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For queen of 'new kosher,' Jewish dietary laws take back seat to taste, nutritiousness

Judy Maltz

Make way, Jamie Geller. There's a new queen of kosher cooking in town.

But she doesn't quite look the part. Dressed in a short shift, her arms and legs bare and hair completely uncovered, Kim Kushner is the first to admit she doesn't exactly project the image of a woman obsessed with Jewish dietary laws. "There's nothing about me that screams 'kosher,'" as she puts it.

Yet that's precisely the point, explains this Canadian-born New Yorker: "I happen to be kosher, but being kosher was never at the front and center of what I do."

Kushner, who has been featured on NBC's popular "The Today Show," is a trailblazing force in a new foodie movement she likes to call "the new kosher." It also happens to be the title of her second cookbook, which will be officially launched in Israel today.

What distinguishes the "new kosher" from the old? It is the antithesis of "margarine, margarine and yet more margarine," as Kushner sums it up, referring to a signature ingredient in many traditional kosher dishes. Jewish dietary laws prohibit mixing dairy and meat, so margarine – a non-dairy substitute for butter – has traditionally been a staple in kosher cooking.

Rice bran oil hamantschen

The "new kosher" focuses instead on simple, light and delicious meals, she says, based on lots of fresh and organic ingredients. In her biscotti, for example, Kushner replaces nutrient-devoid margarine with healthy olive oil, and in her hamantaschen (triangular-shaped cookies eaten traditionally on the Purim holiday), rice bran oil is used as the substitute to hold the pastry together.

In the spirit of "new ko-



Kim Kushner

Motti Milrod

sher" cuisine, few of Kushner's recipes contain more than seven or eight ingredients. And while the "new kosher" movement adheres to strict Jewish dietary laws, she says, it doesn't make a big deal about them.

Kushner's first cookbook, "The Modern Menu" (2013), offered up different suggestions for five-course meals, each contained in a separate chapter. Her latest, "The New Kosher," has a more traditional chapter breakdown (soups, salads, poultry, beef, side dishes, etc.), though it does devote an entire opening section to "Kim's Essentials" ("butternut squash chips with herbes de Provence," "addictive pickled carrots & radishes with Indian spices" and "za'atar everything topping," to name a few).

Schooled by Moroccan-born mom

A 35-year-old mother of three, Kushner was born and raised in a modern Orthodox home in Montreal. It was from her Moroccan-born mother, who grew up in Israel, that she inherited her love of cooking. "Our whole life centered around the kitchen and food," she recalls. "My mom was a fabulous cook, and just observing her in the kitchen, I was able to pick up a lot of things."

Twelve years ago, after marrying an American real

estate developer, Kushner moved to the Upper East Side of Manhattan. To occupy her time before she obtained working papers in the United States, she enrolled in the Institute of Culinary Education in New York. "One day a friend told me that she loved my food and wanted to know if she could get a group of women together so that I could give them a cooking lesson," recalls Kushner. "And that's how it all started, without any business plan whatsoever."

As a sort-of-stay-at-home mom, Kushner found herself befriending many women hired to take care of other people's children. That's how she discovered her next calling: special crash cooking courses for nannies. "These nannies would tell me that their bosses would be happy to pay for them to learn how to cook, and so I started these two full-day workshops where I'd teach eight recipes, and they'd just sell out," she recounts. She next found her talents in demand among a completely different clientele: affluent women wanting to prepare big dinner parties on their own but frightened by the prospect. "It used to be very popular in Manhattan to bring a chef to your home to cook dinner," she explains, "but not so much anymore."

At the end of each of her cooking classes, Kushner

has always provided her students with printouts of the recipes they've prepared. "At one point, one of them said to me that I really ought to be writing my own cookbook," she recalls.

Two cookbooks down the road, Kushner was asked to choose one tried-and-true (and super simple) recipe from her "The New Kosher" that would make a great family meal, appealing even to the most finicky eaters. Here's what she picked:

Kim's sticky chicky with potatoes

Ingredients:

8 skin-on, bone-in chicken pieces of your choice, about 3 lb (1.5 kg) total weight

1 yellow onion, chopped

4-6 potatoes (any variety, including Garnet yams), about 1.5 lb (750g) total weight, peeled and cut into wedges

Kosher salt and freshly

ground pepper

1 big squirt of tomato ketchup

1 squirt of honey

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon

Worcestershire sauce

Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).

Place the chicken, onion, and potatoes in a roasting pan or a rectangular baking dish and season with salt and pepper. Add the ketchup, honey, soy sauce and Worcestershire sauce, then use your hands to slather them evenly over the chicken and potatoes.

Cover the pan with aluminum foil and place in the oven for 30 minutes. Uncover the pan, reduce the oven temperature to 325 F (165 C), and continue to cook until the chicken is golden brown, sticky and perfect, about 2 hours longer. Serve right away.

Serves 4-6.

Weather

Seasonal average

Today will be partly cloudy to clear with average temperatures for the season. Temperatures will be a little lower tomorrow, but will begin rising again on Thursday. Friday will see another rise, leading to hotter than average weather and humidity along the coast.

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Sunrise Sunset		
06:01 19:28		

Air pollution index: 10.8.15

low • medium • high • very high

Jerusalem Tel Aviv Haifa Krayot
Be'er Sheva Karmiel Afula Mod'in
pollution forecast for this morning:
medium

