Dear Chavera,

The exciting and highly successful 2013 World Meeting of Representatives is now behind us. For the participants who attended it was a wonderful experience, a time to share ideas, network with friends old and new and see firsthand how WIZO is changing lives. The lectures were very interesting and insightful and we came away empowered and enriched, better equipped to face the challenges awaiting us. The Organization and Tourism Division’s session was entitled "Friend Raising – Growing and sustaining membership in organizations" and our keynote speaker, Avi Armoni, kept everybody spellbound with his analysis of the problems WIZO Federations face in recruiting and retaining members. He gave us much food for thought and we have included a summary of his speech in this edition of the LAPID newsletter.

Also within the framework of the MOR, Professor Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, Israel’s representative on the UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and world-renowned in the field of women’s rights appeared on the panel of ‘Remarkable Women who have broken through the Glass Ceiling’. As a religious Israeli feminist and respected jurist who has brought about far-reaching changes in her field she is the embodiment of the "Successful Jewish woman".

"Recruiting Members" by Tricia Schwitzer is the second article in our "Membership Matters" series and reflects on the tools needed to recruit new members. Guest writer, media specialist Rolene Marks, writes on the changing face of anti-Semitism. "Knowledge is power" and as ambassadors for Israel we constantly need to be "in the know". "Jaffa Tales" and "Israel Touch" showcase our tiny country as a hub of innovation, where something is always happening and where there is something to suit every taste.

The 46th World WIZO Bible Day book will be available online shortly. For a sneak preview we have included an excerpt on Purim which will be celebrated on 23rd February. If you have any interesting pictures of your Purim celebrations, fancy dress costumes and delicious recipes we would be happy if you would share them with us.

With warm WIZO wishes,

Chairperson
Organization and Tourism Division, World WIZO
Please join us for what promises to be a wonderful day out

$45 per person including lunch and museum entry

For more information and to register latest by Thursday, 21st March 2013 contact:

World WIZO Organization and Tourism Division
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Purim is one of the Jewish holidays which comedian Alan King summed up: “They tried to kill us. We won. Let’s eat.” Though Sukkot is the holiday upon which the Biblical command to rejoice is centered, Purim, a post-Torah celebration, is the Jewish holiday most closely associated with unbridled joy. Of the four mitzvot of Purim, three are intrinsically structured to make people happy:

Eating the festive meal, sending gifts of food and giving gifts to the needy (Esther 9:22).

The first mitzvah, listening to the reading of Megillat Esther [the Scroll of Esther, also known as the Book of Esther] (Esther 9:28), has itself become a festive occasion, with adults and children dressing up and being permitted – actually, encouraged – to make noise during the reading of the story of Purim whenever Haman’s name is mentioned.

This is the only Jewish holiday on which people are exhorted to drink. The Talmudic passage justifying this custom is chayav inish livesumei (a man is obliged to become inebriated) until he cannot distinguish between “Cursed is Haman,” and “Blessed is Mordechai.” (Tractate Megillah, 7b). Some people solve the problem by drinking a little wine and then taking a nap – if you are unconscious, you also can’t tell the difference...

Listening to and relating the story of Purim – in which Queen Esther and her uncle Mordechai rescued the Jewish people from destruction during the reign of the Persian King Ahashuerus - is a mitzvah that Jews throughout the world have fulfilled with great enthusiasm.

Humor in the Megillah

One of the most humorous works in Scriptures, the Book of Esther includes a number of humorous situations. The story starts with King Ahasuerus holding an enormous banquet for the people of Shushan, the capitol city. He orders his Queen, Vashti, to be brought to his party wearing the royal crown (some say only the royal crown) to "show off to the people and the officials her beauty." She refuses, indicating that such a display was beneath her dignity; so the king has her deposed (and presumably killed).

The King then issues a decree to the effect that henceforth, "every man should rule in his own home and speak according to the language of his people." (Esther 1:22). This unnecessary decree seems amusing, and the Midrash discusses whether it turned Ahasueurus into a laughingstock all over the world (Midrash Esther Rabbah 4:12).
The basis and composition of the book of Esther is dripping with irony. The people who are riding high when the book opens are at rock bottom when the book closes, and vice versa. Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordechai. Ahasuerus rid himself of a queen who disobeyed him and chose a new queen who bypassed the laws and came to the inner court without being called. Queen Esther continued to assert herself and even succeeded in getting the King to grant more time for the Jews to defend themselves against their enemies.

At the turning point of the story, Haman was asked by the King, "What should be done to the man whom the king desires to honor?" Of course, Haman was positive that the king must be referring to him, and described the way he most wanted to be honored: having a high-ranking official dress him in a royal robe, put him on the royal horse, and lead him through the streets crying, "This is what is done for the man whom the King delights to honor". Haman was ordered to lavish all these honors upon Mordechai. In addition, Mordechai worked actively to save the Jews, but his behavior was the catalyst for Haman’s rage and subsequent decision to kill the Jews: "And when Haman saw that Mordechai bowed not down nor prostrated himself before him, then Haman was filled with wrath" (Esther 3:5).

There are a number of jokes based on the wording of the Megillah. Here are two:

1. How do we know that there weren’t enough bathrooms in the palace? Because it states, “And Haman restrained himself.” (Esther 5:10).

2. How do we know that they played soccer near the palace? Because it states, “And Mordechai sat at the king’s gate” (Esther 2:19 - in Modern Hebrew the word for gate, sha’ar, also means goalpost).

Passover take-offs for Purim

The Passover Seder has been used as a jumping-off point for Purim parodies. In the Berlin edition of Mahzor Vitry (1893), the liturgical poem “Leil Shikorim” (Night of Drunkards) appears a Purim takeoff on “Leil Shimurim” (Night of Vigil) from the Passover Haggadah.

There is also a Purim Haggadah, “Haggada leLeil Shikorim” (Haggadah for the Night of Drunkards), which starts: “Pour the 9th glass”, and includes an alternate set of four questions, including: “Why is this day different from all other days? On other days we work sometimes and eat sometimes. Today is all for eating and drinking.” The three things that must be mentioned at the Purim seder -- instead of the Passover sacrifice, matzah (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs -- are singing, drinking and dancing. There is even a Purim version of the famous song Dayenu (it would have been sufficient): If Vashti had been killed and Esther had not reigned in her stead, Dayenu. If Esther had reigned in her stead, but had not invited Haman to the feast...If the King had not had trouble sleeping...If Haman had not come to the court...
If Haman had not led Mordechai on the horse...If Haman had not fallen on Esther’s bed...If Harbonah had not spoken up...If Haman’s sons had not been hung as well as their father...If their wealth had not been given to Mordechai...If revenge had not been taken on our enemies...If Purim had not been established...If we had not been commanded to feast and make merry in all our habitations...Dayenu.

Purim plays, parodies, and poetry

There are records of Purim parodies from the 12th century. Ashkenazi Jews put on Purim-shpiels – satiric plays -- as early as the 14th century, starring not only the characters from the Book of Esther, but other Biblical personalities as well. Purim-shpiels were originally performed in Yiddish. As Ahuva Belkin points out, "The Megillah was read in Hebrew, the language of religious literature...while the carnival show required an everyday, informal language that everyone could understand. The vernacular Yiddish...shattered the solemnity of the ritual..., replacing [it] with parody and adding oral material such as sketches, jokes, satires and folk songs." Today Purim-shpiels are performed in many languages, and comprise an unlimited well of creativity and musical initiative.

Sephardic Jews tell the story of Purim in coplas-- poems in Ladino composed from the late 17th century on. These poems, in the main, revolve around Jewish holidays and historical events. Coplas de Purim was among the first of this genre to be written, and they are also the most abundant. In general, the content can be divided into three categories: shortened versions of the Book of Esther; depictions of the Purim celebration; and parodies about the "bad guys" in the Book of Esther - notably Haman and his wife Zeresh.

Getting dressed up – origins and variations

Many people – not only children – look forward to dressing up on Purim. Doing so is a long-standing custom. The earliest record is found in the writings of the Mahari Mintz, a late 15th century Italian rabbi and scholar. He writes that on Purim it is permitted for a man to dress up as a woman and vice versa. It is clearly implied that this is a custom that was well established in his day.

But why do we wear costumes on Purim? A number of different reasons exist. One of the deeper rationales for this custom is that the entire miracle of Purim was “clothed” in natural occurrences. The events in the Purim story happened over a period of years and do not seem to be connected. There is no explicit mention of G-d’s name in the Megillah. In fact the very name of the Megillah — “Esther” — hints of the hidden nature of the miracles.
When the Talmud asks, “Where do we see a hint about Esther in the Torah?” it answers with a verse from Deuteronomy (31:18): “v’Anochi haster Astir Panai” (“and I will surely hide my face”). The word “Esther” is from the same root as the word for “hide”.

Within the story of Purim there are a number of “dressings up”. Vashti kept her clothes on in spite of the demands of Ahashuerus. Esther did not reveal her origins — no one knew where she was from or realized that she was Jewish. Mordechai wore sackcloth in mourning for his people and was later dressed in the clothes of the king. Some say that another reason for wearing costumes is to commemorate the dressing up of Mordechai in King Ahasuerus’s royal garments at the turning point of the story.

A mask and costume hide the wearer’s identity. Not only can you not tell who the individual is, you do not have any insight into their true nature. We dress differently on Purim to minimize the embarrassment of the poor who are to receive charity on this day. When we -- and they -- are in costume, no one’s face can be seen, and no one can be recognized -- neither the giver nor the recipient.

This chapter is an excerpt from the 46th World WIZO Bible Day Booklet which will be available online shortly and you will be able to access it via the homepage of the World WIZO website (under Media/Bible Day Booklet).
Friendship – Growing and sustaining membership in organizations

Summary of a lecture by Avi Armoni, Resource Development Consultant

Avi as he refers to himself defined Friend Raising as Partnership Building – a way of looking ahead to the future.

The question was raised whether we need to adjust the vision of WIZO to make it relevant to the 21st Century? He mentioned that the vision of WIZO is to connect world Jewry. Hadassah on the other hand focuses on a particular field of work without a specific ideology. They don't speak about valuable global messages; and don't link their ideology to the global relationship amongst Jews.

Nowadays it is harder to make the case for Israel and raise funds abroad. Israel is perceived as a strong nation, a leader in high tech, the start up nation. Funding mutual projects and responsibilities is more than being about the money. It is about relationship building and shared ideology. We need to "sell" Israel as an advanced civil society that still needs financial support from abroad.

WIZO's customers are 2 fold: Members and Recipients of our generosity.

When we look at the environment we need to re-evaluate the geopolitical situation we are facing today. There has been erosion in the quality and substance of life in Israel. We are facing a double challenge to be more relevant in our own communities (World WIZO Federations) and also in Israel.
We can’t make a difference to our environment but we can increase our capacity i.e. more members/more money. If our capacity is increased we can fulfill our mission.

The list of WIZO projects is phenomenal as is the growth of Israeli philanthropy. Armoni spoke about having an Exit strategy, shifting from service provision to capacity building and sustainability. The Zionist ideology is embedded into WIZO’s history.

We need to bring new life to the meaning of Zionism and engage new partners, "New Zionists" (eg. Kibbutz Ironi). To make these young Zionists part of our equation by giving them roles and responsibilities.

Membership organizations usually are broad based, stable, receive smaller contributions from a larger number of members, enduring, have small overheads, create a community, and the level of bequests is larger than any other form of charity.

**How can we create a wide membership base?**

You give and you get (a two way relationship) – aim is to become partners in nation building, feel a sense of pride and belonging, form relationships with like minded people, sense of community belonging.

A membership organization has obligations – commitment to the organization’s values, financial commitments, social and ideological commitments.

The outcome of giving and getting: is the highest sense of loyalty, sense of ownership, brings the highest level of involvement both time and quality wise.

Weaknesses:

- Dwindling membership
- Organization is not attractive to younger members
- Organization doesn't answer the needs of the customers

The demands on members in the Diaspora communities are much greater nowadays. We need to strengthen the personal level of partnership. At the end of the day there are enough people interested in our mission and vision. People want to connect to a success story. We need to convey a sense of urgency, raise money by expanding circles of giving, opening doors

Optimally we should reach out to a matrix of people and create a diverse group of members with shared areas but also showing diversity and new ground. We need to attract people from different worlds which add color and controversy. We should engage student ambassadors (and take an example from the Technion’s successful fundraising campaign) because they speak from the heart.
How to recruit new members?

- Members bring Members
- Training members to utilize capacity
- Branding and perception of WIZO not in tune with the quality of the organization

Armoni mentioned the example of the Diaspora Museum which recently underwent rebranding – reaching out to a wider audience, now called the Museum of the Jewish People – branding of the museum as belonging to all Jews, Diaspora communities and also Israelis.

WIZO needs to rebrand and recreate its' image to be attractive to the younger generation, invest in outreach and social media. We need to give our members unique benefits, ownership of information that others in the community don't share.

He suggested creating global engagement, not necessarily Israel based. Organize study tours to other Jewish communities, create a sense of fun and get members together.

The challenge is to increase membership by 20% every 3 years, but this is a very ambitious goal. Strategies should focus on 3 elements:

1. recruit new members
2. preserve existing members,
3. increase level of commitment and engagement (for new and existing members)

Israeli philanthropists want connections with Jews from abroad – these connections could be forged through "Home hospitality". The new generation of Israeli entrepreneurs has a social agenda, they support youth villages, large providers of education and also concerned with advocacy.

We cannot be passive and have to share best practices to increase membership:

- Rebranding of the organization
- Increase prestige – convey the message that WIZO has a unique value
- Improve communication
- New ways to engage people in leadership positions
- Build mentoring systems and recognition strategies
- Be active in your local Federation; create a community that supports Israel. We need to invest in our own internal capacity.
- Improve outreach – engage university students, provide volunteer opportunities for youth
- Improve the quality of professional training to volunteers
- Invest in Webinars, policy sessions, updating our data base
Swelling the ranks of membership is crucial to the future of WIZO. New members bring with them new skills and new ideas and a totally fresh outlook with which to tackle the demands of an ever-changing society. Moreover, it is worthwhile remembering that even the most seasoned leaders were once new and inexperienced.

The question is often asked, 'what are the tools needed to recruit new members?' Primarily your biggest asset in promoting WIZO to potential new members is YOU. Whatever way you market your membership campaign, however much you invest in making it happen, both the problem and the solution is based in the preliminary signals that YOU send out. Above all, be positive. If you wring your hands and lament on the impossibility of recruiting membership for a myriad of reasons – then you quite simply won't... Your positive attitude will always be the key to your success. Women gravitate towards positive people and they want to among them. Show potential members that their part in the WIZO success story is one to be shared, and one to which other women will aspire. In short, if you believe in the WIZO product – you will be better-equipped to 'sell' WIZO to new recruits as the movement of choice.

However, a permanent smile and an easy laugh is not enough. In order to 'sell' WIZO – to explain why it is the most worthy movement in which to donate your time, energy and skills, you must empower yourself with facts, figures and emotional testimonies that support your crusade. Be vibrant in your illustration of the challenges of Israel's society and the solutions provided by WIZO. Find common ground, shared allegiances, and a shared passion and shape your appeal to suit prospective members. WIZO, by nature of its work, has countless mental images that appeal directly to the heart, innumerable success stories of Israelis whose lives have been changed for the good because of WIZO's excellent caring strategies supported by 'women just like you all around the world.' As a peoples' movement that cares so deeply for the people of Israel – and the future of the Jewish peoplehood, WIZO has much to offer women who care about a wide range of social issues and the betterment of Israeli society. It is my belief that if WIZO was better explained (or better marketed) then women would be queuing up to join!

Additionally, a successful campaign also depends on your prospective member's perception that they are essential to the WIZO cause. They want feedback, they want direction, but more than that – they want inclusion. They will be more likely to join if they are assured that their participation is not, heavens forbid, being taken for granted.
Potential members must be made to feel that they are full partners and their voices will not only be heard – but will be given a platform. Network, network and network some more. By increasing membership, you increase your people network and spread the WIZO word far and wide, thereby making the ultimate task of raising much needed funds to support those crucial projects in Israel – less of a cold call and more of a warm relationship.

You may be thousands of miles away but your mission is to be the best ambassador for WIZO that you can be, to appeal to the Jewish heart and highlight the role of Zionism in the life of every Jew everywhere, thereby creating an emotional link between your peers and the women and children of Israel.
THE SUCCESSFUL JEWISH WOMAN

Professor Ruth Halperin-Kaddari: A religious feminist trailblazer fights for women's rights

Legal expert Ruth Halperin-Kaddari has been fighting for women's rights around the globe, but faces some of her biggest battles in Israel.

Prof. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari founded and heads the Rackman Center for the Advancement of the Status of Women at Bar-Ilan University's Law Faculty. The Center leads advocacy efforts aimed to improve the legal rights of women in Israel and worldwide. Halperin-Kaddari is also a lecturer at Bar-Ilan University and an expert on family law, feminist legal criticism and women's rights; and, until recently, head of the Prime Minister’s Advisory Council on Women’s Status. The fact that she is a religious woman makes her career all the more noteworthy. And it’s also what makes her a religious feminist by definition.

Not only is Ruth Halperin-Kaddari a trailblazer for women’s rights in Israel but also in many international forums. Since the late 1990s Prof. Halperin-Kaddari has been working with the United Nations in the realm of women's rights. She began by directing the official study on the status of women's rights in Israel for the UN on behalf of the Israeli government. In 2007, she was elected a member of the elite, influential and predominantly female, UN Committee for Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which reviews reports on the status of women submitted by UN member countries. The Committee has 192 member countries, including Israel, and a smaller body of 23 members which is comprised of human rights experts and activists who oversee implementation of its charter.

In July 2010, Prof. Halperin-Kaddari added another accomplishment to her list when she was reelected for a second term to the UN committee something her predecessors had not achieved. Prof. Gabriela Shalev, the president of Ono Academic College, who was Israel’s UN ambassador at the time said that her reelection, particularly at a time when Israel was under a barrage of criticism following the May 2010 raid on the Turkish flotilla was a real achievement for the State and testament to Ruth Halperin-Kaddari’s exceptional talent.

Although elected on behalf of Israel, Halperin-Kaddari stresses that she does not represent Israel specifically while working on the committee. Rather, she “works on behalf of all women in the world,”

Born in Ramat Gan, Halperin-Kaddari served in the Israel Army at age 18, in an intelligence unit. She earned her first degree at Bar-Ilan University, and her Master's and doctorate in law from Yale University, which she attended on a full scholarship.
At Yale she obtained the feminist education she had been missing and describes her studies there as “an unsettling intellectual, cultural and feminist experience.” It was at Yale that she decided to specialize in family law - an unconventional choice at the time as up to then, religious males had a monopoly in the field. During her sojourn in the United States she began her process of liberation. Her official birth as a feminist took place at a liberal synagogue in New Haven, Connecticut, when she was called up to the Torah for the first time.

Halperin-Kaddari is active in Kolech, the first Orthodox Jewish feminist organization in Israel and is considered a prominent voice in the religious feminist sector. She promotes awareness of Orthodox women in Israel seeking to interpret and develop the status of women within Judaism and her approach combines Western law and Jewish religious law. She is at the forefront of the struggle against discrimination against women in terms of personal status issues, which derives from the fact that religious law has a monopoly on marriage and divorce in Israel.

In the early 1990s, when she began lecturing on family law at Bar-Ilan University, she was the lone woman in the field. Dr. Daphna Hacker, a family law expert who lectures at Tel Aviv University, says that Halperin-Kaddari was a real trailblazer in a generation that was entirely male. “In just a few dramatic years she made an attempt to bring together family laws that are based upon religious-communal-conservative logic and the family reality in Israel, which requires much more up-to-date solutions”.

Prof. Halperin Kaddari has received many accolades throughout her illustrious career. In 2007 she was a recipient of the Secretary of State’s Woman of Courage Award. Inaugurated by then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the Award honors the courage of extraordinary women worldwide who have played transformative roles in their societies. Her award certificate states: "She has tirelessly worked to protect women’s rights in Israel. Through her expertise in feminist jurisprudence, she has changed attitudes, shaped policies, and is enabling women to achieve genuine equality in the workplace. This award is to honor her courage and leadership in advocating for women’s rights and advancement."

In 2010 Prof. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, was named 2010 Woman of the Year in Law by the prestigious monthly magazine "Praklitim", published by the Israel Bar Association.

Halperin-Kaddari has published several articles in prestigious law journals and her book, "Women in Israel: A State of Their Own," was published in the United States in 2004.

Sources:
Tamar Rotem, Home truths: a religious feminist trailblazer tells it like it is retrieved from http://www.haaretz.com
In today's social media savvy and fast paced world it seems that the face of anti-Semitism as we traditionally know it is rapidly changing. Modern day anti-Semitism is no longer restricted to the desecration of Jewish graves or the barring of Jews from sports clubs as we used to see in the past. Today we see a shift from attacking the individual to the attack of the ultimate Jewish symbol, the State of Israel.

The new anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head in the form of virulent anti-Zionism. On University campuses around the world and in calls for Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions against the Jewish State are increasing. Attempts to equate Israel with pariah states like Apartheid South Africa and deal out the same treatment that brought the notorious African regime to its knees, seems to be the new modus operandi that forms part of the new assault on Israel's legitimacy. March brings with it perhaps the most nefarious event on the anti-Israel calendar, Israel = Apartheid Week. On university campuses across the world "activists" will be staging various forums to attack and vilify Israel. Drawing comparisons by alleging that Israel practices crimes of Apartheid anti-Israel activists are treated like visiting rock stars and Jewish students are feeling the heat as anti-Israel activists use intimidation tactics. Many feel too intimidated or that Universities are complicit in fostering climates of hatred.

The other battlefield that is growing in momentum are the calls for cultural, academic and economic boycotts and divestment (BDS). This attempted assault on Israel's legitimacy is the new manifestation of anti-Semitism. It has become the cause du jour for actresses like Emma Thompson or musicians like Roger Waters. These so called human rights activists are also strangely silent when rockets rain down on Israel's civilians but this just exposes the scary double standard at play. Last year, music icon Stevie Wonder, cancelled his scheduled appearance at the Friends of the IDF benefit after he was inundated with letters and petitions from activists. The sad reality is that the people who stand to lose the most in campaigns like this are the very people human rights activists purport to help.

The new tool in the arsenal of hatred is Holocaust inversion or the accusations that the Jewish victims of the worst crime of atrocity known to mankind are now the perpetrators.
This was evident in South Africa last week when at an event to commemorate International Holocaust Day (organised by the BDS Movement - oh the irony!), the CEO of the South African Human Rights Commission declared that "The Holocaust survivor has become the War criminal of today." This nauseating and offensive statement that is meant to give these nefarious organisations the moral high ground only serve to expose their true intent.

Israel has become the favourite scapegoat much to the detriment of other conflicts around the world. Beating up on the Jewish State has become the sport of choice in the world media and in the hallowed halls of the United Nations. One has to wonder how victims of human rights atrocities and genocide in places like Syria or Darfur feel that their suffering is of little consequence when Israel is the focus of so much attention. Sadly when we needed the focus of the world it was lacking. But if the tyrants and terrorists of the world unite against us and use us as a scapegoat, perhaps we are doing something right?

Rolene Marks is a member of the Media Team Israel, a voluntary body under the auspices of the South African Zionist Federation that counters bias against Israel in the media. Rolene Marks has written numerous published opinion-editorials, addressed groups and has been featured on radio and television countering bias against Israel. Follow Rolemarks on Twitter or read her blog: www.rorosrantings.wordpress.com
ISRAEL TOUCH

Rethinking Israel Advocacy... It is not to counter the negative, but to promote the positive.

Sometimes we need to forget about the politics and focus instead on the miracles and splendor of Israel and its people, to highlight the core strengths that have propelled our little country to the forefront of world innovation and progress.

Israel is a remarkable performer when it comes to innovation. This premise was reaffirmed by Professor Dan Shechtman, the 2011 Nobel Prize winner for Chemistry in his keynote address ‘Technological Entrepreneurship, a Key to World Peace and Prosperity’ at the World WIZO Meeting of Representatives in January. As ambassadors for the State of Israel we can rally support for our cause by promoting Israeli entrepreneurship, and new innovations and technologies which are helping nations nowadays to tackle a major global concern - Food Security.

As the old English proverb goes "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach" and this feature article is certain to tug at some heartstrings.

Let them eat hummus, with a Hebrew University breakthrough

What would Israeli cuisine be without the chickpea — the major component of falafel, hummus and more? Ranking second among the world’s food legumes, just behind the soybean, the chickpea is a popular and sought after protein source. It contains Lutein — an important antioxidant whose intake is associated with a lower risk of blindness. Humble though it may be, the chickpea plays a major role not only in the Middle East, but across Asia and especially in India, where hundreds of millions rely on it to fill their daily nutritional needs so an upgrade to the chickpea could go a long way toward fostering better nutrition for many of the world’s poorest.

Using natural selection techniques as opposed to Genetic Modification methods which have been banned outright by several European governments, the Hebrew University team led by Professor Shahal Abbo have developed new chickpea varieties which promise to raise chickpea crop yields, lengthen their growing season, make more land available to farmers for crops, and even produce a more nutritious pea.

In South Asia and northern Australia, chickpeas are predominantly grown in the post-rainy season on receding stored soil moisture, and toward the end of their growing cycle require a great deal of irrigation to complete the cycle.
The team of agriculturalists developed a strain of chickpea that flowers earlier, in the colder, rainier weather of winter. As a result, the growing season for chickpeas is increased, and the plants can take advantage of the spring rains for watering.

“Chickpea is not only a staple diet component in large areas of the globe, but also an important health food in Western countries and its consumption is rising steadily. Therefore, the new varieties, developed by Prof. Abbo using non-GMO techniques, are highly important for human health in developing countries, and may promote marketing in industrialized nations,” said Yaacov Michlin, CEO of Yissum, the Research and Development Company of the Hebrew University.

The Israeli fish that lays golden eggs

Super-expensive Karat caviar, coveted by restaurateurs in several countries, starts out in river-fed ponds in the Galilee.

Think “caviar” and the Caspian Sea probably come to mind along with Russia and maybe Iran. Well, think again because some of the finest caviar in the world today originates from ponds at Kibbutz Dan in Israel.

It all started with a business trip to Russia in 1992. Aquaculturists Yigal Ben-Tzvi and Avshalom Hurvitz, who grew up on Kibbutz Dan and run its fish farms, bought some prized Osetra sturgeon eggs to hatch for the growing Israeli population of Russian immigrants who love this variety of fish.

At the time, harvesting the fish’s precious eggs was not on their agenda. Russia and Iran had that market cornered. But when the United Nations declared wild sturgeon endangered in 2003, Ben Tzvi and Hurvitz decided to go for it even though that entailed holding onto their stock of fish for about another six years until they reached the peak age. It was a good decision, because in 2006 the export of all wild sturgeon caviar from the Caspian and Black seas was banned. The little Galilean kibbutz just had to wait until 2009 to conquer the market.

Harvesting black gold

Ben-Tzvi explains that when the fish reach four years old, they are sex-typed by endoscopy under anesthesia. The males are killed, frozen and shipped to a Russian wholesaler. The females are pampered for another four years, at which time their eggs are surgically biopsied under anesthesia.

The staff can tell by the eggs’ taste, size and color if the mother is sufficiently mature. Eggs which are bigger than 2.8 millimeters in diameter and somewhere between gold and gray-black in color signal readiness. Once the eggs reach the right size and color, the mature females are killed, and the eggs removed from their bellies. This meat, too, is shipped to Russia for consumption.

The caviar is put in two-pound tins and left to curate for at least one month in the tin before being repacked and shipped to wholesalers in the United States, France, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Singapore and Australia.
Nutty and buttery
Under private label or the kibbutz’s Karat brand, the product can be bought on gourmet websites for about $107 for a one-ounce tin.

According to Ben-Tzvi the kibbutz raise only Osetra sturgeon. This gives them a big advantage because most caviar in the world is not Osetra and is much less good. Only three other farms in the world raise Osetra, and the Israeli variety has gained a premium reputation partly because the ponds use water pumped from the Dan River, a tributary of the Upper Jordan.

Jean-Francois Bruel, executive chef at Daniel restaurant in New York City uses Israeli caviar because of its flavor and describes it as “very nutty and buttery” with no aftertaste or muddiness. To quote Bruel “We tried some caviar from Italy, from Bulgaria, from Germany, from California here also. But we find the Israeli variety the best so we work with Israeli caviar.”

Israel Inside: How a Small Nation Makes a Big Difference
This new feature-length documentary explores the positive characteristics of Israeli society from a humanistic, psychological, and emotional perspective. It is insightful and uplifting and sidesteps the usual conversation of politics, conflict and violence, and tells the story of the Israeli people – whose resilience has propelled Israel to the forefront of world innovation and progress.

The movie is narrated by Professor Tal Ben-Shahar, who is famous for having taught the most popular course at Harvard on Positive Psychology. He decided a few years back to leave behind his stellar career success in the US in order to move back to Israel with his family. In this intensely inspiring video, Ben-Shahar explains why he chose to return to Israel and why he feels so much love and admiration for this unique country.

Enjoy, and please share this important video which can be viewed by clicking on the link below: http://www.israelinsideinthemovie.com

Sources:


Avigail Klein-Leichman, The Israeli fish that lay golden eggs retrieved from http://israel21c.org
EXPLORE ISRAEL

Jaffa Tales: An ancient port awakes from its slumbers to become a must-visit city

Something new is happening in Tel Aviv’s southernmost and oldest neighborhood, Jaffa. The newly renovated old port of Jaffa is bringing new life to this once quiet, fishing village. The port of Jaffa known in biblical mythology as the site of Jonah’s unfortunate swallowing by a whale was an important commercial hub throughout the city’s history. The reconstruction and preservation efforts that lasted for several years, managed to successfully maintain it as an active fishing port, alongside the new emerging urban cultural facilities. The renewed old warehouses now host a variety of excellent restaurants along the wharfs, with captivating views of the Mediterranean and the fishermen Marina. Other spaces are dedicated to art, hosting permanent exhibitions and changing art events. Together with the unique shops and a colorful square that hosts various shows and concerts, it is a charming spot.

Within Warehouse 1, a renovated structure dating from the beginning of the last century, at the northern end of the port is the new Jaffa Port Food Market and if you’re a bit of a food fan this is a must-see sight (and taste) to add to your Tel Aviv itinerary. The market is one of the most invested culinary projects in Israel, designed in the spirit of famous food markets in Spain, Italy and the nearby Tel Aviv Port Farmers’ Market. It is small and chic and offers an elegant alternative for the fascinating rough and noisy street markets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Here one can shop for organic fruits and vegetables, freshly baked breads, herbs and spices or coffee, drink a glass of beer with a portion of fish and chips, or a gourmet sausage, and combine the two.

For those interested in an "out of this world experience" a visit to the "Nalaga’at" Center housed since 2007 in a renovated shipping hangar in Jaffa’s Old Port, is a must. Founded by the "Nalaga’at" non-profit organization the Center is comprised of the "Nalaga’at" Theater, billed as the world’s first professional deaf-blind theater ensemble; Café Kapish, a coffee shop offering a variety of appetizing dishes, fine coffee and... an out of the ordinary communication experience since all of the waiters are deaf and can only communicate with a smile, sign language...
that they are eager to help you learn, a slate, and a Magic Marker; and Black Out, the pitch-black
restaurant with its staff of blind waiters. The center also conducts workshops in sign language,
pottery and wine tasting – the latter two “in the dark”.

At the "Na'laga'at" Center, whose name means "please do touch" in Hebrew, the idea is to turn
"normal" life upside down by empowering deaf and blind people and pushing seeing and hearing
customers beyond their comfort zone. The Center - the first of its kind in the world, seeks to
promote interaction between deaf-blind, deaf, and blind individuals and people able to hear and
see, regardless of cultural or social distinctions. A visit to the center is an exceptional artistic
experience and will change the way you think, the way you feel, and the way you are.

Another of Jaffa's highlights is the wonderful, brand-new
Visitor's Center located in Kedumin square. The "Jaffa Tales" is a
magical multi-sensory experience which brings one of the
world's most fascinating ancient seaports to life using a 16
meter panoramic screen along with floating glass screens,
surround sound and special effects. "Jaffa Tales" is a fun,
interactive virtual trip to through Jaffa’s history. You walk amid
archaeological discoveries and meet a cast of virtual characters
and artifacts from the past of Israel and Jaffa.

Old Jaffa, is an architectural and artistic gem with the potential of providing an endless good time:
It's fun to discover ancient Jaffa on foot, wander through the picturesque alleyways interspersed
with art galleries, browse around "Shuk Hapishpishim" the outdoor flea market which has become
quite trendy of late and is full of new bars, restaurants and boutique art galleries and feel a sense
of unmatched freedom. "Jaffa by ear" a self-guided tour of Jaffa with a map and audio guide is
available free to guests of the new Visitors' Center. The tour lasts anywhere from an hour and a
half to a full day and allows you to discover magical Jaffa at your own personal pace and get
enraptured by the picturesque port.

After indulging in Jaffa's culinary delights a good way to burn off those unwanted calories is to take
a pleasant stroll along Jaffa’s new promenade, from the Sea Wall and until the Green Slope Park
(Park HaMidron HaYarok), which offers you wonderful views of the Mediterranean and a large gulp
of fresh sea air.

Jaffa, with its Old Port, markets, restaurants and unique old-world atmosphere is the place to visit
and makes for a fabulous and fun day out in Tel Aviv/Jaffa.

Sources:

Aviva and Shmuel Baram, Jaffa Tales: an ancient port awakes from its slumbers to become a must-visit city retrieved from http://www.timesofisrael.com

Steve Kramer, Please touch theater at Jaffa Port Na'laga'at Center, ESRA Magazine, Issue: 151