



# THE JESUS FEAST

What Did Jesus Eat?

## ABSTRACT

This guide equips readers with a basic understanding of the variety of meals and foodstuffs available in 1st Century Palestine, as well as the histories of the Passover meal and the Agape Feast of the early church. The Jesus Feast also provides an alternative for churches and individuals wanting to present a “Last Supper” program that does not misappropriate the Jewish Passover Seder. Included are sample meal plans, worship suggestions, recipes, and a resource list for more information on any of the topics presented herein.

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## INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended for churches interested in hosting a Last Supper program that doesn't misappropriate the Jewish Passover Seder. However, this guide can also be used to create an Agape Feast, an educational program, or a meal that can serve as a vehicle for interfaith/intercultural dialogue.

Section 1 discusses the types of meals common in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine. Section 2 introduces the Passover Meal and discusses the development of the Passover Seder and the Agape Feast. Section 3 provides information on the foods that would have been available during Jesus' time and includes sample menus. Section 4 includes ways the meal can be incorporated into a worship service, particularly Maundy Thursday. The guide concludes with a recipe section, a print copy of PowerPoint slides that can be used for education [information on how to obtain a copy of the actual PowerPoint presentation is included in the resources], and a full resource list.

The program is completely flexible. It can be easily modified to meet your needs or you can follow a sample menu and/or sample dinner worship as they are presented here. The majority of the ingredients used in the meals are readily available at most grocery stores; those ingredients not available locally can be easily obtained online. Likewise, no special equipment is required for the preparation or serving of the foods.

### Section 1: Meals in the time of Jesus

There were four types of meals eaten by the Jewish people in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE: Everyday meals, Shabbat meals, Holy Feasts, and Banquets.

#### Everyday Meals

Most Israelites lived simple, agrarian lifestyles. The number of meals a day depended on the amount of wealth or resources a person had. The poorer members of society usually ate one meal a day – generally in the evening. The average, working-class person broke their fast in the morning with a handful of fruit, nuts, or toasted grain, or a little leftover gruel from the night before. If they had milking animals, there might be a bit of milk or whey as well. Lunch, if they ate it, was often a piece of leftover flatbread smeared with olive oil or a bit of butter. If they were fortunate, they might have some cheese or leftover meat/fish to wrap the flatbread around. Otherwise, they likely had some dried fruit or olives with their bread.

The evening meal was the main meal of the day. Unless the family was rich enough to own a table, they usually squatted on the floor around communal serving dishes of bread, grain porridge or legume stew seasoned with herbs, fresh or pickled vegetables, olives, fresh or dried fruit, maybe a bit of cheese, and watered-down wine or juice. Meat was reserved for special occasions. Wealthy individuals and families ate a wider variety of foods and could afford to have meat more often. Meals may or may not have concluded with a prayer of thanks. This simple, grain & produce-based meal is still commonly eaten throughout Palestine and Israel.

### Shabbat Meals

Shabbat began with a prayer or the singing of hymns. The meal usually included meat, either roasted or as part of a stew. There might also be honey, vinegar, or some other dipping sauce. If they had chickens, there would be boiled eggs. If they had milk animals, there would be cheese or maybe yogurt. The meal would also include bread and seasonal vegetables or fruits. There would be wine or grape juice (“new wine”). The meal concluded with the Birkat ha-Mazon (Grace After Meals).

### Holy Feasts

There were seven major Jewish feasts in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Each feast had special foods that were offered as burnt offerings or blood sacrifices, depending on the feast. Three of the feasts – Passover/Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Booths – were annual pilgrimage festivals to Jerusalem. Whether the feast happened in Jerusalem or at home, they were community affairs involving friends and family. The Feast of Passover & Unleavened Bread featured roasted lamb and flatbreads made of barley. The Feast of Weeks celebrated the wheat harvest and the Feast of Booths celebrated the fruit harvest. Communal, religious festivals are still celebrated around the world today, featuring the sharing of food with others and spending time in community.

### Banquets

Banquets were modeled after traditional Greco-Roman banquets, which included a meal followed by a “symposium” – music, teaching, debates, or other entertainments. Diners reclined on couches or mats around one central table or a few smaller tables. The location of one’s seat was based on social status. Wine flowed freely and the choicest foods were served. Banquets were meant to impress guests. They were primarily for men, though women did participate occasionally.

## **Section 2: Passover Meal & Agape Feast**

In the early centuries of the Passover celebration, the only requirement was for each household to slaughter a lamb, sprinkle its blood on the doorposts with a hyssop branch, roast the lamb and then consume it that evening. After the 1<sup>st</sup> Temple was built during Solomon’s reign, Passover was combined with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an agricultural festival celebrating the barley harvest. The required elements for the Passover meal then became roasted lamb and unleavened bread. After the Babylonian Exile and the building of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple, the priests included bitter herbs in the meal requirement. So, during Jesus’ time, the only required foods were roasted lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. The meal wasn’t limited to these three items, they just needed to be included.

Sometime during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple period, Passover became one of three pilgrimage festivals. All who were able were required to travel to Jerusalem and offer a lamb for sacrifice at the Temple. After the lamb was slaughtered, they would bring the carcass to wherever they were staying and roast it for the evening meal. The evening would have included prayers and hymns, and probably a discussion of the Exodus story.

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple was destroyed in 70 CE (AD) and people scattered, the priests looked for a way to continue teaching the people about God and who they were as God's people, in the absence of the Temple. Rabban Gamaliel the Younger and his contemporaries expanded the required food items for the Passover plate and wrote explanations of what each food symbolized. They created The Haggadah, which details the rituals and readings to be followed during the Passover meal. Thus, the Seder (which means 'order') was born.

The Passover Seder is a distinctly Jewish ritual that was developed decades after Jesus lived. Early Christians, on the other hand, had the Agape Feast, a communal meal shared among Believers that included scripture, prayer, and the Eucharist. Though the meal was modeled after the Last Supper, there were no required foods (other than bread and wine), nor were there dietary restrictions. The Eucharist was eventually separated from the Agape Feast and put into a worship service. The Feast fell out of use by the 6<sup>th</sup> Century as the Early Church shifted its focus to worship services.

The Agape Feast has seen a resurgence in recent decades as a "Lovefeast" and as "Dinner Church". Some groups and communities, such as The People's Supper and the NYC Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee, are using the Agape feast model as a bridge for interfaith fellowship and dialogue. There is a sacredness in sharing a meal in community and welcoming strangers into that meal as equals. Holy conversations happen in the breaking of bread. For churches interested in hosting an interfaith dialogue in the context of a meal, there are links to two hosting guides in the resources.

### **Section 3: Foods Available During the Time of Jesus**

Many of the foods Americans are used to, such as apples, oranges, rice, corn, potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, lemons, and peppers, weren't available in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine. Below are some of the foods that were available:

#### Grains & Legumes

Barley, Chickpeas (garbanzo beans), Fava beans, Peas, Lentils, Millet, Spelt Wheat, Einkorn, Emmer, Oats

#### Vegetables

Artichokes, Asparagus, Beets, Bitter herbs (wild and cultivated lettuces including chicory, endive, chervil, purslane, dandelion, nettles, chard, and watercress), Carrots, Celery, Cucumbers, Garlic, Grape leaves, Fennel, Fig leaves, Leeks, Mushrooms, Mustard greens, Onions, Radishes, Shallots, Turnips

#### Fruits

Apricots, Quince, Carob, Citrons, Figs, Grapes, Olives, Mulberry, Dates, Pomegranates, Melons, Blackberries, Raspberries, Pears

#### Nuts

Almonds, Walnuts, Pine nuts, Pistachios, Hazelnuts

### Meats, Fowl, Fish

Goat, Lamb and Mutton, Beef, Ox, Deer, Chicken, Geese, Quail, Partridge, Pigeon, Sparrow, Turtledoves, Eggs from all these birds, Tilapia, Sardines, other Saltwater fish

### Herbs & Spices

Anise, Dill, Black cumin, Coriander/Cilantro, Mint, Rue, Bay, Parsley, Savory, Sage, Thyme, Cumin, Mustard, Pepper, Saffron, Capers, Hyssop, Ginger, Juniper, Sumac, Poppy seeds, Sesame seeds, Cinnamon

### Condiments & Beverages

Vinegar, Honey, Salt, Garum (fish sauce), Meat broths, Water, Wine, Grape juice

## **Sample Menus**

\* indicates recipe is included in recipe section

### Simple Passover-Style Meal

Roasted lamb  
Flatbread\* (or store bought)  
Bitter herb salad (Spring Mix salad)  
Red wine vinegar  
Hummus\*  
Feta cheese  
Olive oil  
Dilled cucumbers\*  
Olives  
Dried fruits – dates, figs, apricots

### Banquet/Wedding Feast

Roasted chickens w/pomegranate glaze\*  
Lamb & Chickpea stew\*  
Breads – yeasted & flatbread  
Asparagus w/Sumac and thyme\*  
Pickled radishes\*  
Spicy split-peas\*  
Marinated goat cheese\*  
Herbed yogurt cheese\*  
Fresh cucumbers, carrots, & green onions  
Olive oil & herb dipping sauce\*  
Pistachios & almonds  
Olives  
Fresh melon drizzled with honey  
Fig cakes\*

### An Elaborate Holy Feast

Roasted lamb  
Braised chicken w/ figs & apricots\* OR  
Baked tilapia  
Jacob's Lentil Stew\*  
Flatbread  
Labneh (yogurt dip)\*  
Hummus  
Field greens/Spring mix  
Feta  
Tabouli  
Hard-boiled eggs  
Fresh vegetables  
Olives  
Dried & fresh fruit  
Pickled beets, pickled onions\*  
Pomegranate & poached apricots in honey syrup\*

### Picnic/Outdoor Meal

Grilled fish or poultry  
Flatbread  
Marinated feta cheese\*  
Olives  
Dried fruit  
Date cakes\*

## **Section 4: Food and Liturgy**

There are a variety of ways this meal can be incorporated with a worship service, particularly a Maundy Thursday service. In its simplest form, the meal can precede a worship service, with diners moving to the sanctuary at the conclusion of the meal. There are two sample programs listed below. The first one is modeled on a “dinner church” and the second one is a more full-bodied worship experience. These are just suggestions and can easily be modified. For hymns, consider using simple, well known hymns or Taizé hymns.

### Dinner Church Model

(based on St. Lydia’s Dinner Church)

Welcome

Gathering hymn

Prayer

Blessing and breaking the bread (1<sup>st</sup> part of Eucharist)

Eat dinner except dessert

Scripture reading(s)

Homily

Hymn

Prayers of people

Blessing the cup

Dessert

Announcements

Closing hymn(s)

### Fuller Worship Model

(based on ELW Maundy Thursday service)

Welcome

Hymn

Confession & Forgiveness

Readings

Prayer

Eat dinner except dessert

Gospel reading

Sermon

Prayers of people

Eucharist meal

Dessert

Hymn

Footwashing

Closing prayer/Benediction

## **Recipes**

### **Hummus**

1 can garbanzo beans  
4 cloves garlic  
¼ - ½ cup water  
2 teaspoons white wine vinegar  
¾ teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
2 tablespoons olive oil

Place beans, garlic, water, vinegar, salt, and cumin in a food processor or blender. Process until smooth. Add olive oil and mix thoroughly. Transfer to serving bowl. Makes about 2 cups.

### **Pickled Onions**

2 cups water  
¼ cup salt  
2 ½ cups vinegar  
1 large yellow onion cut into ¼ inch rings, then cut in half

Heat the water and salt in a saucepan until the salt dissolves. Take off the heat and add the vinegar. Allow to cool to room temperature. Place onions in a bowl or glass jar and cover with the pickling solution. Cover the container and refrigerate for 7–10 days.

### **Dilled Cucumbers**

2 cucumbers  
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
4 sprigs fresh dill, finely chopped

Peel and seed cucumbers. Cut into ½ inch cubes and place in bowl. Toss with vinegar and dill. Serves approximately 10

### **Pomegranate Glaze for Roasted Chicken**

4 tablespoons pomegranate molasses (available from online retailers or specialty market)  
4 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
4 tablespoons water  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 tablespoons honey

Combine all ingredients. Baste chicken with 1/3 of glaze before putting in oven. Baste twice with remainder of glaze during roasting. Glaze is sufficient for 1 chicken.

### **Lamb and Chickpea Stew**

1 pound dried chickpeas or 2 (15 ounce) cans, rinsed  
2 pounds of lamb shoulder or leg, cut into 1 inch cubes  
2 tablespoons ground coriander  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
2 teaspoons salt  
¾ teaspoon fresh ground pepper  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 medium onions, chopped  
4 garlic cloves, minced  
6 cups water or 3 cups beef stock and 3 cups water  
1 bay leaf

Soak the dried chickpeas overnight and then drain. Season the lamb by rubbing with regional spices, salt, and pepper to taste. Heat a Dutch oven over medium heat and add a tablespoon of olive oil. Add the lamb and brown. Remove the lamb and add additional oil only if needed. Sauté the onions until just starting to turn brown. Add the garlic and continue to cook until the garlic turns translucent. Return the lamb to the pan and add the chickpeas, liquid, and bay leaf. Cover the Dutch oven and turn the heat down and simmer until the meat is almost tender, 1¼ to 1½ hours. If using canned chickpeas, add them to the Dutch oven for the last thirty minutes of cooking. Serves 8-10

### **Asparagus with Sumac & Thyme**

1½ pounds asparagus  
1 tablespoon salt  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 teaspoon dried sumac (available at specialty markets and online retailers)  
1½ tablespoons fresh thyme or 2 teaspoons dried thyme  
1 teaspoon salt, or to taste  
¼ teaspoon pepper, or to taste

Prepare the asparagus by breaking off the fibrous bottom section. The asparagus will typically break at the correct spot when bent. Save the bottom section for asparagus soup or for some other purpose. Add 3 inches of water and the tablespoon of salt to a pot large enough to hold the asparagus spears. Bring to a boil. Add water and ice to another pot or large mixing bowl. Blanch the asparagus by placing half in the boiling water. Remove the asparagus after 20–30 seconds and place it in the ice water so that it stops cooking. Remove the asparagus from the ice water and dry. Repeat for the other half.

Heat the olive oil in a 12-inch or 14-inch skillet or sauté pan. The pan should be hot. Add the asparagus to the pan and sauté until tender. Then add the sumac, thyme, salt, and pepper. Serves 8.

### **Spicy Split Peas**

1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 onion, chopped  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 cup dried split peas  
1 cup each chicken stock and water or 2 cups water  
½ teaspoon each of cinnamon, cumin, coriander, thyme, dill, sumac  
1 teaspoon salt, or to taste  
¼ teaspoon pepper, or to taste

Heat a large saucepan and add the olive oil. Add the onion and sauté until translucent. Then add the garlic and sauté briefly, until translucent. Add the peas, stock, and water and bring to a boil. Turn down the heat until liquid simmers. Cook 1–1¼ hours. Fifteen minutes before peas are done, season with regional spices, salt and pepper. Serves 6

### **Pickled Radishes**

2 cups water  
¼ cup salt  
2½ cups vinegar  
8 ounces radishes or more, washed and quartered

Heat the water and salt in a saucepan until the salt dissolves. Take off the heat and add the vinegar. Allow to cool to room temperature. Place the radishes in a bowl or glass jar and cover with the pickling solution. Refrigerate for 7–10 days.

### **Marinated Goat Cheese**

8 ounces goat cheese  
1 teaspoon dried parsley  
1 teaspoon dried thyme  
2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed  
olive oil

Form the goat cheese into balls with the diameter of a quarter. Place the parsley, thyme, and garlic cloves in the bottom of a container. Place the goat cheese balls on top. Pour olive oil over the cheese until it is completely covered. The cheese should not be exposed to the air. Marinate for at least 3 days.

### **Olive Oil & Herb Dipping Sauce**

1 cup olive oil  
1 tablespoon dried herb of your choice  
½ teaspoon salt

Mix the ingredients and let sit. Stir before serving.

### **Herbed Goat Cheese**

16 ounces plain Greek yogurt  
2 tablespoons fresh dill, finely chopped (or other herb of your choice)  
1 clove garlic, minced OR  
1 green onion, chopped  
¼ teaspoon salt

Stir herbs and garlic/onion into yogurt. Line colander with cheesecloth and scoop yogurt into cheesecloth. Fold corners of cheesecloth over yogurt and set colander into a bowl. Drain 2-12 hours (the longer it drains, the firmer the cheese will be). Place bowl in refrigerator if draining overnight.

### **Date Cakes**

Dried dates, any amount

Remove pits, if using whole dates. Place dates in food processor, 1 cup at a time and process until well chopped, stopping several times to scrap the sides with a spatula. Remove from the processor and form into cakes, ½ inch thick and 3-4 inches in diameter. Wrap in plastic wrap to store. You may have to clean the blade of the processor between batches if you intend to make more than one cup. The fruit is very sticky.

### **Fig Cakes**

20 dried figs  
6 ounces walnuts or almonds, lightly toasted and coarsely chopped  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Preheat oven to 200 degrees. In a medium bowl filled with warm water, soak figs for 2-4 hours. Drain and finely chop the figs. Place figs in a bowl and combine with nuts and cinnamon. Form mixture into patties ½ inch thick and 2 inches in diameter. Set cakes on lightly greased baking sheet. Bake until the cakes are moderately dry, 2-3 hours. Cool completely before serving. Store on counter in airtight container.

### **Marinated Feta Cheese**

8 ounce block Feta cheese, cubed  
½ teaspoon sumac  
½ teaspoon cumin  
1 teaspoon black peppercorns  
1 teaspoon dried juniper berries  
Olive oil

Cube cheese. Put cheese and spices into a steep-sided bowl. Completely cover with olive oil. Stir and cover bowl. Set aside for at least 1 hour before serving.

### **Braised Chicken with Figs & Apricots**

8 large chicken leg quarters  
1½ teaspoons salt, or to taste  
Ground pepper to taste  
Flour for dredging  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
½ onion, chopped  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 cup chicken stock (or water)  
1 cup white wine  
1 cup dried figs  
1 cup dried apricots  
1 teaspoon cumin  
1 teaspoon coriander  
1 teaspoon mustard

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Salt and pepper the chicken quarters and dredge them in the flour. Brown them, two or three at a time in a large skillet or Dutch oven. Remove the chicken and sauté the onion in the same pan until it begins to caramelize. Add the garlic and cook for another minute.

Place chicken, onion, garlic into a roasting pan and add the rest of the ingredients. Cover with lid or foil and cook, until the meat easily pulls away from the bone, approximately an hour or so, turning the quarters from time to time. Uncover and remove the chicken. Cook for an additional 5 minutes to thicken the sauce. Adjust the seasoning if necessary, by adding additional salt or pepper. Place the chicken on a serving dish and cover with the sauce. If you cannot find dried figs, simply use dried apricots. Serves 16.

### **Labneh**

1 32-ounce container full-fat plain yogurt  
¾ teaspoon salt  
20 fresh mint leaves, chopped  
½ cup fresh chopped dill, no stems  
1 cucumber, sliced lengthwise, seeded and chopped  
½ teaspoon sumac  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Olive oil

Stir ¾ tsp. in yogurt. Line colander with cheesecloth or muslin. Pour yogurt into colander. Either place colander in a bowl and cover, or tie opposing corners of cheese cloth together and hang from kitchen faucet. Strain yogurt 12-24 hours. Put in bowl, add herbs cucumber and sumac. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Top with olive oil.

**Jacob's Lentil Stew** (courtesy of Tori Avery)

1 cup fresh chopped cilantro, divided  
6 carrots  
6 celery stalks, including leaves  
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
2 large onion, diced  
2 clove garlic, crushed  
4 cups dry red lentils  
0.5 cup pearl barley (omit for GF)  
4 quarts vegetable or chicken stock  
3 tsp cumin  
2 tsp hyssop or parsley  
1 tsp sumac (optional)  
2 bay leaf  
Salt and pepper to taste

Roughly chop the cilantro. Scrub the carrots, then cut them into chunks (do not peel). Cut celery into chunks, including leaves. Reserve. In a medium sized soup pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add diced onion and saute until translucent. Add garlic, carrot chunks, and celery. Continue to saute till onion turns golden and ingredients begin to caramelize. Add red lentils and barley to the pot, stir.

Cover mixture with 2 qts. of broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer. Add 1/4 cup of the fresh cilantro to the pot along with the cumin, hyssop or parsley, sumac (optional) and bay leaf; stir. Cover the pot and let the stew simmer slowly for 1 1/2 to 2 hours, stirring every 30 minutes, until barley is tender and the stew is thickened. Garnish soup with remaining cilantro. Serves 12.

**Pomegranate & Poached Apricots in Honey Syrup**

32 dried apricot halves  
1 cup honey  
¾ cup water  
1 cinnamon stick  
¼ - ½ cup sweet red wine  
1 cup pomegranate seeds  
¾ cup chopped pistachios or toasted, sliced almonds

Plumb apricots in warm water for 30 minutes. Drain. In a medium saucepan, bring honey, water, cinnamon stick, and wine to a low boil. Add apricots and poach until soft, 15-20 minutes. Let cool. Pour apricot/syrup mixture into wide serving dish. Top with pomegranate seeds and garnish with nuts. Serves 8.

## **Flatbread Recipes**

### Unleavened Griddle Bread

1 cup whole-wheat flour  
2 cups white flour + extra for kneading  
1-1/8 cups water

In large bowl, combine flours. Make a well in the center. Gradually add water and mix thoroughly until loose dough forms. Transfer to a lightly floured work surface and knead until dough becomes soft and elastic, 10-12 minutes. Shape into a ball and let rest 15-30 minutes. Knead vigorously for one minute.

Preheat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Alternately, heat a lefse griddle to 500 degrees. Separate dough into 8 even balls. Roll out each ball into a 6-inch round. Cook each round for 30-60 seconds per side, until dark brown spots appear. Serve warm.

### Unleavened Bread #2

2 cups unbleached all purpose flour  
1 cup whole wheat flour  
½ tablespoon salt  
1 tablespoon honey  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 cup water

Place all ingredients in food processor and process until it forms a ball. Can also be mixed by hand. Remove and place on floured surface. Knead until smooth. Wrap in plastic wrap and let rest for 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 350°. Divide dough into 16 sections. Dust with flour and flatten each section with a rolling pin. Roll to 1/8 to ¼ inch thickness. Lightly dust with flour as necessary to keep from sticking to rolling pin. Place pieces on baking sheets and immediately place in the oven. Breads will stick to the pan while cooking if they are left there too long. Cook for 6 minutes, turn and cook for another 3–5 minutes. Cooking time may take longer if breads are thicker. Remove from the pan and cool on a rack. Makes 16 pieces of bread.

## Copy of PowerPoint Slides



# The Jesus Feast

The Last Supper and other 1<sup>st</sup> Century meals

Photo credits: Kosher.com, Veg Kitchen, Times of Israel

## Types of meals Jesus would have eaten:

- Everyday Meal
- Shabbat Meal
- Holy Feasts
- Banquet

## The Everyday Jewish Meal



Photo credit: Middle East Eye

- Simple grain porridge or stew
- Bread, either flatbread or yeasted
- Dried fruit, olives
- Seasonal vegetables
- Fresh cheese if access to milk
- Watered wine
- No meat

## Shabbat Meal



Photo credit: Jewish Food Society

- Meal begins with prayer or hymns
- Meat is featured, if available
- Cooked grains or legumes
- Seasonal vegetables and fruit
- Olives, honey, vinegar
- Bread
- Wine
- Meal ends with the Grace After Meals (Birkat ha-Mazon)

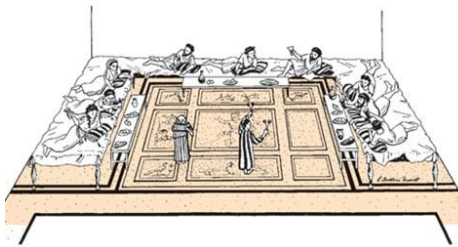
## Holy Feasts



Photo credit: Lori Gordon

- Holy feasts were community affairs
- Feasts featured special foods and good wine
- 7 annual feast days
  - Passover/Unleavened Bread
  - First Fruits
  - Weeks
  - The New Year
  - The Day of Atonement
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Booths
  - 8<sup>th</sup> Day of Booths

## Banquets



Drawing by: Romney Oualline Nesbit

- Took the form of traditional Greco-Roman banquets
- Diners reclined around 1 or more tables
- Seating based on status
- Featured rich foods and good wine
- The meal was followed by debate, teaching, music, or other entertainment
- Primarily for men but women occasionally participated

## Was the Last Supper a Passover Seder?



Photo credit: marthastewart.com

## History of the Passover Meal

Up until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, Jews were only required to include 3 items in their Passover meal:

- Roasted lamb
- Unleavened bread
- Bitter herbs

Wine was always included in Holy Feasts. They would have said prayers, sang hymns, and talked about the significance of the Exodus story.

In the years after 70 AD, Rabban Gamaliel the Younger and his contemporaries created a detailed ritual involving symbolic foods and their explanations, along with passages to recite and hymns to sing. They called this ritualized meal the *Seder* and the scroll/book that detailed the ritual became *The Haggadah*.

The Passover Seder is a distinctly Jewish ritual that was developed decades after Jesus lived.

## The Agape Feast

- Instead of the Seder, early Christians had the Agape Feast, a meal shared among Believers that included scripture, prayer, and the Eucharist.
- The Eucharist was eventually separated from the Agape Feast and put into a worship service. The Agape Feast fell out of use as the Early Church shifted its focus to worship services.
- The Agape Feast has been reborn in recent decades as “Dinner Church” and as a model for interfaith meals.



Photo credit: oaktonbrethren.org

## Interfaith Meals



Photo credit: Crosslight.org

- There is a sacredness in breaking bread with others around a table that brings us closer to God and to one another
- The spirituality of eating with people across religious divides goes much deeper than talks and classes
- Eating together helps us appreciate how similar we all are and gives us the opportunity to explore what makes each of us unique
- Sharing a meal with others forms a bridge between us

## RESOURCES

### **Excellent resource/recipe books:**

*A Biblical Feast* by Kitty Morse. La Caravane, Vista CA, 2009

*The Food and Feasts of Jesus (Religion in the Modern World)* by Douglas Neel and Joel Pugh. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Washington DC, 2013

*Food at the Time of the Bible: From Adam's Apple to the Last Supper* by Miriam Feinberg Vamosh. Palphot Ltd, Herzlia Israel, 2007

### **For music:**

*Taizé: Songs for Prayer, Assembly Edition* by Gia Publications, Chicago, 1998

### **Historical Information on the Passover Seder, Last Supper, and other meals:**

The Biblical Archaeology Society has numerous articles available. Here are three:

"Was Jesus' Last Supper a Seder?" by Jonathan Klawan. 2001

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/was-jesus-last-supper-a-seder/>

"Jesus' Last Supper Still Wasn't A Passover Seder Meal" by Jonathan Klawan. 2021

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/jesus-last-supper-passover-seder-meal/>

"A Feast for the Senses...And the Soul" by Dorothy Willette. 2019

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/a-feast-for-the-senses-and-the-soul/>

### **Interfaith Meal & Dialogue:**

Two downloadable guidebooks from The People's Supper (<https://thepeoplesupper.org/>)

Guidebook for Faith Organizations:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/595e51dbd1758e528030285b/t/59b2d3ade45a7cdb518238fb/1504891836819/Peoples-Supper-Faith-Kit.pdf>

Guidebook for Interfaith Gathering (produced with the Muslim Jewish Solidarity Committee):

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/595e51dbd1758e528030285b/t/59b2d850bebafebcbecac7424a/1504893026403/NYC-MJSC-Guidebook.pdf>

**Dinner Church Resources:**

St. Lydia's Dinner Church: <https://stlydias.org/>

Simple Church: <https://simplegraston.org/>

Edible Theology: <https://www.edibletheology.com/>

The PowerPoint can be downloaded here:

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For a copy of the PowerPoint presentation by email or for questions about the Jesus Feast, email Lori Gordon, [lgordon001@luthersem.edu](mailto:lgordon001@luthersem.edu)