And they had their own markets and their own provision of food that they got, the kosher food and ritual killings, but in in other towns, the Jews in some cases were allowed to come to the market only when the market was over. And so, they could get the dregs, you know, what was left, and a lot of our traditional food, because that's what your interest is in, is wonderfully tasty, but it's made from, almost from scraps. Of course, if you have wonderful ingredients, your food will usually taste great, but I think the real skill is making something that doesn't have much taste into something very tasty. I would give you an example like the gefilte fish. Have you heard of that dish? The stuffed fish? It used to be traditionally a carp which can grow to be a very large fish, a freshwater fish and the meat is used, the skin is kept, and a mixture is made with onions and - depending on your tradition,
Polish, Russian - different spices, and stuffed back into the skin and baked in the oven. And when that comes out it is an enormous thing. And that was very much, then, very wealthy, you know, wealthy people could have it. But if you couldn't get that you could get little scraps of fish that were left and you could get a different fish and make a different dish. But in the same way, mixing fishes, mixing different fish with onions and salt and pepper or whatever spice, and making them either into a loaf or into balls that they have. What would you call them? Little patties that you deep fried and it's delicious. So, we became very adept.

**Angela Hanratty 10:40**

Can I just ask, Lynn . . . you say you remember your grandmother having the pots on the stove. What would she have been cooking? What would have been in the pots?

**Lynn Jackson 10:51**

Well, the Sabbath, it traditionally was of course chicken soup, which is very traditional to have chicken soup there on the stove. All the preparation is done. It's all completed by Thursday evening. So, the big cooking day is Thursday. The chicken soup traditionally made from what we call a boiling fowl, a hen that has finished laying, is the one that was used for chicken soup. And it is still the tastiest one, but it's very hard to get that nowadays! That's what we all had. And of course, it's simmered with onion and carrots and celery and salt and pepper. And it just simmers there. And it is just wonderful. And when that is made, because the whole hen is in the pot, it's usually cooked Wednesday, and then Thursday it cools off. And the fat rises on Thursday, the next day. And it goes into your cold larder. I remember the cold larders, but now you have a refrigerator. The fat solidifies on the top of the soup, like an inch or half an inch of, of chicken fat. And you can just lift that off. And now you have a completely fat free, beautiful clear soup with these wonderful flavours. And so that's very traditional and that's left then, the fat taken off and that's left to simmer for the Sabbath meal. Another dish they would have, a thing called cholent. Have you come across that name?

**Angela Hanratty 12:35**

Yes, I wasn't quite sure how to pronounce it. So, it's cholent? I was saying co-lent. Cholent.
Lynn Jackson  12:41

It's usually either tch or just c, h, o, l, e n t. But these names all differ depending on your accent and which Yiddish you spoke. But I grew up with it as cholent. And that's usually from something like a shank bone placed in a pot, or something like a Le Creuset casserole, if you know what I mean. There's a pot that goes into the oven or on top with peas and beans and barley, big broad beans, and some people put potatoes in it. And it's absolutely delicious. And nowadays, people make that as vegetarians, but the traditional way was, again using up something like, you know, the old bones or the marrow bones, because that's what was available. And that's what was affordable. And people still make cholent for that. Another very traditional dish would be tzimmes, which you may have heard of. And that's very simple, then depending again on your Russian or Polish influence. That's basically carrots and potatoes in a big casserole with salt and pepper and sugar goes into that. Now if you can do that, in my family that was cooked with a piece of brisket. The brisket went in and the potatoes, carrots, water, of course, salt and pepper. And then as it gets very slow cooking, the meat finally starts to get really soft and melt and you lift it up and you mash all the potatoes and carrots together and you serve it with sugar. And a lot of people, and I will check for you if it's the Polish tradition or the Russian tradition, would add prunes and apricots to that dish . . . So tzimmes is a very popular dish and I make it . . . They're the sort of general foods, and then we have special dishes for festivals. But the same would apply when the festival follows the same rules of observing not lighting fire. So again, everything would be made in preparation for the festival, so that it's ready. Ready to serve on the day,

Angela Hanratty  12:55

That was actually going to be another one of my questions, the food for celebrations. So what kind of food for . . . celebrations? Would there be specific food that you would remember?

Lynn Jackson  16:05

I'll try and remember, I just remembered something that you asked me about the Sabbath. One thing is when the table is laid, if possible, with a white cloth. Sabbath candles are lit, there's always a special loaf of bread called a challah. I still make my own challah. I was taught how to plait with 12 strands, six strands of plaiting to make the 12 ropes, and that's covered with a special cloth, challah decorated Sabbath cloth and the silver candlesticks. The candles, the Challah on the table and the wine. So, you can see the very close relationship with the Christian
tradition, certainly Catholic tradition with bread and wine, perhaps with different connotations, but also part of, as part of religious ritual, I would say, or traditional ritual. So that would be the Sabbath. And then we've got the festivals, special food, and we'd have wine, bread and wine at the table, laid beautifully and we would have, I would have a different cloth for, if it was New Year for instance . . . Greeting at a festival is Gut Yontiv. And that's the Yiddish. So Yontiv is a special day, a good day, so you're happy. I suppose the Americans say Happy Holidays. But it's Gut Yontiv. And that's for all festivals, so Shana Tova, the new year . . . And the baking is, if possible, round. So, the loaf of bread that was the traditional Challah, the plaited loaf that we talked about, now becomes a round loaf because it's continuity for the significance of the new year . . . Any occasion, any reason to have a celebration of eating, Jewish people do it, we're just madly into food . . .

**Angela Hanratty  28:01**

Could I just ask a quick question there on Hanukkah? Would you have any tradition in your family of having goose? Roast goose at Hanukkah?

**Lynn Jackson  29:15**

No, no, not my family. That doesn't say it wasn't for Jews. I can remember there being great excitement when someone got a goose and it was served. Very unusual to get one. But it was a luxury to get a goose. A huge bird like that . . . There's a whole, you've probably looked into it, there's a whole area of food preparation and kosher foods and preparing kosher food. The killing, from right down . . . to how the meat is prepared. Whether it's fowl or meat and what is discarded and what is not. So, I'm trying to think when I saw it, I think only once in my life, I've seen a goose on the table . . .

**Angela Hanratty  32:46**

That's brilliant, Lynn. I'm particularly interested in . . . I started off looking at Jewish food, the history of Jewish food in the Alsace region of France, because that area was known as, that's where the word Ashkenazi came from, the Ashkenaz Valley, which is the Rhine Valley. So, I've been looking . . . and was inspired by Joan Nathan. I'm not sure if you're familiar with Joan Nathan, she's an American cook? You haven't. Okay. She has written a number of cookbooks, but she wrote one particularly on Jewish food in France. So, this is where I got my inspiration from, I suppose. So, I'm looking at how the traditions there went across as people
moved across to Eastern Europe. And then those traditions were brought, particularly over to America. At the same period as your family emigrated to Ireland. I know that vast numbers went to America as well. So, I'm trying to forge links, really, with what happened way back in the Middle Ages, medieval period in the Alsace region and links then with Eastern European foods, from the Russian tradition, from the Polish tradition, and then what went over to America. So, I'm interested to hear what you think, what would you say are the quintessential Ashkenazi foods? If you had to make a list of, say, the top five that you would identify,

**Lynn Jackson  34:40**

I think, chicken soup. Gefilte fish. Probably tzimmes and cholent. And then there's a lot of wonderful baking. If you just make a note, Angela, we can come back to this. But the Festival of Passover, which is Pesach, quite often corresponds with the Easter festival for our Christian friends . . . It's eight days, and we don't eat bread, we eat matzah, which is the unleavened bread. And the festival meal, there's two nights. In Ashkenazi communities, we keep two nights for the festivals . . . But at that festival, we tell the story of the Exodus of Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, when Moses got the people out; "Let my people go". That's from that tract in the Bible, and we eat the special food. And when they were finally allowed to leave, they didn't have time to wait for the bread to rise. And so, they grabbed it and ran. And so, we have the unrisen bread, the matzah . . . So how do you manage if you have no flour and you have no bread? You eat matzah, but also you improvise and make different things. People make wonderful sponge cakes with potato flour, and rice flour and . . . potato flour, and those flours are becoming popular now that people are all busy making different breads and gluten free and so on. Sorry to backtrack there. But I think the Passover festival is huge and the food related to it. Sorry, what was your question?

**Angela Hanratty  38:17**

I was just asking about . . . quintessential Ashkenazi food. I'm interested you haven't mentioned chopped liver.

**Lynn Jackson  38:24**

Oh yes, you're quite right. I completely forgot about chopped liver. That was always part of the Friday night dinner, with the chicken soup and chopped liver. And that's very nice. It was traditionally chicken liver that was chopped up with some onion and salt and pepper and it's
delicious. And quite often it could be calves' liver. And today, you can buy it as calves' liver from the kosher shop. And we eat that on crackers, on matzah crackers, usually. And the other thing I didn't mention was chopped herring. Did you come across chopped herring?

**Angela Hanratty  39:01**

I did in America, the delis in America, in New York. They have herring.

**Lynn Jackson  39:11**

Chopped herring is very traditional, again made . . . with salt herring and some pickled onions and chopped up with apple, and flavoured, and served again usually on matzah crackers or on brown bread. And you wouldn't go into a Jewish house when I was growing up without being offered some chopped herring. Or if you were offered a drink; "Would you like a whiskey?", you were served it with chopped herring. And in case you're very interested in this I believe chopped herring keeps you sober, no matter how much whiskey you drink. I've seen an experiment done on television that was really very funny. They had one guy who said he can take double whiskeys, three double whiskeys. He never gets drunk, and he uses mashed potato. The other man said he can take double vodkas and I forgot what was it that he said he eats, something strange that he ate. And this man, on his stool, said he eats herring. And as soon as he said he eats herring I said to myself, that's a Jewish man. So that gave them all their double drinks. And of course, the first two were falling off their stools, the mashed potato was off his stool very quickly. The next one managed to last another little while and the guy after three double whiskeys with his chopped herring was fine. Now you know what to serve with whiskey in future.

**Angela Hanratty  40:46**

Oh, yes! Okay, the other thing I'm wondering about . . . I'm very interested in pastrami. Claudia Roden says pastrami is an invention of the American deli. I wonder what your view is on that.

**Lynn Jackson  41:05**

Well, we're such a non-meaty family at the moment. It's definitely American. We didn't grow up knowing about pastrami in my day. But we did have pickle meat. And pickle meat is very similar. And so boiling pickle meat and making, or boiling tongue was another thing. To boil the pickle meat and oh, boil it, through the house for two days, but then it's ready. And you put
it in a dish with a plate and a weight on top of it so that it becomes pressed. And when it's freezing, very cold, you can then slice it very, very thin. And it's very nice. It's very nice with salad or very nice with vegetables. And that's the nearest we've ever come, I think here, but it's definitely an American Jewish dish.

**Angela Hanratty  41:58**

Okay, and you when you say pickle meat that’s what you called it, *Pickle meat?*

**Lynn Jackson  42:03**

Pickle meat. We called it pickle meat. I think the most similar thing to it would be corned beef. I won't say it's exactly the same. Probably made slightly differently. But for my non-Jewish friends, if we had pickle meat we would say "Would you like some pickle meat? It's like corned beef", sort of, to explain what we're offering.

**Angela Hanratty  42:28**

And what cut of meat would that have been, Lynn?

**Lynn Jackson  42:31**

Usually the brisket, I think.

**Angela Hanratty  42:34**

That's very interesting. Because in, in Alsace, they have something called pickelfleisch. You know that German word fleisch. So, when you say pickle meat, and pickelfleisch . . . that's very, very interesting for my research.

**Lynn Jackson  42:51**

Yes. Well, it shows you the migration of that. And it's interesting when you talk that you're doing that region, the movement of the Ashkenaz into Eastern Europe. King Casimir in Poland who welcomed the Jews then. And consequently, the huge settlement of Jewish people in Poland. And that corresponds with your medieval times and onwards.
Angela Hanratty 43:17

Yes . . . That's all the questions that I had here. The other thing was, do you think there are other people that I should talk to?

Lynn Jackson 43:49

I think you should certainly talk to my friend Carolyn; I will ask her . . . she's still very traditional. She keeps a completely kosher home.

Angela Hanratty 44:49

Ok.

Lynn Jackson 45:43

I don't keep a kosher home. But I've never had any meat of the pig, or any shellfish inside my house. I remember when we were building this house . . . I remember one of the builders came in to put the kettle on and he plonked down on the kitchen counter, which was all in rubble, a sandwich, which was ham and cheese. And I stood staring at that. And I thought to myself, 'Will I say anything? What will I do?' And I didn't want to start a whole thing that we're Jewish . . . So, in the end, I said, "Would you mind if I asked you to eat in the conservatory?", which we had, I don't know, got three walls of it up or something, at that stage. "Because I'm very strict about my kitchen" or something like that and just left it at that but it was funny. But Carolyn would go for a meal out in a restaurant, and she'd probably have vegetarian or fish, she would never eat meat of any sort outside of home. And then the very orthodox Jews who just don't eat outside of their own home, it's very hard for them in Ireland, very hard because there are no kosher restaurants. You can go to somebody else's house, if you're happy that their house . . . I know whenever a new Rabbi comes I always say the same to them. I say, "Look, I can't pretend to run a strictly kosher house. But you're welcome anytime. And if you want a glass" - you can have something in the glass because it's not porous. Crockery is porous - “You can have a glass of, of tea or fruit juice or something and a piece of fruit. You will be most welcome.”

Angela Hanratty 49:22

I will just stop recording. Thanks so much.
Appendix C – Edited Interview with Karen Marder (20th March 2021)

Angela Hanratty 0:00
Karen, the first thing I want to ask you is about your family background.

Karen Marder 0:06
Just generally or . . .

Angela Hanratty 0:09
Where would you trace your ancestry from?

Karen Marder 0:11
Sure. I know more about my dad's family than my mom's, but both sides of my family are originally from Poland, and that whole area. There was, you know, there's a little bit of confusion I think about that, about some of it, but generally they are from Poland.

Angela Hanratty 0:30
Okay. And when would they have come to America? Do you know?

Karen Marder 0:35
Oh, actually, you got me with the family tree sitting right here. I can look but I can tell you. I mean, my parents were born here. My grandparents were born here. My great grandparents, I have a couple that were born here, but some that came over at that time.

Angela Hanratty 0:51
So would you say that your family, then, was a very traditional family in the foods that you ate. You're coming from an Ashkenazi background?

Karen Marder 1:15
I would say probably yes. I mean, both my mom and my dad were raised kosher. And we were not kosher. At least in my memory. I think, you know, my mom, she never cooked any, she never made like a pork roast or ham or anything like that, though, we did eat bacon. I don't
know why that is. But she never made traditional things that Christians eat like pork chops, hams, and stuff like that. But bacon was okay. And we would eat things like, you know, you could have a cheeseburger. But never ever did we ever drink milk with anything besides breakfast. You would never, we would laugh when on TV you would see commercials of people eating KFC and milk. Like everyone's drinking, pictures of milk with meat. I mean, that was disgusting. The idea that . . . as weird things Christians do. But we definitely grew up eating lots of things that I think are pretty traditionally Ashkenazi. And now I'm actually myself reading this book about Yiddish. And the history of Yiddish and just embedded in that is something, like food things that I'm like, oh, yeah, we definitely ate all this kind of stuff.

**Angela Hanratty 2:33**

So, can you give me a few examples then of those dishes?

**Karen Marder 2:37**

Sure. So, weekend mornings would definitely be a bagels and lox kind of thing. We ate lox. We ate sable. I don't know if you're familiar with sable, but it's like a smoked fish. It's very Jewish. And we ate white fish. Now my parents ate herring. That was a cold herring. I thought that was disgusting. But we all loved sable, whitefish, lox . . . all the different kinds of cream cheese . . . either scallion cream cheese or lox cream cheeses, no other, like fruit cream cheeses. That's definitely not anything we would ever eat. My dad had us eating what I would consider dairy meals. We would eat things like tuna salad, egg salad, which are you know, traditionally considered dairy kosher things, and then we would eat things that I now see are like very Ashkenazi. It's like a bowl of sour cream with fruit.

**Angela Hanratty 3:43**

Yeah. And . . . things that I've been coming across in my research, things like chopped liver? . . . chicken soup?

**Karen Marder 4:36**

Oh, sure. So, we ate stuff that was dairy, like I just told you. Those were all these dairy meals. But definitely, Friday night was generally you're going to have a chicken, like a roast chicken . . . they all made a roast chicken with chicken soup. You know, this was the eighties so you never saw any kind of real vegetable. But definitely, my mom made chopped liver. She and my
dad would eat it. We thought it was gross. Never would eat anything like that. But yeah, what else did we eat in terms of meat? I mean, for holidays, we would definitely eat things like a brisket. For Passover, you know, I always make a very traditional brisket. When it came to things in the meat category, of course, you know, we ate American type stuff too. But always, the roast chicken is just like a given on a Friday.

Angela Hanratty  5:46
Okay. Just when you mentioned brisket, I'm very interested in pastrami and where pastrami really originated because nobody seems to know for sure where it came from. I know Claudia Roden says in her book that it's an American invention. Then other people would say, I've read some books about the American deli and history of the American deli that you know, pastrami came from Romania. What I'm trying to do in my research is link it back to Alsace in France, where they have something called pickelfleisch . . . which, to me, seems very much like what pastrami is. You just mentioned brisket, and it's made with brisket as well. So, I'd be interested to hear your views on pastrami.

Karen Marder  6:49
Sure . . . so, we always had and still have Jewish deli meats every Hanukkah and even though you know, at one point, like two years ago, my dad was like, we should not keep getting these Jewish deli meats, it's so expensive. And the family was not even having it. They were like, we're getting Jewish deli meat. That's it. So, I definitely grew up eating all that stuff. Now personally, I think pastrami is not as good as corned beef. I mean, we would always get pastrami in the meats. You know, we would get and still get several pounds of corned beef, several pounds of tongue. I don't know if you're familiar with tongue. And we still get that and then pastrami. Now the rest of my family loves pastrami. And I grew up with this place called Pastrami King. Do you know about Pastrami King? No. Oh, okay. So, Pastrami King is a place, I think it was in Queens, which is where I grew up. But it was a deli place that you could go to called Pastrami King . . . But I mean, to me, corned beef . . . if you go to Katz's deli in Manhattan, you know, you get a huge amount. I find corned beef to be a little tastier than pastrami, maybe a little leaner. But I mean, I wouldn't turn down pastrami. I definitely like it. That stuff is the stuff you know, we were raised on and it's all like good memories getting, having it. And there's only one way to eat it, on rye bread with mustard. Like people who put mayo on that have to be killed. That's just unacceptable. It's always on rye bread with some
pickles. And no way you're having any kind of sweet pickle, no gherkin. No, it has to be a sour or half sour pickle.

**Angela Hanratty  9:31**

… so, Karen, would you consider corned beef to be more traditional?

**Karen Marder  9:54**

I think so. To me corned beef is the classic and pastrami is a little bit not. And I couldn't tell you why. That's how I was raised. We got pastrami, but it was all about corned beef.

**Angela Hanratty  10:15**

Okay. And can I ask, you said the correct way to eat pastrami is on rye bread? Would you have sauerkraut with that?

**Karen Marder  10:24**

No, no. That seems German. And so, we wouldn't, definitely not. I've never even seen it eaten like that. It's always on rye bread with mustard. And a pickle. I mean, you could have some potato salad on the side, maybe, but not sauerkraut. Like that almost seems like the way the Irish do it where they have, you know, corned beef and cabbage and, I mean, it's not sauerkraut, but it's cabbage, which is sauerkraut. No, I mean, we eat cabbage, like a stuffed cabbage. But it wouldn't go with like a deli meat. On a hot dog. Yes.

**Angela Hanratty  11:05**

That's interesting. Great. So, at the moment, I'm getting points of view from people in France, and then from . . . Irish Jewish people who have, you know, a family background in Russia or in Poland. So, I'm just interested to hear about the American view. I know I've asked you about your childhood memories. But if you were to identify, say, five key dishes that you think are the quintessential Ashkenazi foods, what would they be?

**Karen Marder  11:43**

I have to be limited to five?
Karen Marder  11:50
I mean, bagels and lox. Probably kasha varnishkes. Are you familiar with that?

Angela Hanratty  12:00
I've heard of them.

Karen Marder  12:01
Yeah. So, kasha varnishkes is like a combination of what looks like bow tie pasta, with buckwheat, which is called kasha. I mean, a lot of people don't like it, but it is very, very quintessentially Ashkenazi. Probably . . . like the whole meal like a challah and a roast chicken. And, you know, matzah ball soup. It's like that whole Shabbat dinner. I mean, Jewish deli, for sure. Now if my dad were here, my dad would say kishke. So kishke is something I mean, we grew up joking about kishke. My dad talks about kishke, he calls me and asks me to bring him kishke knowing that I'm not ever going to find kishke, but kishke is like a sausage. It's stuffed with something. I don't know. I don't love it. But it's something that my parents and my aunts and uncle, they all grew up on the Lower East Side. And they all will talk about kishke all the time. So kishke is different from kasha.

Angela Hanratty  13:15
Okay, great. And the thing I wanted to ask you about, gefilte fish?

Karen Marder  13:23
Oh, yeah, I guess that you have to, you can't forget gefilte fish. I mean, we grew up eating it . . . And most Ashkenazi Jews . . . bought the gefilte fish from a jar. You can make it fresh; my friend does. It doesn't taste any better. It's nasty. But I mean, people like my dad, like I'm having a Passover Seder this week. Nobody likes gefilte fish, but I must buy it and I will eat it too. I will eat it one time a year with horseradish on it, the red horseradish which is another very Ashkenazi thing. The horseradish mixed with beets. We will have to eat it just one time here but there're people that love it like my parents. They would be happy if I served, they would
like me to serve gefilte fish and chopped liver, but I will not go that far, because chopped liver makes your house smell, it's so nasty. But definitely, I mean, other than chopped liver I would say I pretty much eat almost anything that's in the Ashkenazi meal stuff. There's stuff that I'm not as familiar with, like schav. I don't know if you've heard of this. I'm just going to type it so you can see what it is. I'm not even entirely sure what this is. Now my parents talk about it. It's like a soup. Made with some kind of vegetable. I don't know but it's very Ashkenazi Jewish and you'll see it in jars sometimes. It's like one of those foods not that many people eat anymore but my parents’ generation know about it.

Angela Hanratty  15:00
Okay, I haven't heard that at all before. That's very interesting. And let me see what else do I have to ask you? Okay, so the key dishes. So, you said that, you know, Jewish deli food is important. Do Jewish people, because what I'm reading or what I have read is that a lot of Jewish delis have closed down, and you know, some of them are really just for tourists now … well, when tourism was allowed. Do Jewish people eat in delis?

Karen Marder  15:35
Not really, not in New York. I mean, like my son, the other day, he's in college, he goes to school in Manhattan. And he sent me a picture of himself at Katz's deli, with a huge corned beef sandwich. So, we do get it. Me and my friends will go down to Katz's and get it. Of course, it's full of tourists. But I mean, do we eat there? Yeah, we will eat there. But it's not like a part of the day to day diet. I think most people know that food is not good for you. It's so high in salt. It's so much meat. Everyone I know is watching their weight or they're a vegetarian or vegan. So, you don't see that stuff getting eaten as much. Not to mention, it's very expensive. Like . . . my son sent me the picture of the sandwich and he's like, $18 sandwich. Now granted, it's a huge ass sandwich. So, I said, just take half of it. This is what everybody does, half it. You just save it because it's so big. But, I would say Jews eat it but not regularly. Like my whole family, we're all going to eat it on Hanukkah. And like I said before, when they try to get rid of that, my dad was like, it's too expensive, we were like, absolutely not! We must have it! But it's not a regular thing. I don't think you see a lot of Jews going out of their way. There's not, like you said, there's not as many of those kinds of delis left. There are some. There's Ben's.
Angela Hanratty  17:01
I'm just going to jot these down now, because I am going to look at these. I know Katz’s.

Karen Marder  17:07
Yeah, by the way, with a K. There's Ben's Deli, which is a big one. Then there's a Ben's in Manhattan. And there's a Ben's on Long Island. There used to be a Ben's in Queens too. Okay, there's Pastrami King, which I don't know if it's still around. Oh, 2nd Avenue Deli, which I think is no longer on 2nd Avenue. But it also has the same kind of food. Trying to think, I mean, growing up there were more of these places . . . those would be the main ones I go to and that come to mind.

Angela Hanratty  17:52
Okay. And, Karen, when you say you get the meats at Hanukkah, is that because, you know, is it too much hassle to make those at home? Are they too complicated, you know, to do corned beef or to do tongue?

Karen Marder  18:08
No one does it at home. First of all, you're going to slice it and put it on a sandwich. So, you would need a professional slicer to do that. Not many people have that. Second of all, I mean yeah, you can make corned beef. I made corned beef the other day for St. Patrick's Day, but it's nothing like, it's not the same taste. You know what it's like because you're Irish, right?

Angela Hanratty  18:35
We don't eat corned beef here at all. Actually . . . I don't know whether you're familiar with Hasia Diner? She's an expert on immigration to America, and the Irish and the Jews and Italians, and she would say that that the Irish people got corned beef from the Jewish people. Because traditionally for us it's not corned beef and cabbage. It would be bacon and cabbage. That would be very traditional Irish. We do have corned beef, but they'd eat it maybe in places like Dublin . . . It's something that the Irish inherited from the Jewish people who came to America at the same time as them because they were all living in tenements together. So, I don't actually know what proper corned beef tastes like. You know, you can get it in a tin or whatever but it's not the corned beef you'd have.
Karen Marder  19:40
Okay, so, but either way, the corned beef the way that the Irish Americans make it is not the same. It's like a big roast that's boiled and pickled. I mean, I'm sure you can make that corned beef. And if you have a slicer, like my brother did this one year, he made a corned beef for St. Patrick's Day and then he's sliced it because he has a professional slicer, but most people don't. And nobody wants to buy a tongue anymore. I mean, think about how nasty that is. Now, I'm sure previous generations must have done that. But I don't know anyone, and I know some people who are really into cooking. I don't know anyone who makes pastrami, corned beef. They make the Irish type corned beef, but I don't know anybody who makes the Jewish traditional sandwich meats at their house, I think like you said too much work. Also, it's not like the regular supermarkets going to have a tongue. Or even corned beef is hard to find, unless it's around St. Patrick's and most stores don't have it. So yeah, I just think it's just one of those things that you get at the deli.

Angela Hanratty  20:49
Yeah. Okay . . . And do you make your own challah?

Karen Marder  21:12
I don't, but my sister-in-law does.

Angela Hanratty  21:15
Okay. Would that be common practice in America?

Karen Marder  21:18
I think a lot of people have gotten into it during the pandemic. So, I mean, I know quite a few people who know how to make it and do make it. It's actually, from what I hear from my sister-in-law, it's pretty easy. I don't like to bake. So, I don't . . . We were raised Jewish, but not super religious. And so, we didn't sit down for eight, full on, like, we didn't go to temple. We didn't necessarily, I mean, we had this nice dinner on Friday, we lit candles, but it wasn't like, my mom never got challah or rarely. I don't know that many Jews that actually get a challah every week. Whether they bake or buy it. Most people I don't feel like do that. Now, if you're going to have, you know, Rosh Hashanah dinner, you're going to have a challah as part of it. I mean, my sister-in-law will definitely bake one. I mean, for me, when I'm doing restaurants I'm going
to buy it, I think you probably have a mix. It depends on, you know, New Yorkers are busy. But people also get into making that kind of thing. And, you know, if you like to bake it's not a hard one to make - so I hear.

**Angela Hanratty  22:38**

Great. Okay, Karen, thank you so much.
Appendix D – Edited Interview with Françoise Klein (19th March 2021)

Angela Hanratty 1:12
The first question I'm going to ask you is about your background and your relationship with food, your food memories?

Françoise Klein 1:45
I was born in 1959 to Alsatian parents, whose interest in religion is extremely limited. So basically, I grew up on Alsatian food with some, let's say Jewish meals, but not that many. So, I grew up with sauerkraut, fish, lots of sausage, and beautiful cookies, rugelach and all kinds of pastries. So, I found your subject very interesting, because as you know, Alsace is just at the limit of France and Germany, but it's extremely French when it comes to food. I mean, French people mean business about food, right?

Angela Hanratty 2:56
Yes, of course. And what would you say then, Françoise, what would you consider to be typical or traditional Alsatian Jewish foods?

Françoise Klein 3:11
I asked Christophe, Christophe Woehrle who sent you some links. He's a professional historian …

Angela Hanratty 3:32
Okay. One of the links that Christophe sent that you sent on to me, I find very interesting. It's about pastrami. Because I'm looking at pastrami as, I suppose, something that's considered to be from Eastern Europe. But Claudia Roden in her book would say that pastrami is really an American invention.

Françoise Klein 4:13
I would agree. I had never seen a pastrami before going to America. As you might notice, I have a French American accent. So, I never came across pastrami before going on holiday in New England.
Angela Hanratty  4:35
Okay. And just coming from that, I know there's an Alsatian meat called pickelfleisch.

Françoise Klein  4:45
Pickelfleisch. Yes.

Angela Hanratty  4:48
On that subject between the whole idea of Eastern European Ashkenazi food, do you see links? Would you personally see links between Alsatian food and food that would have gone to Eastern Europe with Jewish migration?

Françoise Klein  5:53
It depends. I would say probably because of local history. I mean, lots of Eastern European Jews moved to France over the 19th and 20th century. So probably, it makes sense.

Angela Hanratty  6:20
And before that, when Alsatian, Jewish people would have migrated across to Eastern Europe. I'd be particularly interested in looking at that, and what food traditions they would have brought with them when they were moving across Eastern Europe.

Françoise Klein  6:38
To me it's not that clear, because Alsatian Jews have been there for 1000 years. This region has a very violent past between France and Germany, with lots of wars. And lots of immigration, from Eastern Europe, from Germany, from Switzerland, so what is truly Alsatian and what is common to Eastern Europe is not that clear to me. It's part of Middle Europa, but to what extent? Is it more French or German or more Eastern European?

Angela Hanratty  7:46
It's complicated. Yeah.
You see what I mean. The place has changed nationality so often, so many people have moved . . .

Yes, of course. And I just want to ask you about geese, goose fat and I saw even one of the recipes that you translated, I could see a tablespoon, or a teaspoon of goose fat was in the recipe. How important were geese to Alsatian cooking?

Okay, so first of all, the link to foie gras. As you might know, when you talk food, it's serious business. They raise geese in Alsace. I guess that since, because they ate kosher food, geese fat was replacing pork . . .

. . . let me see what other questions I have. Because you answered a lot of my questions when you got back to me. I asked about pastrami and geese. You don't have any childhood memories really, of what you would say were traditional Jewish food. As you say your parents weren't very religious.

I've never eaten kosher food in my life. But I know that some of the meals I ate were composed of traditional Jewish cooking. That's in a kugel, or fish. The recipes I sent you. I know there are traditional but since my parents have never been religious . . .

That's great. Some of those recipes would correspond with what other people were telling me . . . thank you.
Appendix E – Edited Interview with Carolyn Collins (22nd March 2021)

Angela Hanratty 0:32
The first thing I want to ask you about is your family history.

Carolyn Collins 0:09
Well, basically, on my father's, there're obviously the two sides. My dad's side, I know more about my father's side than my mother's side. I don't know why that is, but I do. My father's side of the family came from a small town in Poland called Szydlow. And what happened was, just at the start, or just before the First World War, there were pogroms in Poland. And the family there decided that they would, like a lot of Jewish people at that time, decided that they would emigrate to Canada. And they got some sort of ship. And it came to London. And unfortunately, my grandfather was sick. He was a young man, but he was sick. He left my grandmother in Poland and she was pregnant with my dad, who was the eldest of four. And the rest of the family went on to Canada. And consequently, I have an amazing family tree actually, which a distant kind of cousin person made up of all the Druker family - that's my maiden name - that ended up in Canada. And if ever you wanted to see that you're more than welcome . . . So unfortunately, they didn't speak any English. They spoke Yiddish, you know, they didn't speak English. So, they stayed in London because he wasn't well enough to travel on. And they were furriers by trade. My grandfather was a furrier. And because he was able to work with his hands, which was similar to a lot of Jewish people at the time, they were either tailors or cobblers, or something, they could make a living. And he got taken in by what we would call lancelite, which is probably Yiddish for you know, people would say the same, you know, the concept of the meithal, in Irish, that type of a thing, where they were Jewish people coming in from Poland, with nothing to do and nowhere to live. And this family took in my grandfather. They were tailors, they were all in the rag trade. And he was useful because he could make collars and cuffs and things like that, for the coats. So, my dad was brought up like, he had no education, he left school when he was 13. And he used to go out with my grandfather, because he had health, which is more than my grandfather had. And they used to go to the markets, or they'd go to a market town. And he used to tell the story of going with a big sack of fur skins or collars or that and spread them out on the ground. Like they worked very hard. And my auntie who was the next in line, my dad was the eldest, she was a fur machinist . . . so, in my grandmother's house in Belfast, we had a little factory in the front room. The front room was
the factory room. These were people that were used to really hard graft, you know. My dad was born in 1913. And he brought my grandmother over at that time, but my grandmother left, I think she had something like seven or eight brothers in Poland in that town of Szydlow. And they all perished in the Holocaust. Anybody that got left there, this was I think 3 million Poles were murdered between Auschwitz and other camps, you know. So that was basically my father's family . . . so they were of Polish extraction, because you're interested in food . . . they were Poles and they cooked in a certain way which I'll come to. My mother's side of the family, they, my grandfather came from Lithuania. And my grandmother, I'm not sure exactly where she came from . . . But I gather that my grandfather met my grandmother in England. They lived in Newcastle upon Tyne. They came from Russia, so they had a different way of cooking. So, when my mom married my dad, she went to my grandmother's for Friday night dinner or whatever. And they made gefilte fish and stuff like that. I'm not sure, Angela, I'm sure you know all about these kinds of, at this stage about the traditional foods, but if you don't, I can certainly go through them.

Angela Hanratty  5:06
I have a fair idea about the traditional foods, but I just want to listen to you talking about them.

Carolyn Collins  6:33
Yes. So of course, she tasted my grandmother's fish and thought 'Oh my god, this is so sweet!'. Everything from the Polish side of the family was laced with sugar. They cooked with, everything was sweet. All the fish, all that, whereas my mother cooked, if she was making gefilte fish when my grandfather used to come, she cooked it with onion skins and nutmeg, you know. It's like that type of seasoning, completely different flavour all together. And then of course, my grandmother, from my father's side, they made all the, even though borscht is a kind of a Russian dish. She made borscht but it would have been sweet borscht, whereas my mother's borscht would have been a different flavour. So, because the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, she cooked for my father the way he was used to it. I only tasted the Russian type food when . . . I can see my grandfather sitting at the breakfast table. And he was one of these people that believed in breakfasting like a king. So, he used to have schmalz herring and pickled herring and all that type of thing for breakfast, when he used to come to our house, and a little glass of brandy, a little schnapps glass of brandy with it. He was a bit of a gourmet, my grandfather. These people had no education, Angela. They didn't go to school.
or anything. But they knew, like he knew his food. So, his mom must have been a good cook for him to know all this. But we never liked the taste of anything that he, we never really liked that taste. For example, potato kugel. Are you familiar with that? Yes. So, if I go to my friends, for example, their potato kugel, my husband wouldn't eat that, because they don't use sugar, they use salt, most of the Dublin people, they're I think more Russian extraction. Don't forget, my parents came from England. My dad was born in England. So, they lived in England, after that they lived in Northern Ireland. So, they were kind of English, as opposed to Irish. Whereas my husband's family were born in Ireland, even though they came from Russia. So, when I married Alan, his mother, thankfully, used to put sugar in potato pudding and stuff like that. That was great for me because I didn't have to change dramatically. But I find that people in Ireland that came from Russian extraction all cook with a lot of salt and very little sugar and no sugar, different flavour. So, they would all be Ashkenazi Jews, you know, mainly . . .

**Angela Hanratty  6:51**

. . . I suppose I should have started off by telling you that what I'm looking at is starting off in the Alsace region of France, which would have been German in the Middle Ages. A lot of Jewish people moved up from the south of France, from Provence at the time of the Crusades and settled in the Alsace region. And I'm trying to find connections . . . later then they would have moved eastwards towards Poland and the Russian Empire. And I'm looking for connections with the food that would be traditional Jewish food in the Alsace region, and what would become what we consider now Ashkenazi traditional foods. So, that's the thrust of my research. So . . . what the Ashkenazi traditional foods are . . . your point of view on that. So, sorry, I interrupted you.

**Carolyn Collins  11:37**

No, no, because I just tried to see where you're coming from . . . Yes. And so, the traditional foods, I mean, I've been to, I'm just trying to think when I went to Switzerland that time for, we used to go to for Hanukkah. And do you know, the, the festival at Christmas time? I'm not sure how much you know, and how much you don't know? I reckon you do know all these things, but we used to go, and the food would be a lot of . . . I travelled a lot with my daughter in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. She was a chess player. And when I went to Poland and places like that, and Hungary and Czechoslovakia, I'm looking at all this food, I only eat kosher food. Everything looked like what my grandmother used to make, you know, goulash, Hungarian
goulash. All very heavy, heavy meat, what we would call gedempte meat, which means that it's cooked . . . it's probably because they could only afford the cheaper cuts, but if you get a cheap quarter of like, brisket . . . brisket is probably one of the cheapest cuts. Like people buy prime beef here and you roast it fast and it comes up delicious. And it's all pink and everything. But brisket is . . . I don't know which part of the animal it comes from, but it has very little fat on it. But it's tough. So, it needs to be cooked for a long time. Long and slow in a big pot. I used to cook that way because it's the way I was brought up and my husband was brought up the same way and they used to do it like, brown it all off with onions and stuff and then cook that for like five or six hours and then at the end put the potatoes in around the gravy. And then you know that's delicious, that would be what we would be calling gedempte, which means, how would you call it? Stewed I suppose. It's different to a stew in that it's cooked for a really long, long time. I always cook long and slow. And the longer you cook it, the more this breaks down and you can actually get your teeth into it. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to slice it, you know?

Angela Hanratty 14:59

Yes, that brings me on to the subject of cholent? Would you have a tradition of this on a Sabbath?

Carolyn Collins 15:09

Shabbat? Yes, Yes, I would. Now, my husband doesn't really like cholent. So, I don't make it that often. But it's a great handy thing for a winter, you know, to put that on, on a Friday, and you'd have it there. You could have, I'm not at that level of religion, shall we say, but the very religious people can leave that on a blech, on the top, overnight. And that way they've got a hot meal for a Shabbat lunch. That's the purpose, that the longer you leave it on, the better it becomes.

Angela Hanratty 15:44

Yes. And would you, Carolyn, use brisket in that?

Carolyn Collins 15:49

Yes, I would. I'd either use brisket, or I'd use shin beef. Shin beef is a better thing. Because the shin is, it becomes lovely and soft. Brisket you'd usually do in a piece, but there'd be nothing to stop you using either, you know?
Angela Hanratty 16:08
Yes. So, would you say brisket would be more traditional then in that?

Carolyn Collins 16:13
No, they'd both be equally. Shin beef is probably the cheapest bit of meat you can get, but it's delicious. And you know, we would make tzimmes from that. You know, tzimmes? Tzimmes with carrots would be sweet. And I put apricot and stuff like that... .

Angela Hanratty 17:18
That's great. So yeah, traditional foods, you've already mentioned gefilte fish. Herring is coming up. It came up with Lynn as well. Herring?

Carolyn Collins 17:37
Yes. Well, herring would be a big thing. Schmalz herring, or chopped herring is, you know, that's made with salted herrings. It's like my family. My mum didn't, there was never a year went by that we didn't have a bucket of herrings underneath the stairs. My dad used to go down to the market, or we used to go out to Howth as kids. And the lad, he'd have his bucket there. And the lads would throw in all the herrings into the bucket. And he'd hand him the ten-bob note, and you came home with your bucket of herrings And, then my mum used to lay them, you lay them into a salt, you know, into a bucket with then kosher salt, you can get it in the butchers here. They use it for salting, for making corned beef pickling and that type of thing. And she'd layer up all these herrings and put a brown paper top on it with a string around the top. And that would sit there and when you took out those herrings you could, after a couple of weeks you could leave them soaking overnight, and then cut them into strips. And that's the most delicious thing. Schmaltz herring is a lovely thing. And that's what you make chopped herring with.

Angela Hanratty 18:55
And can I ask just about the gefilte fish, Carolyn? What fish would you use for that?
Carolyn Collins  19:01
I'd use a mix. I use hake usually, hake and whiting, or cod and whiting, or hake and cod, whatever you can get. To be honest with you it doesn't really matter. I put loads of ground almonds in mine and no matter what fish I use, it always seems to taste the same . . . I use the Evelyn Rose recipe for gefilte fish . . . Evelyn Rose cookbook. Because, you know, we don't mix meat and milk. So, everything is kosher is, you know, so I don't have to adjust because I find with cookery books, you know, everything's either got cream or butter or milk or, you know or scallops or, you know, shellfish or any of these things that we don't use. So, if you use a Jewish cookbook you don't have to eliminate anything.

Angela Hanratty  20:23
Yes. And so, we'll say your grandmother. What would she have used for gefilte fish?

Carolyn Collins  20:30
She would have used the same . . . my dad, my grandmother lived in Belfast, and my grandma, my paternal grandmother, and she used to come down to Dublin and like that my father used to go down to the markets. And he come in with big, huge whole fish like a big hake or a big cod. And my mum used to cut the head off, and they used to boil the head. And the other thing they used to use was carp. We don't get carp now, but my mother used to get these carp. And she used to make steaks. So, you'd get a piece of fish that had the meat here, like, you know, a salmon steak, not a darne . . . and it would have a hole in the top and they used to stuff that hole with the gefilte fish mixture. And that used to boil on the top of the cooker for hours. The smell of it was revolting, but it was very delicious with a bit of chrain. Chrain is horseradish, red or beetroot horseradish.

Angela Hanratty  21:36
Yeah, I had somebody tell me, somebody from New York actually, tell me about red horseradish.

Carolyn Collins  21:42
You know, you can get chrain in the Polish shops now. It's called something else, but I think it's not called chrain. I don't know what it's called. But I buy it in the Polish shop. Perfect. It's absolutely delicious. They sometimes would use mustard with that, because it's a bit bland.
There's not a lot of flavour. You know, there are onions in the gefilte fish. But the rest of it needs a bit of a kick, you know, as an accompaniment, the way you'd have horseradish with beef, you'd have mustard or chrain with that. Delicious. Did you ever hear, Angela, about the feshnoggi? No? That's calves' foot jelly.

Angela Hanratty 22:33
Right. And that would be traditional as well?

Carolyn Collins 22:37
That would be traditional. Now because we've no butchers here now, we can't get calves' feet. We only can only get frozen lumps of everything now, but when I was growing up in the community, my mum used to go down to the butcher and get a couple of feet and boil that up. And that in a pot with probably onions and salt and pepper and stuff like that. And then, what would happen is the jelly from that, the liquid from that, you'd put into a dish with meat, like shin beef or bits of meat used to float around and hard eggs along the top. And it used to set in the fridge, and it would be used as a starter actually. Calves' foot jelly was a huge thing. My father-in-law loved that. And my dad loved it, but it was a lot of work. In our generation that kind of thing died out a bit . . . I haven't made that since I was first married and I only made it as a treat for my late father-in-law, and then I stopped doing it.

Angela Hanratty 24:04
I hadn't heard of that one before Carolyn.

Carolyn Collins 24:07
Calves' Foot Jelly is the English name and feshnoggi, don't know how you spell feshnoggi but . . .

Angela Hanratty 24:16
Yes. And chopped liver. Would that be something that you would have, would be traditional in your family?
Carolyn Collins 24:24

Yes. I would make chopped liver every Friday. Now, unfortunately I can only get chicken livers here now, but we used to make it with beef liver. Yes, fried liver. We fry up - well first of all, I don't know if you wanted to know the tradition that we have. We have to burn off livers . . . it's to seal in the blood. You have to show it to an open flame. Well, we don't have open flames now, but I can picture at home in my house in Templeogue, we had a gas cooker out the back. And my mum had a little, like a rack thing and the livers went on, on a Friday. And you just have to show them to, seal them. So now I do it under the grill and most people do because we can't buy them already burned. That would be a detail. That's it. That's the kashrut. That's a law under Halakha . . . they're not kosher unless you do that.

Angela Hanratty 25:30

Yes. And if you had a kosher butcher there, they do it for you, would they?

Carolyn Collins 25:37

They will do it for you. Yes, we used to buy them koshered, when the butchers were down on Clanbrassil Street. The guy used to be burning the livers out the back, which is an interesting thing to put in when you're talking about livers. And then you'd fry that, fry off the onions, you know, for a good long time and then take your livers that have been burned off. And then you just add eggs, hard boiled eggs, and a bit of, well, we don't use it anymore, but they used to use schmalz, chicken fat. Now my mum used to make jars of that. And when they had the charity coffee mornings they were always looking for Lily's chicken fat, and I can remember being at home with her and having a bit of muslin and after she melted down all the chicken fat I'd have to hold it on top of the jar while she poured this through. And then it would go into the jar and solidify. It's a heart attack waiting to happen. I don't know how they all didn't die at the age of 35! But they didn't. They lived well into their 90s, eating all that cholesterol! Like it's so bad for you. Chicken fat, it's the worst thing, but it's delicious. Because you know wurst? You know what wurst is? Salami. We call it wurst. But there's nothing like a piece of, we can get kosher sliced pan. Sliced pan, chicken fat, and wurst is the most divine sandwich you'll ever get.

Angela Hanratty 25:57

Sounds good. With the chopped liver then, Carolyn, would chicken soup and matzah balls, would that be something that would be traditional?
Carolyn Collins  27:31
Well, first of all I want to tell you about my husband's family. They always had roast potatoes with their chopped liver. Now we never saw that. Our family never saw that. And consequently, when we get invited round to a few of our friends, I used to say to the girls 'Do you have a roast potato?' because Alan's looking at the plate thinking where’s the roast potato. So, I started off this tradition in Dublin and now whenever I go to places I see they're offering roast potatoes, I think I started that off. But we also have egg and onion with that. The chopped liver goes with egg and onion, it's kind of like duo. So, if you go to a wedding or a bar mitzvah and they have a traditional Friday night dinner, you'd usually get a blob of chopped liver and a blob of egg and onion on the one plate. They go hand in hand. And egg and onion . . . It can be served a number of ways, but it's usually an accompaniment for chopped liver.

Angela Hanratty  29:18
Rather than the egg being through the chopped liver?

Carolyn Collins  29:22
You know it's both. The egg has to go into the chopped liver. Chopped liver is eggs, onions and liver. Usually, I would put a package which is probably a pound of livers. I'd use two or three eggs and a big huge onion. You'd get a big bowl of it then you know. It's lovely spread out on challah, you know, on Friday night.

Angela Hanratty  29:49
Yeah. And you probably make your own challah?

Carolyn Collins  29:53
Well, I don't personally. But I have done, I have done but as you get older, Angela, you don't bother with these things. You get lazy.

Angela Hanratty  30:05
But you always have it on a Friday night.
Carolyn Collins  30:07
I do. Yes. I can get it up there in Supervalu because they get Bretzel's. You know, they get the Bretzel's challah. Sometimes my sister-in-law makes it and she's given me from time to time smaller, you know, or the Rabbi's wife sometimes drops in a few, especially during Covid . . . I would make more like kichels and sponge cakes and that type of thing. But I don't bake challahs. I think Lynn bakes her own challahs. I think she does.

Angela Hanratty  30:57
She did. She told me that. Yes. The 12 different strands.

Carolyn Collins  31:04
And all of that.

Angela Hanratty  31:07
Great. So yes, just to come back then to the chicken soup.

Carolyn Collins  31:12
You're talking about a traditional kind of Friday night meal. Yes. So, then we'd have our soup. Chicken soup. Which I make myself, make that probably twice a month and freeze, you know, because there's only two of us now. When the kids were growing up I had no trouble getting rid of the pot of soup. But now with just the two of us I usually make a batch and then freeze it. And then in that I would use lokshen. I would use sometimes rice for a change. And I'd use kneidlach. Now I used to make my own kneidlach always. And then they brought out these wonderful packets that you just add an egg to, and they're fantastic. You know, things are a lot different now than they used to be. When we were growing up, you couldn't get such a thing as a ready-made mix for kneidlach. You know, my mother wouldn't know what that was.

Angela Hanratty  32:14
I know. But these are all, the chopped liver and the chicken soup . . . this is what your grandparents would have been having on a Friday night? It was?
Carolyn Collins  32:24
Yes. Yes. They would

Angela Hanratty  32:26
So, it's come down through the ages as such. Okay. I also wanted to ask you, I'm very interested in pastrami, because . . . Claudia Roden says that pastrami, she thinks pastrami is an American invention. And I've done a bit of research on American delis, and specifically New York delis. And nobody seems to know the exact story about pastrami but there's this legend that it came from Romania and the recipe was given to somebody who looked after a suitcase for somebody else. So, I'm just wondering, I'm asking everybody, what's your view on pastrami? Was this something traditional in your family, pastrami?

Carolyn Collins  33:18
No, no. I didn't, neither Alan nor I, and in fact when we went to America, probably one of the first times, we thought it was like salt beef. It's kind of like salt beef but it has that edge. You know, that spicy thing going around the top of it? And you know, if I was going into a kosher deli, now in London, we'd go to Reubens in Baker Street. I don't know if it's still there. But we used to go there before this Covid thing and you'd have a hot salt beef sandwich, which is very traditional. Now I would always prefer hot salt beef which is actually brisket, believe it or not. It's brisket, pickled brisket, that's what salt beef is. They slice that off. I'd have that in preference to pastrami. We get pastrami now in packets. It comes processed or whatever, you know . . . I think that's an American, I do think that's an American thing. That might have come from Italian American, you know, Italians, I think rather than Jews if you know what I mean.

Angela Hanratty  34:38
Yeah, I think it was the name itself, the sound like salami, pastrami, and because the Jewish immigrants with the Italian immigrants and the Irish as well landed all around the same time so there's some confusion. Can I just ask you about the salt beef, Carolyn? What is the difference then? This is the first time I've come across salt beef. What's the difference between salt beef and corned beef?
Carolyn Collins  35:05
That's a good question. I don't know. I actually don't know the answer to that. Salt beef is, I wonder is corned beef pickled? You see, salt beef is pickled before. That's why we, I was just telling you about Passover, for example, all chickens that we get in from England are Kosher for Passover all year round. The only thing that's not Kosher for Passover is pickled meat that you would have had in your freezer from England, you know, if they send it over and it's pre-packed. Frozen, but pre-packed. And the reason that wouldn't be Kosher for Passover is because in the pickle, there's mustard seeds and things that we're not allowed to have on Passover. So, salt beef is pickled brisket. It's another name for pickled brisket. Now we don't use, we don't have corned beef. No, I've never bought, we don't buy it named as corned beef. . .

Angela Hanratty  36:34
It's just very interesting. They have this thing traditionally in Alsace called Pickelfleisch. Just what you're saying. This is pickled. Salt beef is pickled brisket. So, it's all tying in with, with what I'm looking at. Now, if I had to ask you, if I said to you, Carolyn, tell me what you think are the top five or the top ten quintessentially Ashkenazi dishes or foods What would you say?

Carolyn Collins  37:12
Well, I'd say, first of all, I think we've gone through quite a few of them there. Like gefilte fish. Chopped herring. Pickled herring. Salt beef. Latkes.

Angela Hanratty  37:33
Latkes. Yeah

Carolyn Collins  37:35
Because they go together, salt beef and latkes. You know, that's a lovely, that's a combination. Chopped liver. Chicken soup. Kneidlach. Lokshen. Klops. You know what klops is? Well, they call, my family call it klops because they were from Poland. It's like a meatloaf. You know, they were reared on that because you know, you could make, mince beef was cheaper. Don't forget these people had very little money. So, they had to make stuff go a long way. You know, so apparently mincemeat could feed a family because they used to add a good lump of challah into it. You know, I could see my grandmother used to get a lump of the challah leftover from Friday night and soak it in water and then getting the water out of it and shoving it into the
mincemeat, it'd make it go a bit further. And that would be cooked like a type of a meatloaf with onions. Salt and pepper, and egg and matzah meal would go into that to keep it bound. And you know matzah meal?

**Angela Hanratty 38:48**
Yes. I do.

**Carolyn Collins 38:49**
Matzah meal, you can't live without that. I couldn't live without matzah meal. It goes into everything. It goes into my chopped herring, goes into the gefilte fish. And it would go, if I was making a klops today . . . that would have matzah meal. And they used to use a fowl like a hen. You know, they made the chicken soup from a hen, which is a different thing to a chicken. Chicken soup is made, and the hen would be the meal, they'd eat that hen. Now today, with affluence, people say 'Oh, I gave the hen to the dog'. But you know, back in that day, you wouldn't be giving the hen to the dog. It's lovely actually, a bit of hen out of the pot. But, you know, my family wouldn't have given the hen to the dog. But people today do, they just use it literally to make the soup.

**Angela Hanratty 40:00**
Yeah, and not waste anything. So, the herrings, salt beef, the latkes, the chopped liver, the chicken soup and the gefilte fish.

**Carolyn Collins 40:10**
Then, on certain festivals, Angela, you'd have nice things like holishkes. Do you know what they are? Holishkes are basically stuffed cabbage leaves . . . in a tomato sauce . . . You know, people say to me, because they're not in Jewish circles, I'd say 'Oh, it's a festival' and they say, 'What do you do at the festival?' I say, 'We just eat'. What does it mean to you? - the kitchen! Like we're mad into food, but then I suppose everybody . . . I mean, it'll come to Easter, you guys, you'll be having your lamb or whatever, you know?
Angela Hanratty 41:34
Yeah. And Christmas the same. Sure, you spend Christmas in the kitchen . . . Let me see. I have loads there now. I've asked you about the pastrami, which I wanted, and the carp. You've just ticked a lot of boxes in my research, Carolyn, which is wonderful.

Carolyn Collins 41:51
Have I? Oh, that's great. If I've been one bit of help, I'd be happy . . . The other soup that my grandmother would make would be like a bean and barley soup. Lovely. You know, and shin beef would go into that. It'd be like a meat soup. Beans and barley and carrots and you know, turnips, and whatever you had. But it was mainly bean and barley and the meat. So, you'd get a good bit of meat, you know, in your soup. It was like a meal. It'd be a big thick soup. And the only trouble with that is that you have to be careful that it doesn't stick when you're doing it on the top of the cooker. You know, because it's so thick you have to keep stirring it otherwise it will stick . . .

Angela Hanratty 42:26
. . . a lot of this is just tying in with the practices that were in Alsace. And of course, it wasn't France at the time, the Germans had taken it over and you know that region's forward and back between the French and the Germans and has been very divided, over centuries. So, a lot of even the Yiddish language is a mixture of, you can correct me if I'm wrong here, but Hebrew and German.

Carolyn Collins 45:05
Well, there's not much Hebrew, it's mainly German. It's not really, the alphabet is the Hebrew alphabet. But from my understanding is that it's more German. I don't see any Hebrew.

Angela Hanratty 50:01
Thank you so much Carolyn.
Appendix F – Edited Interview with Fran and Bobby Kolin (25th March 2021)

Angela Hanratty 0:02
The first thing I'm going to ask you about, Fran and Bobby, is your family history, your background.

Fran Kolin 0:10
My family came from a small town, Olanour, that was in either Austria or Hungary or Poland. Near Lvo, my husband says. That was our old world. But my grandfather was born here in the States in 1898, so he grew up speaking English, but also Yiddish. I knew my great grandfather; he came over with them. When the family came over, my great grandfather was with them. And I knew him, he probably lived till I was, I don't know, maybe four, or five. I have a picture of me and him together someplace. And so, it was a European background, but very steeped in America with my father growing up, you know, speaking both, English all the time, occasionally Yiddish to my father, only Yiddish to my great grandfather. My great grandfather was always what they call a resident alien, he never went for citizenship. My grandfather was a citizen, he was born here. And that was my father's side of the family. My mother had similar roots. You know, it was what they call the old world.

Angela Hanratty 1:41
Okay. And your family settled in the Lower East Side?

Fran Kolin 1:51
Yes. When the Marder family, my maiden name is Marder, and when they emigrated, they landed at Ellis Island, and the more religious part of the family stayed in New York, the less religious part of the family went on to Boston.

Angela Hanratty 2:18
And why was that? Why did the more religious part stay in New York?
Fran Kolin  2:22
I think there were in those days, there was what they called a shtiebel on every block. A shtiebel was like a storefront synagogue, where all you needed was 10 men together and the Torah, and you got the makings of a synagogue. So, there was a lot of Jewish life on the Lower East Side.

Angela Hanratty  2:41
Okay, great. So, Fran, can I ask you then, your childhood memories of food, and particularly, I suppose, what your grandparents would have been eating or even your great grandfather? What food memories do you have?

Fran Kolin  2:59
My grandmother, my mother's mother was not a good cook. My mother was not a good cook. But every Friday night we had soup and chicken, every Friday night. And my mother's party dish if we were having company, she made meatballs and spaghetti. Which she made very well, but definitely with a, you know, more Jewish than Italian. But she tried her hand at stuffed cabbage occasionally. It was not the sweet and sour, it was not that the sweet variety that Bobby's family made. Hers was more of a beefy tomato saucy kind of variety. In Bobby's family, it was the raisins and sweet and sour variety. I don't know if it's because that's where she got her recipe, you know, from somebody who had that background. I don't really know the difference. I mean, I remember my great grandfather eating soup, just potato soup usually. My grandmother, the one I'm named after, died when she was a young woman. And then there were a series of women who might have married my grandfather, might not have married my grandfather, and my family's life's like a soap opera that you wouldn't write. I don't really have any strong memories of food related to them. Although we lived within, you know, 20 blocks of each other, I didn't see them all that often. My grandfather was not a talkative man. My step grandmother was a wonderful kind person, but she had her own thing going on. My mother's mother and I were fairly close, but also not from the cooks, which is unusual for Jewish families. And so, my mom was not a great cook. But I turned all of that around. When I got engaged, and I went to my mother and I said "Bobby's mother is such a good cook, you know, and I'm so panicky" and she said, "Listen, when it comes right down to it, if you can read you can cook" and in fact, she was right and so I, you know, invested some time in that. So, I have made brisket and corned beef and I have made shlishkes and, I have not done stuffed cabbage
but I've done stuffed peppers. Matzah brei and kugel, you know, noodle kugel. Yeah, I figured it all out on my own.

**Angela Hanratty 5:08**
Great. Bobby, can I ask you, do you have any memories of food as a child?

**Bobby Kolin 5:56**
Only memories of food!

**Angela Hanratty 5:58**
Only memories?! Great!

**Bobby Kolin 6:02**
My father's family came from an area in the Czech Republic. That was in the area of Vienna. I think.

**Fran Kolin 6:19**
Well, there is a town in the Czech Republic with the name of Kolin.

**Bobby Kolin 6:25**
And while there are no Jews left there now, there is a Jewish cemetery there and an old synagogue that they're using for something else. But then as they made their way over, we're talking about my father's family now. He married a few times, my grandfather, and my grandmother would cook every Friday night. It would be chicken, chicken soup. Sometimes it would be stuffed cabbage. She was excellent on that. Gefilte fish.

**Fran Kolin 7:10**
She made her own gefilte fish.
Bobby Kolin 7:11
Yes, it was excellent. And there are very few like that around now. So, we have to search out that sweet gefilte fish with the horseradish. She made her own horseradish, which we affectionately called nosebleed.

Angela Hanratty 7:31
The red horseradish?

Bobby Kolin 7:36
The red was after the fact. You made the white first. And then you added the beet juice.

Fran Kolin 7:42
The horseradish itself grates white, it's white and you grate it white, and then you add beet juice to get that red colour. And it can be very strong. They actually, a lot of recipes will warn you when you grate it not to sniff it because . . .

Bobby Kolin 7:55
Wear goggles. Yeah. We would, amongst other family members and not at the same time, we would introduce the horseradish to our friends saying, "This smells funny". And we'd hold it under our noses but we would never breathe it in, and then let our friends breathe in the fumes which was just toxic.

Fran Kolin 8:27
Talk about your mother's family.

Bobby Kolin 8:30
Yeah, well, that was my father's family. My grandmother in my father's family also baked challah every weekend. During Prohibition, they made their own wines. And the family basically would get together Friday nights for Shabbat and my grandmother would cook and all the daughter in laws and daughters would get together and clean up afterwards. That was the job. My mother's family on the other hand, my grandfather, her father came from Riga,
Latvia. There are still some thoughts today as to whether his father died at sea or was disposed of at sea since there was a lot of anti-Semitism at the time.

Fran Kolin 9:32
So yeah, his grandfather was named after his own father because he died before he was born.

Bobby Kolin 9:41
My grandmother, my mother's mother, was one of 12 children. Also, my great grandparents. I knew three of my great grandparents, by the way. My great grandparents came from mostly Russian soil. I don't know how my great grandmother was as a cook but there were six boys and six girls. All six girls had their specialty. My grandmother's was rice pudding . . . In any case, my father's family gravitated towards the bakery goods. Rolls were always on the table, desserts. They lived in Brooklyn and Brooklyn was famous for bakeries, some of which have not been able to be duplicated and I still dream of some of those cakes. My mother's family on the other hand . . . oh, one more on my father's family who moved towards the coast on New Jersey, which is right now a very big orthodox, ultra-orthodox community. He was what they call a shohet. Now he was a butcher, and he would kosher kill chickens and meat and, so that's where the meat started coming into the family. On the other side, my mother's family, we had two delicatessens, kosher delicatessens; one in Brooklyn, one in the Bronx, that's where the family would congregate. It was tongue, corned beef, pastrami, hot dogs, kishke.

Fran Kolin 13:05
Do you know about kishke?

Angela Hanratty 13:07
Karen was telling me about kishke. I hadn't heard of it before, but she told me it's a kind of a sausage?

Fran Kolin 13:13
Except it is really not meat involved. I mean they might use some meat juices but it's like a very, very spicy kind of bread pudding, dense and more like a really compressed stuffing.
And it was wrapped in sausage casing.

Right, which is why they called it kishke because your kishkes was your guts. The word kishke, like you say 'he got punched in the kishkes' you know, was your guts, and so the sausage casing was that. Nowadays they wrap it in either like a wax paper or some sort of a plastic . . . used to be you cooked it with that sausage casing around the outside, you know you'd cook it, you'd cut it, make coins like you know that big and fry them but now you take the outsides off . . .

. . . ours would always come with gravy. Also, there were the K foods. There was kasha, I don't know if you know about that.

Kasha and varnishkes. So, kasha is like groats, it's groats. You mix that with, you make the kasha, you add fried onions and then you mix it with bow tie shaped pasta which is the classic. That's kasha varnishkes.

So, there was kasha. There was kishke. There were kneidlach which are dumplings.

Matzah balls

Knishes
Knishes, which was potato either fried or baked depending upon what city your family came from in Europe. But this is all delicatessens type stuff, so when my family would gather, and like I said there were 12 aunts and uncles and their children and their children. I'm very close with cousins who are still, thank god, alive, who are actually my second cousins once removed.

Because of the generational shift. Now there's a dish called cholent which to me is like the thing that stands out, and I learned how to make it a number of years ago. Bobby's sister had a recipe that was straight from the old country. Peel the carrots, peel the potatoes, do all these things. I looked at that and basically, you know, using the more modern conveniences of a bag of baby carrots, a bag of small potatoes that you didn't need to peel. But I still make it the old-fashioned way. I put it up about 10 o'clock at night and it cooks all night and all the next day, and it's beef and potatoes, carrots and fried onions, garlic, kishke and three kinds of beans, and it makes this huge, I mean, I make it in two huge pots.

It ends up as a single colour.

Yeah, the goal in our tradition is to have it sort of the mushy brown. There's no pretty way to serve it. looks like a mushy, if you get it right, a mushy creamy sort of brown mess with meat on your plate with some strings of meat and little pieces of carrot you can see. I've tried adding sweet potato through the years . . . the thing about cholent is that almost all of the ingredients are optional. Cholent used to be the Friday afternoon, Friday morning, the mother would put together whatever she had, and in the afternoon the youngest child in the family would put the pot, this is in the old country, would put the pot in the wagon and drag it to the baker, because although nobody would open the store on Saturday the oven would stay hot from Friday's baking. So, they put that pot in there on Friday afternoon and it would stay there until Saturday afternoon when the little boy with the wagon would go and retrieve his pot from wherever it was inside the giant oven.
Bobby Kolin  18:04
This would be after services.

Fran Kolin  18:05
Right, after morning services and this would be the midday meal that was really the stick to your ribs kind of stuff. I use kishke. It melts in, it's got that great flavour. People do it with, you'll see recipes for cholent with ketchup, with Coca Cola, no beans, more beans. Sometimes you'll look at it, somebody will say "Here's my plate of cholent" and you can see all the things, it looks more like a stew. It's really, it was way before cookbooks were ever invented and it was designed for people who had very, very little to be able to put together what they had. It was poor people's food.

Bobby Kolin  18:51
And like I said, it wasn't . . . when somebody says they've plated a meal to be pleasing to look at, you couldn't . . .

Fran Kolin  19:01
. . . there’s just no way.

Bobby Kolin  19:02
. . . you couldn't make this pleasing to look at with a coat of paint!

Fran Kolin  19:06
Except for people who know what it tastes like, who when they look at it they go aaah!

Angela Hanratty  19:13
Can I just ask, Fran, what meat do you use? What meat do you use in your cholent?

Fran Kolin  19:20
It depends, you know, what looks good but it's basically, it's either flank steak or brisket or chuck, and sometimes a combination of the two.
And what you want is for it to fall apart because it's cooked so long.

Yeah, it's like slow, a slow cooker basically?

Well, my daughter in law did an experiment. She set up a pot of cholent in her slow cooker and a pot in the oven the way I would make it all night, and she did both and then they compared. And she said the oven one came out better because somehow, it was dry it was drier. I guess maybe the all-around heat coalesced everything the way it should. She said the other one was okay. The consistency was not as good but the next day when both were leftover, and she mixed them all together she said it was fine. So, you know, a slow cooker can certainly do it. But I think somehow that all night cooking, and mind you, that all night cooking includes getting up twice to check on it. Because you have to do it on 250 on the oven. 250 sometimes is a hard number for an oven to hold because it's very low. And so, I would get up and I would, you know, give it a stir and make sure the oven was still hot. You know, it's a labour of love. It's like having a new-born baby . . .

. . . okay. So, you've actually gone through an awful lot that I was going to ask you about. What do you think are the key dishes of Ashkenazi food? If I had to ask you, you know, what would be the most traditional? The most important dishes?

Chicken. Soup and chicken.

With matzah balls. And/or noodles. But that's really the plain . . .
Fran Kolin  21:31
That was your everyday, I mean, every week. We never had anything else on a Friday night. As a matter of fact, when I went to sleep away camp when I was a kid, and Friday rolled around and they served fish for dinner, I said "I can't eat that". And they said "Why?" And I said, "because it's Friday night and I have to have soup and chicken". And the lady sat down with me. She said, "That's a tradition, whereas the Catholic children must have fish". And I said, "Oh, okay". But soup and chicken I think was the bottom line.

Bobby Kolin  22:05
The other dishes had to somewhere come along with it. The kugels, the sweet kugels. The stuffed cabbage. That gave you meat and a vegetable all wrapped in one.

Fran Kolin  22:21
And then there's the latkes. There are a million varieties of latkes. Potato latkes.

Bobby Kolin  22:29
Potatoes have all sorts of preparations. The bakeries made something called potato nik, which we still haven't been able to figure out exactly what it is. But on Friday, we can go downtown and pick up.

Fran Kolin  22:47
There's a bakery that gets them in and I, I've never seen anything like it before, the consistency.

Bobby Kolin  22:52
We couldn't deconstruct it. But I remember having it as a kid.

Fran Kolin  22:56
Yeah. When I was young, my mom used to render her own schmaltz. You know, it's chicken fat. When I said that, I was talking to somebody and I said on Saturday mornings, we would watch cartoons on TV and I would have, me and my brothers would have a piece of challah with schmaltz spread on it. And he went "Ooh!", and I said, "You're spreading butter on yours".
It's the same thing. It's the fat from an animal. You know, mine was just made the night before you know.

Angela Hanratty 23:34
What about chopped liver?

Fran Kolin 23:39
Yeah.

Bobby Kolin 23:39
The meal has to have chopped liver.

Fran Kolin 23:41
Well, not everybody made their own but a lot of people did. My mother had one of those grinders that you put the livers in the top and you ground it and it came out on the side like …

Bobby Kolin 23:54
Some people would grind in, and my preference, hard boiled eggs to change the consistency and give . . . I like it. It's a better flavour.

Fran Kolin 24:05
We mixed it with caramelised onions, called fried onions. Yeah.

Bobby Kolin 24:10
Must have caramelised onions. MUST! Have caramelised onions.

Fran Kolin 24:17
As a matter of fact, for Passover, this week I have in an order to pick up a pound of chopped liver. But I already have my onions caramelised in the refrigerator because they never put in enough fried onions. So, I'll get it from the store and then I'll add my own fried onions.

Angela Hanratty 24:37
Yeah, I'm sorry. I know. It's Passover tomorrow, isn't it?

**Fran Kolin** 24:42

Well, the holiday officially starts Saturday evening . . . Friday evening is when you start your prep and Saturday day, you're really on Passover foods, but the first Seder is Saturday night. They give you a day before

**Bobby Kolin** 25:02

At least a day before

**Fran Kolin** 25:04

Oh, there's a lot of prep on Passover. I mean when I was doing a Seder . . . my list of preparation would start five days before . . .

**Bobby Kolin** 25:33

We've had holiday dinners with upwards of 24 people.

**Fran Kolin** 25:37

Yeah, we had 25 people one year where there was a table directly in front of the front door. God forbid there was a fire . . . a number of people sit against the wall so that the table is against them and then there's another side. Everybody's got to go to the bathroom before they sit down. You're not getting up during this event.

**Angela Hanratty** 26:00

Very good. Now. Gefilte fish you've mentioned. Would that be a regular thing?

**Fran Kolin** 26:08

Gefilte fish, yeah. It's pretty common. I mean nowadays people aren't making it themselves. There are many brands on the market. Some of them are regular, some of them are more sweet, which is more what we do. It's got a little sweetness. There's also frozen, comes in a log. You cook it, you boil it in the paper that it's wrapped in and you add onions and carrots to the pot so even though you're not making it yourself you're still cooking it. But yeah, gefilte fish is
pretty common. Then you know, we didn't talk at all about bagels and the kind of stuff you get in the appetising store, like white fish salads and chopped herring. Those kinds of things, that's like the cold kind of thing.

**Bobby Kolin 26:57**
That's a Sunday morning breakfast traditionally.

**Fran Kolin 27:00**
When my kids fly in, when they come to visit us in New York the first meal they want the next morning is from Ess-a-Bagel, our very famous bagel store and it costs me like $130 to get. I mean, this kind of fish stuff is very expensive. Sable, which is a very mild kind of fish that they slice, lox, these things are upwards of . . . what, sable was like $25 a half pound or something. It's like $50 a pound.

**Bobby Kolin 27:37**
You didn't swallow it quick because why would you swallow it? Your money's out the window!

**Fran Kolin 27:43**
Yeah. That kind of stuff is an expensive deal, but you know, we don't have it all that often.

**Angela Hanratty 27:50**
Why is it so expensive though?

**Fran Kolin 27:54**
I don't know.

**Bobby Kolin 27:55**
Everything from scarcity of this type of food to preparation. This has to be smoked.

**Fran Kolin 28:01**
Yes, so this is all smoked fish.
Bobby Kolin 28:03
And you have to have people who know how to slice it.

Fran Kolin 28:06
Yes. I mean, when I ask for a half a pound of sable they take out the big thing. They lay it on the table and there's a special tool. It's like a tweezer, and they pick out the pin bones that are in the area they're going to cut and then they slice it with that flensing knife . . . The slices have to be thick enough to hold together but thin enough so that you're really getting the best taste. Yeah, same thing with lox and smoked salmon and, you know, all of those things.

Angela Hanratty 28:35
Yeah. So, herring would be from both of your backgrounds and herring would be traditional?

Fran Kolin 28:43
Yes. There would be regular herring in wine sauce, they call it. That's pickled herring, pieces. Then they would take that herring and add a cream sauce, like a sour cream sauce to it. That would be called creamed herring. All of these things have onions with them. And then chopped herring which is sweeter and sometimes, I know, that . . . it's spread or dipped. Sometimes I've seen recipes that call for hard boiled eggs or applesauce or whatever, but it's very fine ground. It's almost like a paste.

Bobby Kolin 29:18
Actually, I don't know if this means anything. However, you spoke with Karen? Karen's first husband said one year something to the effect of Jews remember the holidays on what they ate!

Fran Kolin 29:38
I told her that. Jews are the only people he knows that reminisce about the meals they've eaten.

Angela Hanratty 29:48
Yeah. Great. I reminisce about meals I've eaten too! The only thing, I want to come back to is pastrami and, Bobby, your family had delis. I'm very interested in pastrami.
Bobby Kolin  30:10
Okay. One thing about corned beef and pastrami, specifically those two, is that people will go into a restaurant and order a pastrami sandwich or a corned beef sandwich and ask for it to be sliced lean, have the fat cut away. As somebody whose family was involved in that type of food the fat is where the taste is. If you say cut away the fat . . .

Fran Kolin  30:42
If you say lean it's just not as good a sandwich

Bobby Kolin  30:46
By the time you finish that sandwich your mouth should be shining. If you turned out the light your mouth should be shining with the fat that was dripping from the sandwich

Fran Kolin  30:58
The funny thing about pastrami is that now they have pastrami lots of different things. You can get pastrami slices of turkey, a package of pastrami turkey. So, they've taken the idea of coating the outside with these pastrami spices and roasting it that way.

Bobby Kolin  31:19
It's not the same.

Fran Kolin  31:20
It's not the same but for people who don't want to eat the beef, they'd rather have turkey, you can get pastrami turkey. It's funny.

Angela Hanratty  31:31
What I was going to say was, I'm interested in pastrami. I've read the story, you know, I've read a couple of books about American delis and the story about somebody from Romania asking somebody to look after a trunk for them and in return they gave them this recipe for pastrami which came from Romania, which was called basturma, I think in Romania. It originally was goose, and then Claudia Roden . . . would disagree with that and say that pastrami is an
American invention. I just want to hear your views on that. Would your grandparents, would they have had pastrami?

**Bobby Kolin  32:41**

It was brought here and then improved upon depending upon your neighbourhood, what town you came from in Europe. There was a lot of, I mean, you would look at the Lower East Side of Manhattan and say that's where the Jews are. But on every block, and I've taken people down there almost as a tour guide because I grew up down there, you will see one, two, sometimes three buildings that had a Star of David somewhere on the building, that they're now something else but, when the Jews started coming over and settled on the East Side each one would have their own synagogue from the, and the congregation of their own town. Such as if they came from Warsaw then you would have this synagogue.

**Fran Kolin  33:53**

They would find each other.

**Angela Hanratty  33:55**

Yes.

**Bobby Kolin  33:57**

There would be the synagogue and how did they, how did they prepare . . . the pastrami there. On the next block or maybe on the same block, how it was prepared in Vienna and let's face it, the concentration of population of the Lower East Side was greater than that of, what was the hellhole in India? It was the greatest population of any, anywhere in the world in history. So, you would, everything melded together and while somebody used this much garlic and somebody used that much pepper, when they got, when somebody opened up a delicatessen on that block

**Fran Kolin  34:51**

They would make, they would prepare it for their, for the customers that were there, you know? I couldn't tell you whether it is started here but it seems to me that they must have come up with something, some idea, you know from the from the old country.
Angela Hanratty  35:08
I'm just interested, pastrami is always, no matter what spice mix or, pickling mix they put on it, it was always brisket? Yes? Yeah, okay. That's interesting because, you see, in Alsace they have brisket that they pickle and it's called Pickelfleisch, fleisch in German meaning meat . . .

Fran Kolin  35:33
That would be corned beef.

Angela Hanratty  35:39
What would be the difference now would you say in pastrami?

Bobby Kolin  35:43
Just the coating of the spices and don't forget, you might have seasoned it but then it has to sit there, overnight, couple of days and then you had some.

Angela Hanratty  36:02
Fantastic. Great. Thank you. Just one last question . . . Jewish people in New York, do you eat in delis often?

Fran Kolin  36:54
I would say not as much as I would like to but only because of the price.

Bobby Kolin  37:00
And also, it's not healthy. Times have changed.

Fran Kolin  37:07
Yeah, we eat much more consciously. You know, it’s a lot of fat, it’s a lot of money, eating at a deli whereas it used to be . . . during this year when we were quarantined a friend of ours went down to Katz’s on Houston Street, big famous deli, and she called me. She said “I’m at the counter. What do you want?” So, I said to her “I want a sandwich of centre cut tongue”. We didn’t talk about tongue either. “I want a centre cut tongue sandwich and a square knish”.
That was $33. Now granted there was enough meat in the sandwich for Bobby and I to share, you know, take it apart and absolutely.

**Bobby Kolin  37:55**
Deli sandwiches are stuffed.

**Fran Kolin  37:56**
It’s expensive, especially, I mean, if you’re in a kosher deli or even kosher style deli which most of them are nowadays, you’re paying for the, for the oversight of the mashgiach who is, the mashgiach is the one who, the rabbi or someone from the Kosher Authority whose job it is to make sure that it’s all kosher and to put his stamp of approval on it. When you get that stamp of approval the prices skyrocket . . . so, eating in a kosher deli is therefore more expensive than eating in almost any other restaurant. So yeah. I do love it.

**Bobby Kolin  39:51**
Most of them have, very few of them left.

**Fran Kolin  39:55**
Yeah, not a lot. In the city we have Katz's downtown, which is sort of, it's counter service. You sit at tables amongst a million other people. 2nd Avenue Deli which has two sites now in Manhattan. That's, you know, you sit at a table like a regular restaurant. You get served.

**Bobby Kolin  40:12**
I would say in New York City maybe you would have 15 or 18 in the entire city whereas it used to be the neighbourhood restaurant, yeah.

**Fran Kolin  40:26**
Yeah. After my mother’s unveiling, after she passed, the immediate family went out to a kosher deli in Queens and we all sat at an enormous table and talked and laughed and ate because that's what Jews do, regardless of the circumstances you know. No, I love eating at a deli. We just don't do it that often.
Angela Hanratty 40:57
Okay. And so, you mentioned Katz's deli, 2nd Avenue Deli. Karen told me about these. Any others that I should be looking at because I'm going to look at menus.

Fran Kolin 41:07
Ben's, which is in Queens, I think. That's the one. Is it still open that one?

Bobby Kolin 41:13
I'm not sure.

Fran Kolin 41:14
There's a restaurant, a deli called Sarges on Third Avenue in Manhattan and . . .

Bobby Kolin 41:24
There’re a few neighbourhood ones around. There's one on 72nd Street.

Fran Kolin 41:30
I don't remember the name of that one. Who knows what's still open anymore also?

Angela Hanratty 41:35
Yeah, I suppose with Covid.

Bobby Kolin 41:37
Of all those delicatessens, I just want to go back a little bit. Tongue, corned beef and pastrami and hotdogs, that's what people picture. But the true delicatessen lover will gravitate eventually towards tongue.

Angela Hanratty 43:30
Okay. Great. Thank you so much!
Appendix G – Edited Interview with Celia Vimont (29th March 2021)

Angela Hanratty 0:01
The first thing I’m going to ask you, Celia, is about your family background, about your family origins.

Celia Vimont 0:09
So, my father's family is from Latvia and my mother's family's from Lithuania

Angela Hanratty 0:19
And were your mother and father born in America or would your grandparents have been born in America?

Celia Vimont 0:30
So, my mother's parents were both born here but they were the babies of their family so they both had older siblings who were born in the old country. But my grandparents on my mother's side were born here. My father's side, his mother was born here but his father was born in Latvia and emigrated to the United States when he was a young man.

Angela Hanratty 1:02
So, can I just ask you then about your childhood memories of food. Either about your own memories or maybe, thinking about your grandparents what would the traditions have been? What can you remember?

Celia Vimont 1:18
We spent a lot of time with my mother's parents. They lived here in New York with us. I would not say that my grandmother was much of a cook, but she was quite the connoisseur of takeout, Jewish takeout. So, she lived on the Upper West Side of New York which is a real big Jewish neighbourhood so we would do a lot of takeout of deli. My grandfather liked tongue and pastrami and corned beef, of course, on rye and, I didn't love all that stuff, but my grandmother would always treat me with Jewish baked goods. Do you know what kichel is? Kichel it was like a round of fried dough with sugar on it that, I don't know. I guess they sell it. I don't know
where it originated but anyway it's a Jewish treat and every time I'd go visit my grandmother she'd always buy me some kichel. You dip it in the tea or the coffee. And let's see, what other, you know, when I think of Jewish foods I'm thinking it's a very apt time because I always think of, say, Passover of course, because we have our family way of making the charoset, and it's very interesting when I talk to all my friends. Every family has a very different way of making it and everyone thinks their way is the right way. You know, the charoset and the tzsimmes, you know which is the side dish with all the vegetables. As a matter of fact, I just made it this weekend, and the matzah ball soup. We would always have brisket and chicken so, you know, when I think of Jewish food I'm really thinking very much of Passover but also the high holidays, so Rosh Hashanah, actually would pretty much have this. A very similar meal except we could have bread with it. But I mean we also have brisket and chicken and tzsimmes, and then of course the apples with the honey . . . What else? So, my grandfather loved this thing that I don't even think exists anymore. He would sit down and start a meal with pot cheese and sour cream. Pot cheese I think is kind of like cottage cheese, I'm not sure. I think it's like a big curd cottage cheese, I looked for it recently in the grocery store. You can't even find it, but it was some kind of cottage cheese and then he'd mix sour cream in with it and he would just have this by itself, you know. Kind of like as a side dish in a meal. Needless to say, he was a very large man. He would have that, then he would progress to the tongue sandwich. Let's see. What else, what other things are people talking about?

Angela Hanratty  5:00
I've got some dishes that I'm particularly interested in here. Chopped liver. Would that be traditional?

Celia Vimont  5:12
So, chopped liver, as in my family, we did not make it but we bought it. And there's a funny story in my family. My husband, when I met him, he wasn't Jewish, and he grew up in Texas and he had never heard of chopped liver. Never. In my family, it was a great delicacy. And we brought it out for the finest occasions. And when I brought him to meet my parents, they served him some chopped liver and you could see him go, 'Oh my god, what is this?'. He took a little bite and I realised that he, so I ate most of it for him. I said think of it as pate, you know, but in our family even now, because I'm eating matzah this week, I just was thinking I've got to go get some chopped liver to have on the matzah. Yes, yes. One of our favourites.
Angela Hanratty  6:03
Okay. Forgive my pronunciation, cholent?

Celia Vimont  6:08
Oh, yes. You know our family didn't have that. But I know that it's very popular in orthodox families, because it's the meal that you can put on the stove and then you're not supposed to turn the stove on and off during Shabbat. So, you just stick it on the stove for the whole Shabbat. But no, we never had that.

Angela Hanratty  6:32
Okay. You've already mentioned chicken soup. Would that have been traditional in your in your house?

Celia Vimont  6:43
Oh, definitely. Yes. Yes. Although again, we didn't make it. We always bought it. Yes, very, you know, chicken soup with the matzah balls for the holidays. But then, as my mother, like every other Jewish mother, anytime anyone had the sniffles, or sick or didn't feel well, the chicken soup came out.

Angela Hanratty  7:05
I'm very interested now in pastrami, because I've done a bit of research into pastrami . . . and really, nobody seems to know exactly where it came from. And there are different stories and there seems to be a bit of a legend around it, maybe. So, pastrami in your house when you were growing up, or your grandparents even for example, would pastrami have been a thing that they would . . .

Celia Vimont  7:34
I'd definitely say when we were buying the cold cuts. You know, definitely my grandfather loved it. Did my parents eat it? Maybe. It was definitely, though, my grandfather, that was one of his favourites for sure.
And what other meats then, you've mentioned tongue

Tongue which always kind of horrified me. He loved it. And I don't think you really see, either you don't see it anymore when you go into New York deli. I mean, it's not such a big thing anymore. But he really liked it. Corned beef, he would like. You know, those were probably the three meats that I associate with him and his favourite meals.

And when you said that you'd have brisket and chicken, what way would that brisket be cooked?

Again, we would buy it takeout, but my cousin gave me a wonderful recipe from her mother-in-law that had so many onions. I made it once and it was delicious. And at first, I thought how can you eat, you know it was just a flavour, I guess, that kind of melted and caramelised. Just tonnes and tonnes of onions that you cooked and put in with the meat. You could put the meat in with all these onions. And it was delicious.

And it would be, would it be roasted or slow cooked?

Slow cooked. This one was slow cooked in a pot with all these onions for many, many hours.

Okay. So, I suppose that to an extent is a little bit like cholent, is it?

I don't know but I haven't had that so I couldn't really compare it for you.
Angela Hanratty  9:26
Great. Okay. Celia, if you had to list off the quintessential Ashkenazi foods, what would you say, the top 10. What would you include?

Celia Vimont  9:46
Well, for sure, brisket. Chicken at every holiday meal and every Shabbat meal, every dinner. Matzah ball soup. Well, we haven't talked about latkes, but you know Chanukah certainly the latkes. Tzsimmes with the side dish. I don't know if charoset counts because you really only have it during Passover but it is a food that you may put over that every Ashkenazi family, or every Jewish family makes for Passover . . . Kugel, of course. Yes, how did I forget that. Noodle kugel and then for Passover you make it with potatoes.

Angela Hanratty  11:21
What about, people have been talking to me about herring, chopped herring?

Celia Vimont  11:27
Yeah. My grandfather loved that too. Yeah, in the sauce, in the white sauce

Angela Hanratty  11:36
Okay. And gefilte fish?

Celia Vimont  11:39
Gefilte fish, yes, but really our family mostly just has that at Seder.

Angela Hanratty  11:49
So, it wouldn't be something you'd have every Friday night?

Celia Vimont  11:54
Our family, no. Although my grandparents might have had it, but by the time it came down to my family's Shabbat we wouldn't have it every Friday night.
Angela Hanratty  12:04
So Friday night standard for you would be chicken?

Celia Vimont  12:10
Yeah, and then of course a challah.

Angela Hanratty  12:15
And chopped liver not so much, just special occasions?

Celia Vimont  12:19
Yeah. You'll bring that out when the guests come.

Angela Hanratty  12:24
Okay, great. So, I just have another couple of questions for you Celia. New York delis - interesting to hear that your family traditionally buys these foods from the delis. I've asked other people, do Jewish people in New York eat in delis and they say not so much, but you obviously buy the food to take out.

Celia Vimont  12:54
We did take out from deli like, for instance, Katz's deli. You go to Katz's deli even now during the pandemic there's a line out the door. It's always tourists. So that's not where I would necessarily go. If we go to our corner delis or, there's the Carnegie Deli. There're some very famous delis in New York, the 2nd Avenue Deli, but they're very expensive and if you were having a party for people you might splurge and go there and get stuff but just, you know, for your own family to have a sandwich - probably not. You'd probably go to your neighbourhood deli, or even just go to your, every big supermarket here has a deli section. You can go get your sliced meats here in any supermarket.

Angela Hanratty  13:48
And would that be kosher, that meat then, if you're buying it from a supermarket?
Celia Vimont  13:53
Ah, we're not kosher so, it seems unlikely. I mean, I think you can probably get pre-sliced, packaged kosher meats but no. Your neighbourhood supermarket in New York, if you were kosher you wouldn't want to get it there. Even if they said the meat was kosher are you really going to trust that the slicer is kosher? So, I would say probably not.

Angela Hanratty  14:24
Okay. So that's interesting because what I’m hearing from you is that it's the big names like Katz's and 2nd Avenue Deli, they're the ones that are very expensive, but you can go to a deli and you'll not pay huge money?

Celia Vimont  14:41
So, you can go to your neighbourhood supermarket and go to the deli. There's a deli counter in every supermarket and so, you know, if I’m going for my family that just gets a slice of turkey or roast beef, I'm just going to my neighbourhood supermarket and get that.

Angela Hanratty  14:56
Yeah. And then, apart from the supermarkets, would there be smaller delis that you would frequent? You know, that wouldn't be the big name because I'm going to look at some of the big famous ones in New York. I'm looking at their menus, but there are other delis?

Celia Vimont  15:11
You know what a bodega is? You know, the corner store. A bodega is what we call the corner store. So, every corner store, they may not have pastrami, they may not have corned beef, but they're going to have roast beef, turkey, you know, they're going to have the basic stuff you can get. So, every neighbourhood has those stores, too. They don't have a huge selection, but they have your milk, they have your soda, you can buy your lottery ticket, you can buy a newspaper, and then you can get a freshly made sandwich there.

Angela Hanratty  15:52
Okay, if you wanted, but if you wanted to get chopped liver, or if you wanted to buy in chicken soup, they wouldn't do that.
**Celia Vimont 15:59**

Chopped liver. I know because I've looked for it, that’s a little harder to find. Like there's a couple of grocery stores that have it, that's more of a specialty item. You have to hunt around for that a little bit. And chicken soup, everyone has, but with the matzoh balls, if you're not going to make them yourself, you have to hunt around a little bit for those. So certainly, you are going to come to New York, right, after this and check out all these places?

**Angela Hanratty 16:36**

Yes! The final question then is the most famous delis because I am looking at these. I've heard of Katz's and 2nd Avenue and Ben's as well. And the other one was?

**Celia Vimont 17:20**

Carnegie Deli. I'm not even sure if that's open anymore.

**Angela Hanratty 17:23**

Sarge's? No? And, and you've mentioned Carnegie Deli. Is there any other?

**Celia Vimont 17:32**

Let me just look up . . . . unfortunately, some places have closed. Stage Deli is a big one. I don't even know if that's even around. Let me just Google that now. No. Stage Deli is closed, unfortunately. Is Carnegie Deli open? That's open. Okay. Right. So, you have Stage, 2nd Avenue, Katz's, Carnegie, Sarge's, Ben's. That covers the major ones that I can think of.

**Angela Hanratty 18:15**

Yeah. And you would think that they are representative then, their menu would be representative of traditional Ashkenazi food culture?

**Celia Vimont 18:26**

Yeah. I mean, that's as close as you're going to get. I think if you want it all in one place, those are good places to go. Yeah.
Angela Hanratty  18:34

Okay, Celia, Thank you so much.
Appendix H – Edited Interview with Lou and Arlene Marder (2nd April 2021)

Angela Hanratty 0:02
The first thing I'm going to ask you, Lou and Arlene, is about your family background.

Lou Marder 0:09
Okay, well, what would you like to know? Where we're from? Okay, my grandparents, all four of my grandparents were born in the United States. They were born in the early 1900s, 1900 and 1903, in that era. However, my great grandparents, were born in Poland. Things being what they were in those days, it was Poland. The joke in the family was that one week it was Poland, the next week it was Russia, then the next week it was Germany. Whoever had their hands on the land, that's where. But they were born in Poland, you know, they grew up it was Poland. Arlene can tell you about her family.

Arlene Marder 1:01
My family also came from Poland. And sometimes as he says, about my family, sometimes it was Russia, to the point where the last name they had was a hyphenated name. They had a Russian name, Pilasovitz, for when it was Russia, and the following Tuesday, when it was Polish, they were Polanski. So, the question really was, what's your name? Who's asking?

Lou Marder 1:36
Whoever was in charge. That's where you belong. Okay, just to go from there. Like I say, my great grandparents came over from Poland. And the rest of my family, like I said, my grandparents were born here in the United States. Some of them were born in New York. I had, one or two of them were born in Boston. But my heritage is Polish.

Angela Hanratty 2:05
Okay, so you've both Polish backgrounds then. So, I'm going to ask both of you, Lou and Arlene, any childhood memories you have of food, I suppose, that your grandparents would have cooked or even if you can remember your great grandparents?
Lou Marder  2:27
It's funny because all my grandparents had the same upbringing. They had that, and then they passed that along through the generations. There was a lot of meat products. We ate chicken. Chicken was the, we always had chicken on the Sabbath, which is Friday night and Saturday, always. That consisted of chicken, chicken soup. And you know, a side dish or something. The style is pretty much like we would have it even now. It was boiled chicken with soup and a vegetable. Challah. Are you familiar with challah bread? That was also, that was part of the tradition. Friday night for the Sabbath. There was a separate blessing said with challah, challah bread.

Arlene Marder  3:19
It's a light bread.

Lou Marder  3:21
Are you familiar with that?

Angela Hanratty  3:22
I am. Yeah, I'm familiar with challah. But everybody I speak to in in New York pronounces it chall-ee.

Lou Marder  3:34
I'll explain why. The 'huh' sound is strictly European. There is no corresponding part to the English alphabet. There is no letter. In Hebrew there is. So, the Hebrew pronunciation would be challee, haroset, Chanukah. But in America, there is no, they start with the H Hanukkah. Rather than Chanukah. It's the same product. It's a light bread. It's traditionally braided. And like I say, it was very traditional for the Sabbath, for Friday night. That was on the weekends. But meat, we ate kosher meat. I don't know what you know or don't know about kosher meat, but the meat had to be prepared a certain way. There are things that are not allowed to be eaten. You cannot eat . . . anything from a pig. The bacon, pork, any of that was taboo, cannot be eaten. There are very strict rules concerning what could be eaten. Same thing with fish products. You can have almost any kind of fish. But you can't have the bottom dweller, you can't have lobster, you can't have clams. They're considered dirty, if you'll pardon that expression. And they were taboo in my house, they were taboo in my parents. When my parents grew up in my
grandparents’ house, it was taboo. Cannot be eaten. Period . . . but we couldn't eat meat every day, nobody could afford meat every day. So, there were dairy products, things like, you know, vegetables. Every type of vegetable is allowed. I can't think of any vegetable that's not allowed, even the most obscure things . . . dairy products, pretty much things with cream milk, butter. All was allowed. Eggs are allowed. Now you get into certain rules concerning combining dairy products with meat products. That's not allowed. There’re biblical references, I can't really cite them other than the fact that I can tell you that not allowed. Oh, my wife said she knows.

Arlene Marder  6:08
Well, it's a paraphrase, the actual biblical reference. You're not supposed to eat a cow or eat a meat product or cook it in the milk of its mother. What this meant was, not literally, but that you were making, say beef, you couldn't put milk in tomato cream sauce.

Lou Marder  6:31
So, you want to eat a hamburger? That's fine. No cheese on top. That's a milk product. You can't combine. And then there are certain things that are neither. For example, eggs. You can eat with everything. It's neither dairy nor is it considered meat. You can have that with anything. Or by itself.

Arlene Marder  6:50
The word for neutral is called parve, meaning can be used with anything. All eggs are parve. All vegetables are parve, all fruit is parve.

Lou Marder  7:10
Things you drink, other than milk. For example, juice, orange juice, parve. Coffee, water, even water, seltzer, soda. Those are all considered parve products. You can use it with either. And Arlene and I both grew up in kosher households where there was no combining. Our parents served a meat dinner, chicken or meat. There was no butter, there was no milk, there was nothing like that. They were absolutely kept separate.
Arlene Marder  7:30
There was a lot of meat. There was a lot of dairy substitutes used to try to make the same taste, like margarine. Margarine was made out of like an oil, and you could use margarine to make like a taste of dairy.

Angela Hanratty  8:28
And that's still how, you know, going back to the Sabbath dinner, chicken, chicken soup, and challah. You'd still have that on a Friday?

Arlene Marder  8:43
Still very traditional, very common. Sabbath, the Friday night dinner is still more special than any other dinner. If you're poor, and you can make one really good meal, you make it for Friday nights for your family.

Lou Marder  9:05
For the Sabbath. And that's even done even today.

Arlene Marder  9:09
Even today. Much like Sunday dinner. Sunday dinner. Your best dishes come out, your best food comes out. You spend more time cooking the Friday meal.

Lou Marder  9:23
I don't want to bore you with all the details but there are even rules about preparing the Sabbath meal. The commandment, if you will, says you shouldn't work, you should keep the Sabbath for rest. The very orthodox do not cook on Saturday. They cook early Friday afternoon and they serve Friday night dinner and it carries over to Saturday. They don't turn on their ovens. They don't cook. It carries over. That way they serve the food and they clean away the dishes or whatever. But they're not cooking, they're not freshly prepared, they consider that part of the work.
Now, because of that regulation, a certain Jewish dish was invented, called cholent. What this was, was a thick meat stew. It had meat, and potatoes and carrots, and other vegetables. It was cooked before sundown on Friday night. On Saturday, when the family came back from religious services, they could have a, not a hot lunch, but a warm lunch because they'd have a special thing on their stove, called a blecht, which covered the stove burner. It didn't have a flame, but it kept warm. So, you could put your pot on the blecht, warm it up. And then the family would eat the cholent, which was a very filling meal. And a big pot of it.

What this is, is people in the modern era trying to get around the laws of hundreds of years ago. It says you can't cook. Okay, we won't cook. But we'll have it alighted on the stove overnight. Or we'll have a warm up overnight. The food will stay there, it'll stay warm alongside, it won't burn or won't spoil. But we won't cook. But we'll have the food.

We're not cooking. Now this is before microwaves. And before, all the modern ways of cooking weren't invented yet. So, they were improvising.

And that's how we ate. We didn't starve.

And would you still make cholent now? Would you have it?

You could eat cholent. Now, not a lot of people do because of the emphasis on potatoes and starch. It's very heavy. When you eat a plate of cholent you know you ate something. And you're kind of like dazed because it's loaded with calories.
Lou Marder 12:28
It's loaded with, lots of vegetables, very heavy. That's a good word.

Arlene Marder 12:33
It's heavy, and it fills you up. They used to say if you eat something like this, you can withstand the Russian winter because, to eat something like that, heavy like that, you will be full. And it's good food.

Lou Marder 12:49
Yeah. It was edible. There wasn't anything disgusting. It was meat and potatoes.

Arlene Marder 12:56
There were many different recipes. How the season is, what cut of meat to use.

Lou Marder 13:01
And I imagine years, you know, hundreds of years ago when they first invented this, it came from the fact they would kill a wild animal in the forest, deer, and that went into the pot. That's how they did it. Now we go to the butcher, we order whatever we want.

Arlene Marder 13:17
There's a big emphasis on meat eating in our cuisine, there's a lot of meat. The idea of vegetarian is almost like heretical. Vegetables are something on the side. But the meat is the primary thing. Now on meals that don't focus on meat, like you said dairy, it's not just milk. It could be things like cottage cheese and sour cream and blintzes. A lot of cheese. Blintzes is like a rolled dough, and it's filled . . . there was also a big emphasis in terms of vegetables, on potatoes, particularly in poorer families . . .

Angela Hanratty 14:56
. . . another question I'm asking everybody is, if you had to name what you think are the real quintessential or the most important Ashkenazi foods? If you were to name the top ten. What would they be?
Lou Marder  15:45
The most important things?

Arlene Marder  15:50
Corned beef, corned beef

Lou Marder  15:54
I don't know if that's the most important. I would have to think about . . .

Arlene Marder  15:57
Knishes.

Lou Marder  15:58
No, it's not. I'd have to think. Do you think that the (indistinct) eat pastrami every day?

Arlene Marder  16:10
No, no. I would say pot roast.

Lou Marder  16:14
Something like a pot roast I would guess. A pot roast. I would say chicken is right up there also.

Arlene Marder  16:21
All kinds of chicken.

Lou Marder  16:26
Chicken doesn't have to be boiled or soup. You can make fried chicken. These are all within the, you know, not the limitations . . .
A big Ashkenazi favourite might be lox and bagels. You know what a bagel is?

I do know what a bagel is. Yeah.

The bagel with lox on it, which is smoked salmon like gravlax from Scandinavia. Herring, pickled herring.

That's in the fish family of course. But all kinds of things with herring

Gefilte fish.

Gefilte fish. Are you familiar with that? Gefilte fish is a combination of, it's an odd... you can't catch a gefilte. It's a combination of things that comes, it's probably a German word that means something, that over the course of time has just become the product.

It's a cold dish. Generally, people don't make their own, they buy it in jars.

You buy it in a jar. It's not something that you would, you know, it's prepared.

The fish is cooked and ground up, mixed with matzah meal, boiled, served in like a jelly sauce. This is definitely an acquired taste. Served with horseradish.
Lou Marder  18:08
What else would they eat?

Arlene Marder  18:11
Borscht

Lou Marder  18:12
Yeah, borscht. That's a good example. That's like a beet soup.

Arlene Marder  18:18
Very often with meat in it.

Lou Marder  18:20
It's served cold with sour cream. It's served hot, boiled with meat in it, potatoes. It's served different ways but you're not . . .

Arlene Marder  18:32
Potato latkes. Potato pancakes. Served with either sour cream or apple sauce or both . . . it's like a fritter - a potato pancake.

Lou Marder  19:41
Is there anything else that jumps out?

Arlene Marder  19:46
Matzah.

Lou Marder  19:47
You know matzah? That's pretty much, that's for Passover.

Arlene Marder  19:53
There are people who eat it all year but most only eat it at Passover.
Lou Marder 19:59
It's nasty.

Arlene Marder 20:01
You can't tell if it's gone bad. The box it came in . . .

Lou Marder 20:07
Yeah, tastes like the box.

Arlene Marder 20:09
But there are recipes to jazz that up. People make what they call a matzah brei . . .

Lou Marder 20:47
. . . I'll tell you something else that takes, that's very important to the Ashkenazi people. Wine. Kosher wine . . . wine is used in almost every ceremony for the Sabbath. At least two or three times in various services that wine comes into play. Before you have your meal there's a blessing. You drink wine, the holidays call for wine. Very big item. In an orthodox home there's always wine on hand.

Arlene Marder 21:27
Traditional wine used for these blessings is a thick, Málaga grape, very often made by Manischewitz. It comes in like a square looking bottle. It's very heavy. It's not a Chablis, it’s not a chardonnay, it's not a pinot grigio, although in modern times there are kosher versions of these which are more popular among younger people.

Lou Marder 21:59
But it's a very important part of the religious ceremonies and it comes up all the time, all the time. During weddings they take sympathy on the bride and groom, are required to drink a little wine. It's a very important item.
Angela Hanratty  22:18
Can I ask you about chopped liver?

Arlene Marder  22:22
Oh yeah,

Lou Marder  22:23
What would you like to know? First of all, it's almost always chicken liver. It's almost never cow liver. Now, cow liver they serve as a slab, and you serve it with onions or whatever. We don't care for that. Arlene eats it. But chopped liver is chicken liver.

Arlene Marder  22:48
Generally chopped chicken liver.

Lou Marder  22:50
It's chopped up and you mix into that hard-boiled eggs. Onion, fried onions. A little bit of oil and it's cold. It's served cold, traditionally served with like a little salad, tomato, lettuce on the side and a big glob.

Arlene Marder  23:13
Or rye bread.

Lou Marder  23:14
Or it's served as a sandwich. You can make a chopped liver sandwich, it's like anything else.

Angela Hanratty  23:23
Okay, Great.

Arlene Marder  23:26
It's a deli item. Very often in the delicatessen they will have chopped liver as well as pastrami, corned beef.
Angela Hanratty 23:37

Just when you're mentioning pastrami there, Arlene. I'm interested in pastrami because having read up about it there seems to be a bit of debate about where pastrami actually came from. Say your grandparents, your great grandparents . . . I know there's a story that it came from Romania and that somebody from Lithuania had set up a deli and this person gives them, they did a favour for this person from Romania and they gave them the recipe.

Lou Marder 24:08

I can only speak for my grandparents, my great grandparents. I don't ever remember eating a cooked pastrami in their home. Ever. Pastrami was considered an extravagance that you went to a delicatessen, a kosher delicatessen and you bought it. It was already cut. It was already processed, it was already seasoned and they put it on a cutting board and they cut it up. You want a half a pound, a pound and that's how they sold it. The process of making a pastrami is very intense. You've got to first get the meat, you've got to cut away the fat. You've got to put it in brine. It sits in brine, pickled … and you got to sometimes leave it there for 10 hours, 12 hours, 16 hours . . . then it comes out. Then you got to wash off the brine. Because the brine's salty.

Arlene Marder 25:05

And your seasoning's put on one side to make a crust.

Lou Marder 25:09

Right, you put like pepper, pepper corns, very intense. No woman had the time to make a pastrami in her kitchen. It was not good. Like I say, on those rare occasions where we had corned beef was the same principle. It came as a chunk of meat and you went to the delicatessen and you told them ‘I want a pound of that’ and they would slice it up for you. They wrapped it up and we took it home.

Arlene Marder 25:34

I think it was the same cut of meat, just prepared differently. Corned beef and pastrami. Now, we assumed, I assumed as a child that corned beef, forgive me, came from Ireland because of corned beef and cabbage. But we didn't really know and again we didn't make corned beef in
the house. We bought it in the delicatessen. We took it home. We didn't go out to cook that. Although now in the groceries they make corned beef already pickled.

Lou Marder 26:09

Pre-packaged.

Arlene Marder 26:10

In your broiler, you take it home, your boiler for three hours. You cool it off and then you can eat it hot. It’s good. Not as good as the deli one but okay.

Lou Marder 26:23

Yeah, but the main thing I wanted to get across and I hope I did anyway, is that this was not something that was prepared in a woman's home. This was not prepared in our home. Not in my lifetime. I never saw it. I never saw my grandparents. Not at all. They made chicken and they made hamburgers and little, you know, things that were easy. But to make up a pastrami was a major job.

Angela Hanratty 26:53

You’re saying that pastrami and corned beef are the same cut of meat. So, would that be brisket?

Arlene Marder 26:58

Yeah, yeah, brisket. Brisket is also used for pot roast. For pot roast it's cooked in a pot with carrots and potatoes.

Lou Marder 27:13

Again, it’s very, very time consuming. You know, the women in the old days. They had to do everything. The men were out milking the cows and …

Arlene Marder 27:26

Well, the men were actually out working in the factories. And the women generally were home with the children. And there were many families with a lot of children. So, they were home with the children and they did the cooking. You couldn't buy frozen dinners, they didn't have
that. But they cooked all the meals very often from scratch. When something pre-processed came out, it was a grace because it was a time saver and it tasted good.

**Angela Hanratty 28:05**

Great. Thank you. I just want to ask you about delis, about the importance of delis particularly in New York. I've asked other people this, do Jewish people eat in delis?

**Lou Marder 28:24**

Okay, first of all, you have to understand that there's a difference between a delicatessen and what we would call a kosher delicatessen. The word delicatessen implies that it's meats and corned beef or whatever, but it also has other things in it. It has shrimp salad, that Jewish people won't eat. Shrimp, that is a taboo thing, clams, lobster. Maybe you heard of the store, Zabar's. It's a big store in Manhattan. They're the biggest. You can look that one up Z A B A R. Zabar's. They're considered the foremost delicatessen. But it's not only for meat products, it's for everything. You want to buy caviar, they have that. That's where the word delicatessen stems. A kosher delicatessen is altogether different. First of all, the meat has to be prepared a certain way. They will not be open on Friday night and Saturday. They observe the Sabbath. An orthodox person will not go to a delicatessen if they're open, no matter how kosher the meat is, and no matter how it's prepared and who did it. If they're open on Saturday, an orthodox person will not go to a delicatessen, will not go there. In the old days, delicatessens were everywhere. And now in New York City, like you said, very few. I can only name a handful maybe. It's a dying breed.

**Arlene Marder 30:01**

However, there are all kinds of what you would call delicatessen. There are Italian delicatessens that specialise in cheeses, mortadella, capicola, various ham.

**Lou Marder 30:19**

The word has taken on a different meaning . . .

**Arlene Marder 30:21**

There are delicatessen counters in bodegas which are little stores, little groceries that sell . . .
Lou Marder  30:30
If you want a ham and cheese sandwich.

Arlene Marder  30:32
The common denominator of all delicatessens is they will all make sandwiches to go. Every one of them make sandwiches to go, which means that for people working in an office or even a factory or whatever, and they didn't bring lunch and they want to get lunch they go to the local delicatessen. The local delicatessen, if it's in the bodega, could give you a ham and cheese sandwich, the different prepared foods ready to go and take back and eat. No place to eat in doors. There are very few of the Jewish type delicatessens where you could sit there and eat.

Lou Marder  31:18
There are a few Jewish style delicatessens. They say the meat is kosher, I'm sure it is. They can't claim that the meat is kosher if it's not. That's against the law. But besides that, people will not go there. Like I said, because they're open on holidays. They're open on the Sabbath. They're open during Passover. You can't make, you can't use bread to make a sandwich.

Arlene Marder  31:43
A lot of them call themselves New York kosher, meaning they are open. Like we go to a particular one in the area. And it's called New York kosher. They will not mix meat with milk. But they are not open on Passover because most of their customers won't come in because they don't have matzah. They only have bread. Most of their customers won't come in, but the holiday will end on Monday. And people will come in and buy great quantities of sliced meat and breads and pickles. Sour pickles are very big in the cuisine too. Pickling is a major Jewish thing. Pickles and sauerkraut and things that are actually preserved vegetables, because again, there was no refrigeration. So, pickling was a big deal.

Lou Marder  32:45
You know, I don't want to lose the main point of your question. There are not that many kosher delicatessens in the city any longer. There was some done up kosher style, but would the orthodox go? They will not go.
Arlene Marder  33:06
Also, like you said, vegetarians are not going to eat sliced meats of any kind.

Angela Hanratty  33:14
Can I ask you then . . . a few names come up the whole time like Katz's deli? Ben's is another one. 2nd Avenue.

Lou Marder  33:26
2nd Avenue. We're familiar with the 2nd Avenue. Ben's is the one closest to our house. Ben's is in Queens, New York City. These are all New York City. Ben's is in Queens. The 2nd Avenue Deli, believe it or not, they're on 3rd Avenue.

Arlene Marder  33:49
They relocated. Sarge's Deli.

Lou Marder  33:57
Katz's.

Arlene Marder  33:58
If you ever get to New York go have a sandwich in Katz's deli.

Lou Marder  34:02
K A T Z. Katz's. It's on Houston Street in Manhattan, Lower Manhattan. It is THE deli place in the city. The food, the whole ambience. It's been there for 100 years.

Arlene Marder  34:16
They have a slogan which goes back from World War Two which is 'Send a salami to your boy in the army'. Because they used to mail the salamis.
Lou Marder  34:30
In terms of quality of food and the quantity it's A. A+. The problem is that they open Saturday and the real orthodox will not go in to eat there. As much quality as, you know, is there, they will not, they don't like it. They won't eat anything there. Hot dogs, you know, other things that you would buy in a delicatessen They don't go in at all. They just don't.

Arlene Marder  34:59
We are not that religious.

Lou Marder  35:08
Ask any taxi driver 'take me to Katz's'. They all know. It's like the Empire State Building.

Arlene Marder  35:14
Or the Chrysler Building or, you know, they'll know Katz's deli and that's good.

Lou Marder  35:30
Don't be surprised when you see the prices. They're expensive.

Angela Hanratty  35:34
Somebody else was saying that.

Arlene Marder  36:01
It's worth it.

Angela Hanratty  37:56
Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.
Appendix I – Edited Interview with Elaine Lavine (5th April 2021)

Angela Hanratty 0:02
The first thing I'm going to ask you is, Elaine, about your family background.

Elaine Lavine 0:07
So, I, may be, or may not be, slightly different from other people you've spoken to in New York. My mother and my mother's family, not too many generations ago immigrated to New York City from what was then called the region of Galicia, which, depending on which history book and which immigration papers you're looking at, is either Eastern Poland or Western Ukraine, or on some of the passports that I've seen from that side of the family, it was even called the Austro Hungary Empire. So, it really depended on who was drawing the borders at the time. My grandparents came from that family. Their last name was Kirschenbaum, which is actually a German name, but they did not come from Germany. They came, I would say, in the late, very late 19th century to early 20th century. Great grandparents of one, not on the other, etc, etc. I would say between, you know, 1890 and 1910. That part of the family came at different times but settled in New York City. And my father's family I'm less clear on but my father was born in Syracuse, New York, which is a medium sized city in northern New York State. His father, my grandfather came over as a child, I would say, early 1900s. I'm not sure how they picked Syracuse, there may have been cousins or other people there already. Syracuse had at that time, a very tightly knit Jewish community. My father's family was not particularly religious, I would call them secular socialists. But many of the food traditions and at least minimal attendance to some of the holidays were definitely in place, partly because of the small, tightly knit culture they were living in. So, even if you weren't personally religious, everybody celebrated the holidays together or within a few neighbours of each other. The sons were Bar Mitzvahed in the local synagogues, even though there wasn't much other practice going on. So, if I'm going on with too much detail, please stop me. But my father's family called themselves Litvak. I think in English it's L I T V A K. They tended to come I think, from Russia and, or Lithuania. And I noticed that, although the Yiddish was sometimes used, and sometimes not, their pronunciation of Yiddish words, and perhaps some of the food was slightly different from my mother's family, which coming from what I call Galicia where they were called Gillies. And it was considered by, at least by the Syracuse Jewish community to be a step below coming from Poland, Ukraine, that area. The Galicia area, they were sometimes made fun of
in terms of their pronunciation of certain words, or even some of the food that they enjoyed.
So, I grew up in Syracuse, frequently visited my mother's family in New York City. And in fact, to this day, I'm much closer to what remains of my mother's family than I am to my father's family, even though I grew up in Syracuse with my father's family.

**Angela Hanratty 4:54**
Great. Thanks, Elaine. So, to move on from that then, what would be your childhood memories of food, particularly relating to your grandparents, or family traditions.

**Elaine Lavine 5:11**
My grandparents in Syracuse, as I said, were not particularly observant of various things. And my father's mother died when he was only six. So, he grew up with a lovely woman as a stepmother, but I don't consider her to be sort of traditional grandmother role and I don't remember her cooking. I don't remember going there for meals. Not saying I didn't, I just have no memory of it. I don't remember absorbing any food traditions, really, from my father's side of the family. You know, there were a few when I was growing up. There were a few sort-of Jewish oriented food stores, a kosher butcher, a few delicatessens, you know, that sort of thing. But I don't remember from my father's stepmother, who was the only grandmother I knew on that side of the family, I don't remember food. The only food memories I have are from my mom. And then her family when we visited New York. My grandparents in New York, I believe, although you're the expert, were very traditional Ashkenazi food. They didn't really have much money, so the food budget and, you know, my mother grew up in a family of six in very close quarters originally, when she was born. And so, I think much of the thinking was to stretch the food budget, you know, as much as possible. There was chicken soup. There was split pea soup. There were noodles, there was bread baked on Friday mornings for the Sabbath. My mother didn't engage in all that but when I visited my grandmother in New York, she definitely did. I remember, with her I have food memories. I remember being given rye bread with chicken fat smeared on it as a treat. I remember noodles and butter. I remember going to some Passover Seders in New York with my mother's family; long, extended, incredibly boring for a child, dinners. But that would be chicken or turkey. And foods that are particularly associated with Passover, which as you know has limitations on what ingredients you can use. So, the food traditions I remember from my mother's side of the family.
Angela Hanratty  8:28
Great. I have a list of things written down here but I just want to see what you actually consider to be the quintessential Ashkenazi dishes or foods? If you had to name the top ten?

Elaine Lavine  8:44
Noodle pudding, noodle kugel. That springs to mind because my mother made it, as did my grandmother. Let me think, chicken in any number of formats. Chicken was, you know, was, I guess, a primary dinner. What we called delicatessen. Salami or hot dogs. This was kosher and it wasn't so much a religious thing. Everybody just thought it tasted better. But salami and cold cuts and corned beef and pastrami and those kinds of deli meats. Certainly, smoked salmon and bagels and cream cheese on the occasional Sunday morning. Smoked salmon was considered a delicacy because it was expensive. So, a little bit had to go a long way. But that was certainly a Sunday morning treat. Let me think what else. Not so much lamb chops but veal chops . . . My mother did not have a vast repertoire of food but what she made was very good. That's what I remember. She would buy very thin small veal chops and bread them. That is coat them with egg and crumbs and then fry them and that was that was delicious. We had one treat that my mother made occasionally, a whole tongue, a cow's tongue, which had to cook for hours in a pressure cooker so it didn't happen very often, but I remember it very well. And that's something I've never attempted. I just buy it already made. But that was a treat as well with mashed potatoes. That was quite a treat and the mashed potatoes would be made not with milk and butter as a holdover from religious observance but with chicken fat as the condiment in those.

Angela Hanratty  11:27
Thank you, Elaine. So, I'm going to take you back first of all to chicken. So chicken soup with, you're talking about noodles, were used a lot in your family. But chicken soup with matzah balls, would that have been something that you would have had?

Elaine Lavine  12:15
Matzah balls were Passover. I associate that specifically with Passover. I don't remember my mother making matzah balls at other times of the year. I can't swear that she didn't. But really, I don't think she did. I think matzah balls were a Passover specialty.
Angela Hanratty  12:37
But would you have had chicken soup, maybe, for Friday night dinner?

Elaine Lavine  12:42
Sometimes. But I can't say regularly. My father, not only was he not religiously observant, but he wasn't even very culturally observant. So, he didn't love chicken. So, I mean, we had it, certainly we had it, but it was not as much of a Friday night staple, let's say, as it would be in other families, as I know it was in other families.

Angela Hanratty  13:15
Okay. And then another thing I was going to ask about Friday night dinner was chopped liver.

Elaine Lavine  13:23
My mother occasionally made chopped liver but it was usually for a holiday. It was not, certainly not regular on Friday night.

Angela Hanratty  13:30
Okay. Cholent?

Elaine Lavine  13:35
I despise it. We never had it. I never even really knew that much about it until I moved to New York. I don't like the looks of it. I don't want it. There's nothing about it that I like and we definitely never had it. Cholent, you know, again, I associate with religious observance. Since, you know, it could cook all day that didn't make any difference at all. But that was definitely nothing I had growing up.

Angela Hanratty  14:09
Okay. But you say now, since you moved to New York. So, is it a big thing in New York? Would it be a big part of the tradition in New York?
Elaine Lavine  14:16
My friends tell me that it is. I think you spoke with Fran Kolin who’s a dear friend and she herself makes cholent and grew up with having it on Friday night or on Saturday because it cooked all night, Friday night. And this is alien to me. I didn't grow up with it and it does not appeal to me now.

Angela Hanratty  14:42
Okay. Great. Thank you. You've mentioned bread on Friday morning. So that's challah? That would have been challah bread?

Elaine Lavine  14:51
My grandmother in New York was a baker and made her own challah. My mother did not. My mother baked, was a limited baker. Occasionally she would make rugelach, the small cookies, and she would make sponge cake at Passover time, again as a holiday specialty, but my mother was not that much of a baker. It's interesting because for myself, I love to bake. I've been doing a little less of it over the past year since the pandemic because I'm not seeing as many people and baking for oneself is not as satisfying but my mother did not make challah. Sorry, I should be giving you shorter answers. My mother did not make challah.

Angela Hanratty  15:42
Okay. Gefilte fish.

Elaine Lavine  15:48
Again, I associate it with holidays. Not on a regular basis.

Angela Hanratty  15:55
But you would have had it?

Elaine Lavine  15:56
Would have had it. It was not made though. I mean, it was not homemade. In Syracuse, it was bought in a jar.
Okay, and would your grandmother in New York, would she have made it from scratch?

I'm told. I don't remember personally experiencing it. But my mother told me stories of my grandmother who was orthodox and observant. My mother would tell me stories again, particularly at Passover time, about my grandmother making gefilte fish. Yes, including the fish swimming in the bathtub until it was time to use it.

Herring then. Is there a tradition of that?

Yes. On the Sunday mornings when we would have the bagels and the smoked salmon. Definitely herring.

And that would be pickled herring, chopped herring?

Both. Pickled herring in what was called wine sauce. Although it wasn't wine, it was vinegar. Pickled herring in cream sauce which had sour cream and onions with it. And chopped herring as well. I'm the only person I know in my circle of friends that really enjoys chopped herring, but to this day I enjoy it.

Okay, great. I want to go back to, you mentioned corned beef and deli meats. I'm particularly interested in pastrami because I'm trying to get to the bottom of where pastrami originated. Now, there is a story. I've read several histories of American delis, a story, as you're probably aware, of somebody who minded or looked after a trunk for somebody from Romania while he went back to the home country and in return for looking after this he gave this man the recipe for pastrami.
Elaine Lavine  17:54
We heard that there was some Turkish origin as well. Yeah.

Angela Hanratty  17:59
So, there's a debate about where it actually originated. Now they in Alsace for years, for centuries, have had this thing called pickelfleisch, which is pickled meat. And to be honest, the more people I talk to, it sounds just like a variant of pastrami. So, I'm trying to draw the links there. So, your grandmother who's in New York would have been observant and as you said, orthodox. I know it's maybe asking you to guess, would pastrami have been part of, would you ever remember her making anything like pastrami?

Elaine Lavine  18:35
Not making it. Buying it. There were so many delicatessens to choose from, and there would be arguments about which one had the best corned beef, and which one had the best pastrami, but I don't have a sense of her making her own. I think there were enough sources to buy it and then argue about which was the better source.

Angela Hanratty  19:00
Yeah. Okay. The last question I wanted to ask you about, Elaine, is delis in New York. I'm just interested in the role of delis, delicatessen food. Is it, are they places where Jewish people will go to eat now? Are they reflective of the food traditions, Ashkenazi food traditions, would you say?

Elaine Lavine  19:37
I think they are. I think just like bagels and certain other foods, there's become a universality about them. And there are plenty of terrible bagels out for sale that I think have nothing to do with the Ashkenazi tradition. In New York. I mean, some of the delis are almost tourist destinations. And I think it's just about sampling what is considered New York typical food rather than from the Ashkenazi tradition. When I go to a deli and again, I can argue with my friends about who has the best corned beef or where the best hotdogs are, when I go I do feel an awareness of a tradition and I think many of my friends, at least my contemporaries do, but
I'm not sure that that awareness is carrying over into the younger generations. Maybe it is and I'm just not in touch with it.

**Angela Hanratty 20:44**

And if I were to ask you the names of what you think are the most authentic delis in New York?

**Elaine Lavine 20:57**

What's the one on Houston Street? Let me think

**Angela Hanratty 21:00**

Katz's, is it?

**Elaine Lavine 21:01**

Yes. Thank you! Katz's, although I have to tell you Katz's is not my favourite by far but I love the hot dogs at Katz's. And honestly, I can't tell you why. I'm sure they're the same hot dogs at every other delicatessen because they don't make their own hot dogs. They're buying them from somewhere and cooking them but I actually don't think that Katz's, which is a tourist destination in itself, I don't think that Katz's has the best corned beef and pastrami but certainly I've been there and it's fine when I go there. There's a place called Russ & Daughters which is also in that same old, what we call the Lower East Side, which has changed ethnically, you know, over the decades. Russ & Daughters has both. It used to be called appetising. The smoked salmon and the chopped herring and those sorts of things, which were a parve food. Not meat and could be, you know, could be mixed with milk and dairy products. So that part used to be called appetising stores and sometimes they specialise. And other places had the meat, the pastrami and the corned beef. Russ & Daughters I think carries both. They are outstanding; really very, very expensive and really outstanding in quality. Another deli, it's called 2nd Avenue Deli, which is actually located on 3rd Avenue now but it's the 2nd Avenue Deli. They're not kosher anymore. They're kosher style, but they're not strictly kosher because they have some dairy products in their window. But their corned beef and pastrami and chicken soup, which I just bought actually for my Passover Seder, their chopped liver is excellent, really outstanding and very, very expensive. And then there's another place in my neighbourhood that's actually not too far from the Second Avenue Deli. I'd rank it a notch below, both in terms of quality and
price. And it's called Sarge's. Their food is very, very good. I don't think it quite reaches Second Avenue Deli, but it's very good.

Angela Hanratty  21:01
Great. Thank you, Elaine.
Appendix J – Email correspondence from Jean-Pierre Lambert (20th August 2020)

Concernant le monde ashkenazé et l’Alsace, quelques remarques que vous pourrez approfondir!

Le monde séfarade correspond à peu près aux anciennes colonies romaines du sud où les juifs étaient nombreux, Espagne, Sud de la France, Italie, Afrique du Nord etc.

Le monde ashkenazé est une création plus récente, vers le 9ème siècle de notre ère. En fait de nombreux marchands faisaient la route Bagdad- Europe via le nord des Alpes, évitant ainsi la méditerranée. Progressivement le long de cette route, des juifs vont s'implanter, venant soit de l'Est (Irak - Voir la demi légende Kazar) soit de France. Les premières communautés connues pour ce processus sont Metz et Mayence. On y parle le français! Progressivement cependant, ces communautés en terre germanique vont adopter l'allemand et créer le yiddish occidental après 1100. Elle vont progressivement s'étendre mais lentement. Après Mayence apparaîtront Worms puis Spire, presque 2 siècles plus tard. En Alsace, leur arrivée en 1150 n'a rien à voir avec la première croisade (1098). D'autres communautés de commerçants se créeront en Allemagne. elles seront moins de 10 vers l'an1000.

Le développement du monde ashkenazé vers l'Est est plus tardif. Il correspond à la fois à l'entrée dans la modernité de ces territoires qui ont besoin de plus d'échanges commerciaux, mais aussi aux difficultés rencontrées par les juifs de la zone germanique (apparition de marchands concurrents chrétiens, anti judaïsme croissant, surpopulation.) En fait le véritable début de la période de croissance du judaïsme dans le monde slave se situe au début du 14ème siècle, après l'expulsion des juifs de France. Ceux-ci amènent avec eux une partie de leur cuisine.

Concernant la cuisine juive ashkenazé, elle est variable d'une région à l'autre. Elle est une adaptation des cuisines locales pour la rendre cachère. Cependant on note que lors de migrations, de nombreux juifs amènent leur cuisine: C'est le cas des français dont le "Chaud-lent" (cuisine mijotée) va devenir le "Tcholent" polonais!

Dans le judaïsme, la transmission par la table est une constante, voir par exemple le rituel du séder de Pessach. Ce qui crée un immobilisme de la cuisine, du moins le pense-t-on, mais par exemple l'omniprésence de la pomme de terre montre bien que sur le long terme il n'est est
rien. La pomme de terre et les haricots, largement utilisés, viennent d'Amérique (les haricots ont remplacé les fèves). Cependant, oui, la cuisine traditionnelle a sans doute plus survécu sur les tables juives (Kugel, Chaleth), d'autant que les contraintes liées à la cacharouth et au chabbath rendent l'évolution difficile.

Je vous joins 2 courts articles, un sur l'histoire du judaïsme rhénan pour lequel j'étais limité à 600 mots, et l'autre sur la cuisine juive. Ils doivent pouvoir vous servir! J'ajoute que je peux vous résumer certaines recettes!

Cordialement

**Attachment 1:**

Introduction à un repas juif

Disons d'abord que la table est lieu de vie, de joie, de convivialité, pas de privation. Mais comme dans toute la vie juive, le sacré est toujours présent et nous impose des règles de comportement.

Le rabbin Grunewald expliquait un jour que le judaïsme est tel une ville avec des sens interdits un peu partout qui nous obligent à réfléchir sur le but à atteindre et les moyens d'y arriver, sans pour autant nous priver de l'essentiel, qui est d'être heureux sur terre et donc à table.

La table est d'ailleurs sanctifiée et le repas familial est comme une annexe du temple. Chaque fête sera célébrée en famille selon des habitudes bien ancrées, propres à éveiller la curiosité de l'enfant: Récit de la sortie d'Egypte à Paques, bénéédiction sur le vin et le pain le vendredi soir, repas dans une cabane à Soukkoth.

Les caractéristiques de la cuisine juive

Cuisine cacher: obéit à des règles très précises quand au choix des aliments et à leur mise en œuvre.
Pour l’essentiel:
Interdiction totale de mélanger lacté et viande dans le même plat ou au cours du même repas (pas de steak au beurre, de poularde à la crème ou de munster après la choucroute).
Par contre le poisson, les œufs ou les légumes peuvent être indifféremment consommé avec des produits lactés ou de la viande.

Interdiction de consommer certains animaux (pour les animaux terrestres tous ceux qui n’ont pas le sabot fendu comme le cheval, le lapin, le porc, l’escargot, en mer les crustacés et coquillages ainsi que les poissons cartilagineux ou sans écaillles comme l’anguille ou le requin, dans les airs les rapaces).
Nécessité d’abattre les animaux selon un rituel très précis (par égorgement) pour les vider de leur sang. Interdiction de consommer des cadavres non abattus ou des animaux malades avant abattage (donc pas de chasse!).
Nécessité de saler et laver la viande avant préparation pour en éliminer le sang.

Pourquoi?
Trois thèses:
a) Parce que cela correspond à des règles diététiques importantes surtout dans un pays chaud. Assez peu convaincant, même si repris par exemple dans certains ouvrages rabbiniques (Chouchana).
Exemple le porc est une viande malsaine, et les crustacés se corrompent facilement.
b) Parce que cela correspond à des règles sociologiques ou économiques historiques: Pour une peuple qui se sédentarise il est important d’oublier la chasse. Par ailleurs on ne consomme pas les animaux qui servent à la guerre (cheval).
c) Parce que cela transpose dans le concret sur le mode symbolique des règles morales ou philosophiques.
Quelques interprétations:
On se nourrit de la viande, mais pas de l’âme de l’animal, représentée par son sang. Ce serait une cruauté inutile ou une proximité dangereuse (l’homme et l’animal sont de nature différente et toute assimilation est très sévèrement condamnée, zoophilie par exemple).
Le sang représente la vie. On ne se nourrit pas de la vie.
La mort est l’impureté absolue. On se nourrit de viande, pas de cadavre, mort sans que le principe vital en ait été volontairement retiré en éliminant le sang.
Le lait est la vie, l’enfant, l’espoir, la pureté. La viande est la mort, l’impureté radicale, l’inconnue. Il ne faut en aucun cas leur permettre de coexister.
Le serpent ou l’anguille rampent par terre. Le porc se nourrit de déchets. Le vautour se nourrit de cadavres. Ils sont ipso facto impurs. On ne se nourrit pas de l’impureté.

Sans doute, historiquement l’interprétation symbolique s’est superposée, a enrichi des habitudes socialement justifiées. Aujourd’hui, elle est devenue essentielle dans le judaïsme contemporain. La recherche du sens symbolique caché, même si elle peut déboucher sur des dérives hallucinantes permet à chacun de renouveler sa pensée et d’approfondir ses options.

(Je ne cite jamais la quatrième explication, souvent évoquée par certains extrémistes: cela limite les contacts juifs - non juifs … et garantit la pureté de la religion.)

Cuisine pauvre:
Dans nos contrées, les juifs du XIXème siècle sont souvent pauvres, misérables colporteurs, petits artisans. La cuisine reflète cette pauvreté.
Prenons l’oie. Le juif peut l’élever, il vendra les bons morceaux et fera des plats dont il se délectera avec la carcasse ou le cou, simplement farci d’un mélange de graisse d’oie, de farine et d’herbes.
L’oie est d’ailleurs un élément essentiel de la cuisine juive en Europe de l’est, dont l’Alsace, car sa graisse permet la cuisson des viandes dans un monde où l’huile est inconnue, ou le beurre ne peut servir à accommoder une viande, ou le saindoux est proscrit et ou la poêle Tefal n’a pas encore été inventée.
On pourrait citer d’autres recettes qui montrent cette pauvreté, comme la saucisse de poumons (Lungewurst), ou les multiples manières de préparer la rate.

Cuisine mijotée, qui peut cuire 12 ou 15h:
Le repas essentiel est celui du samedi à midi (shabbath). Or la maîtresse de maison ne peut faire aucune cuisine le vendredi soir ou le samedi.
Il va donc falloir inventer des plats qui se mettent au chaud le vendredi après midi pour être dégustés le samedi à midi, tel le Cholent polonais, parfois surnommé le cassoulet juif, ou la dafina nord-africaine, subtil mélange de viande, d’œuf dur, de pommes de terre et de pois chiches.

On pourrait encore citer les « kugels »

On trouve peu de recettes juives qui soient rapides à mettre en œuvre.

Le Cholent est d’ailleurs un plat dont l’histoire est étonnante: D’abord Français, inventé au Moyen-Âge (Chaud – lent!), il va partir en Europe de l’Est pour revenir en France, modifié (avec des pommes de terre!) dans les bagages des immigrés venus de Russie ou de Pologne.

Cuisine transposant sur le mode cashier la cuisine locale:

Bien souvent la cuisine juive transposera la cuisine locale sur le mode cashier:

Le couscous, la pastilla sont typiques de la cuisine juive nord africaine. En Alsace, la choucroute est faite avec des saucisses de bœuf ou de la langue de bœuf fumée. Dans le baeckofe, le pied de veau remplace le pied de porc.

Il existe même un « jambon » juif, fait à partir de bœuf longuement mariné dans le salpêtre avant d’être cuit (Beckelfleisch).

De ce côté là, les juifs d’Afrique du Nord sont outrageusement avantagés: La cuisine maghrébine utilisant l’huile d’olive et relativement peu de lait ou de crème, elle est le plus souvent naturellement cashier!

Existence d’un grand nombre de recettes « neutres » (sans lait ni viande).

Nécessité fait loi et l’interdiction de mélanger lait et viande même au cours du même repas, mais dans des plats différents a conduit à la création de nombreux plats n’utilisant que des ingrédients « neutres » comme les légumes, les œufs ou encore les poissons.

On citera les différentes recettes de carpes, au vert à l’alsacienne ou encore farcies à la polonaise.

Mais c’est sans doute dans les desserts, sans lait que l’imagination de nos grand-mères s’est le plus exprimé: « Café crème » sans lait, beignets, biscuits à la farine d’amande, mousses …

Même si aujourd’hui l’existence de margarine goût beurre neutre ou de lait de soja a simplifié le problème du choix des desserts après un repas carné …

Bon appétit!
Attachment 2:

**History and heritage of the Jews of the Upper Rhine region.**

Between Basel and Mainz, the Rhine is more a link than a border between populations. The Jewish communities on both sides have always been close, resulting in an almost common history and a very rich and dense heritage.

Since at least 950, Jews are established in Mainz, an important place on the Via Regia trade route connecting Europe to Asia. Mainz keeps the memories of the Kalonymos of Lucca, great scholars and merchants and of Rabbi Gerschom ben Jehuda. Created soon after, the community of Worms still own a wonderful medieval cemetery and the synagogue (reconstructed) where Rachi de Troyes studied. Jews will gradually settle in all nearby cities: Speyer around 1080 (ritual bath, medieval synagogue, museum) then around 1150 in Strasbourg (ritual bath, museums) and Frankfurt (cemetry, synagogue, museum) followed by Basel, Freiburg and many other localities. Despite the bloody persecutions linked in particular to the crusades (1095, 1146) and the Armleder revolt (1338), the Rhineland Jews left us numerous testimonies of their thirst for life, materials (synagogues, cemeteries, ritual baths) and intangible (rabbinical treaties, western Yiddish, which replaced after 1100 French as the usual language…). They are also represented in many churches, positively and negatively.

Brutally, in 1349, this period of expansion ended. Jews accused of causing a deadly plague are slaughtered or expelled from cities. Often recalled, then driven out again, the majority took refuge after 1450 in the countryside, remaining however present in Worms and Frankfurt. Others are leaving for Eastern Europe. The Jews will continue to live almost exclusively in the countryside until around 1800, their situation improving however after 1648. The rural Judaism of this period, materially poor but creative and committed, left little traces except for superb tombstones in some cemeteries.

In the 19th century, the demography of the Jews exploded. Emancipated in Alsace from 1791, elsewhere after 1860, they gradually entered all professions. Anti-Judaism subsisted, violent until 1848, then in a more political form. Several hundred synagogues are erected, sometimes very monumental in the bigger cities gradually reopened to the Jews.
The 20th century will be the one of destruction: Destruction of rural communities for the benefit of cities, wars separating French and German Jews, losses due to emigration and assimilation, hardly compensated by the arrival of refugees from the East. Then the unthinkable happens. The Nazis destroy German synagogues in 1938 and then massacre the Jews. The brown plague replaces the black plague. In Alsace, at the Struthof camp, Jews are murdered simply to constitute an anatomical collection, a herbarium of men and women.

In Germany, the Jews who have not emigrated are overwhelmingly murdered. Very few will return. Evacuated from the start of the war, a majority of Alsatian Jews returned in 1945 and recreated a Jewish life under the leadership of leaders and intellectuals like André Neher. In the whole region, only three synagogues were intact: Benfeld, Struth, Wolfisheim. The others were restored, in particular the large urban synagogues still standing (Frankfurt, Colmar, Mulhouse) and others, modern, were built. After 1960, the arrival of Jews from the Maghreb in France and then of Soviet Jews in Germany energized communities. From 1990 on a real work of memory and enhancement of the remaining heritage begins, often carried by non-Jews. Today, there are many museums of Judaism or presenting Jewish collections, synagogues, cemeteries, and ritual baths open to the public. Places of memory remind us of the past, such as the Blaues Haus in Breisach. All of them offer us a message of hope.
Appendix K – Email correspondence from Jean-Pierre Lambert (5th September 2020)

One thing is really particular on Jewish cooking is that it is always using cheap ingredients. To they cook spleen, in beef soup (pot au feu), liver, (chicken or beef). They made sausages with potatoes or lung. You find the same ingredients in North Africa as well as in Poland or Germany. In fact, Jewish recipes are constantly travelling, and changing place, but remaining essentially similar! if you take chopped liver, you will find the same recipe with cumin in north Afrika, with sugar and vinegar in Poland, without both in Alsace.

I am not sure that the North American cooking, Jewish or not derives from Alsace. I would trace more Poland, as most of the Jewish immigrants came from Poland. And also, Germany. But German cooking, somewhat between Alsatian and Polish cooking is not well documented to my best knowledge.

Let’s look at "poeckel fleisch", or Jewish ham. You can find in German language what is pöeckel (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C3%B6keln). In fact, it consists of having the meat stored in a blend Sodium/Potassium nitrate + kitchen Salt + garlic for several weeks and then cooked in water + vegetables + herbs. Eat it cold or (better) warm. Taste is incredible, but in fact it is the only way of making something similar to ham. Is it Alsatian or German? Was it French and then migrating to the east direction? The medieval north European Judaism appeared in France around 700/800, followed by a migration toward German speaking regions (after 900), and then Eastern Europa. For me poeckel is most probably the Jewish transcription of local practices in which pork was used.

Does a link between "foie gras" and “gehackte Leber" exist? Not at all. I believe "foie gras" (as a paste) was invented after "gehackte Leber". In fact, in Strasbourg in the 18th century by the chief-cook of the Marquis des Contades. A drop-in for "foie gras" exists too: Take non-fat chicken, or better duck liver. Cook it slowly in goose or duck fat and eventually add some spices or cognac, wine etc. Let it cool and then mix it with fresh goose fat (cold) - You can reuse the fat used to cook if it is still white after cooling, or even butter (not in Jewish cooking!). It tastes very close to foie gras!
I still have an unknown: Today’s German cooking is not similar to Jewish cooking. Best example is the carp, done in green like in Holland (paling in green) in Alsace and in a sweet sauce in Poland, both cold (to be eaten on chabbath) with jelly. In Germany, carp is prepared like for fish and chips! The difference could come from the fact that Jews never use pork meat or fat, which is the basis of the German cooking (mainly the pork fat, largely available, used to make balls (knoedle) and all sort of dishes.

Coming back to carp, it is widely used in Jewish cooking where it is by far the most popular fish! As it was in France in the medieval period. In Germany, they eat sea fish (herring) smocked or salted. Here again, we can think that French ingredients were migrating with Jews to Alsace and then to Germany and Poland. In fact, in Poland, carp is very popular, numerous recipes are used, sometimes more and generally less similar to Jewish Gefilte fish. Why is America using a lot of Jewish recipes? Is it linked with the fact that beef is very popular in US?
Appendix L – Email correspondence from David Schnée (12th April 2021)

What do you consider to be the most traditional Alsatian Jewish foods?

A mon sens, les plats juifs-alsaciens traditionnels sont:
- les matseknepfelich, qui agrémentent le bouillon du pot-au-feu;
- le matsekugel à Pessah ou le kugel le reste de l'année;
- le poisson à la juive (cf. yidefish) qui se distingue du gefiltefish par une sauce verte;
Si je connais bien les deux premiers mets, en revanche je n'ai qu'entendu parler du poisson à la juive: ma grand-mère le préparait mais ma mère n'a pas perpétué la tradition car elle n'aimait pas ce plat.

Sinon, il existe un gâteau qui me paraît typiquement judéo-alsacien: le choleth (à base de pain sec).

How important were geese/goose fat to the Jewish diet in Alsace?

Symboliquement il me semble que la graisse d'oie est importante dans la cuisine juive en Alsace: notamment car elle rentre dans la composition des matseknepfelich qui est un met qui tient une place importante dans la tradition culinaire judéo-alsacienne.
De plus, dans ma famille, la graisse d'oie sert aussi à relever la choucroute.
Actuellement, c'est la matière grasse qui entre dans la composition des kugel: cependant de vieilles recettes stipulent l'utilisation de la graisse de boeuf (cf. mecker) plutôt que la graisse d'oie pour préparer ce plat.

Do you see links between traditional Alsatian Jewish food and Eastern European Ashkenazi Jewish food?

Je ne connais pas assez la cuisine juive d'Europe de l'Est mais pour ce que j'en connais il existe des similitudes (cf. matseknepfelich) ou des concordances (cf. gefilte fish pour l'europe de l'est et yidefish pour l'Alsace) ou des proximités dans les saveurs (cf. sucré-salé notamment pour le kugel qui existe aussi en europe de l'est bien qu'avec d'autres recettes)
In your book, you mention ‘haumen’, a smoked meat. I notice that Freddy Raphaël also mentions ‘homen’ in his book, La Cuisine Juive en Alsace: “En Alsace, le festin de Pourim comprenait une choucroute garnie et, nécessairement, de la viande de boeuf fumée, appelée Homen” (p. 24). Are these the same meat with different spellings? Also, do you consider haumen to be similar to pastrami?

Oui il doit s'agir de la même viande: du boeuf fumé qui garnit en effet la choucroute de Pourim. L'écriture "haumen" est une erreur de transcription de ma part, il s'agit bien avec la bonne orthographe du "homen" mentionné par Freddy Raphaël: à noter que ce nom vient de Haman le "méchant" de la meguila Ester.

Je ne pense pas que le pastrami soit similaire: pour ce que j'en connais le pastrami est une viande salée et non fumée; peut être que le bickel de boeuf (viande de boeuf salée au salpêtre) se rapproche plus du pastrami?

What are the traditional cured meats and smoked meats eaten by the Jewish community in the Alsace region?

Pour la charcuterie je mentionnerai principalement:
- le bickel de veau et de boeuf
- la langue salée ou fumée
- le derfleish (fines tranches de boeuf fumé)
- toutes les charcuteries alsaciennes non spécifiquement juives mais existant en version casher comme: le lyonner (ou saucisse de lyon avec des pistaches), les knacks, les knowliwurst (saucisse à l'ail)
- et bien sûr le lungewurst
Appendix M – Matzeknepflich Recipe from Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne (Available at http://www.mivy.fr/articles/famille_blum.html)

Matzes Knepflich

Matzes Knepflich
Appendix N – Carpe à la Yete Recipe from Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne (Available at http://www.mivy.fr/articles/famille_blum.html)

Carpe à la Yete  (Carpe à la Juive ou Fish à la Yide)
Appendix O – Pickelfleisch Recipe from Livre Cuisine Marie-Anne (Available at http://www.mivy.fr/articles/famille_blum.html)

Pickle Fleis d’après André Mathieu
Prendre de la poitrine de boeuf, pas du plat de côte, de la viande longue épaisse de 5 à 6 cm
Environ 5 kg
120 g de sel
30 g de salpêtre
Des aromates:
• Feuilles de laurier
• Thym
• Poivre (tout plein)
• Clous de giroffle
• Grains de geneviève
• Ail (une tête)

On met le tout dans un pôt en grès. On prend un verre d’eau, on y mélange les épices avec du poivre.

On prend la viande, on renverse les épices et on met le tout dans une serviette au fond du pôt en grès avec un gros poids dessus: on peut prendre une planchette et des cailloux.

On le retourne deux fois par jour, quand c’est prêt.

On le fait cuire une heure et demie.

On l’égoute et on le met au frigo.
Appendix P – Herring Salad Recipe from Françoise Klein (Translated by Gurwan Simenel)

Salade de Harengs
Herring salad

For 5 to 6:
- 6 herrings
- 5 apples
- 100 g of walnut kernels
- 50 g of gherkins
- 50 g of shallots
- 1 teaspoon of mustard
- The juice of one lemon
- ¼ L of fresh cream
- 50 g of minced parsley
- some pepper

Making:
- Wash the herrings, peel the apples and the shallots.
- Dice the herrings, the apples, the gherkins, and the nuts.
- Mince thiny the shallots.
- Mix these ingredients.

For the sauce:
- Mix the lemon juice, the pepper, the mustard, and the cream.
- Pour it on the other ingredients.
- Serve with some jacket potatoes.
- Decorate as you like.
Appendix Q – Choucroute Recipe from Françoise Klein (Translated by Gurwan Simenel)

*Choucroute à l’Ancienne*

Old school Sauerkraut

For 4:
- 1,2 kg of sauerkraut (300 x 4)
- 3 thick slices of smoked veal (dice them)
- 4 thick slices of garlic sausage
- 4 turkey cervelas (“Yarden”)
- 4 slices of “veau pressé”
- 8 wieners
- 4 slices of smoked goose block
- 4 slices of “Pikel” or smoked pastrami with paprika
- 4 boiled potatoes (ideally red potatoes)
- Some juniper berries
- 1 glass of riesling wine
- 100 g of goose fat

Making:
- In a stew pot (preferably a cast iron one), melt the goose fat, then add the sauerkraut, the juniper berries, the glass of riesling, and some water.
- Let it cook for few minutes, then add the diced veal and all the cold meats (excluding the “veau pressé”, the wieners, the beer sausages, the goose blocks, and the “Pikel”). Let it cook for 30 minutes, on a low heat, and hermetically covered.
- Add the remaining cold meats, and the boiled potatoes.
- Let it cook for another 10 minutes.
- Serve.
Appendix R – Excerpt from Recipe for Kouglof from Françoise Klein (Translated by Gurwan Simenel)

**Kouglof**

Jewish presence in Alsace is a thousand years old. If the Romans brought the secrets of Foie Gras when they occupied the region, it is the Jewish community which specialized in raising and force-feeding the geese, maintaining the know-how long after the conquerors left. During the middle ages, the Rhine communities were also the first to mix the liver with the onions and eggs: The simple minced liver which would later inspire the Foie Gras. At least, this is what the story tells.

It is not surprising that the cuisine has a heavy French and German influence: meatballs, noodles, fruit pies, or cheese, cabbage and cinnamon pies. The other way around, many Alsatian dishes are Jewish influenced: Jewish carp, for example, is made with crumbled lebkuchen and wine vinegar to add a sweet and sour taste to the sauce.

Adapted to replace the pork and the bacon by beef and goose fat, sauerkraut remains a feast dish. In a similar way, the *Birweke*, a fruity and spicy bread made with dried pears, is a speciality for Hanukkah and Christmas. Local pears are also poached, stuffed, or used to make the Krugel, a sweet and flavoursome onion-based dish.

A specific kind of brioche made for Rosh-ha-shana is stuffed with a rich almond cream, but however, it is the *Kouglof* which is the most popular choice for Alsatian Jews. It is a traditional dish for Shabbat, but also after Yom Kippur.