

Seder translates to “order” and a complete Seder is comprised of 15 distinct parts. Yet before you even begin, there is the preparation--and I’m NOT referring to the cooking.

In addition to setting the table, deciding on your menu, organizing the Seder plate, etc. you need to spend time PLANNING to have a successful, fully engaged Seder!

To give you an idea of what I’m hoping this workshop will be, I’d like to share how we celebrate Passover. The Simon Seders are ever-evolving works in progress where we add and subtract, based on what went well the year before and who our guests are each night. We tend to be about 30+ both nights.

We do our 2 nights very differently. One night is “old school” with the Maxwell House Haggadah and the other is “Non-traditional” which is more of an “anything-goes” style. Surprisingly, guests are torn over which they prefer as we have spiced up “old school” night enough to keep it fresh and we are starting to repeat favorite wacky ideas in addition to adding new ones to the non-traditional night.

So every year, starting in January, I start the search. I am ALWAYS looking for new ideas for conducting the Seder, clever song and video parodies, and just about anything I can think of that will enhance the Seder experience for everyone. We have amassed a large and “interesting” collection of Haggadahs, including one that is even Harry Potter themed!

One year we had a frog pinata that I stuffed with hundreds of plastic frogs and we spent some time whacking it right before the ten plagues. Last year we put mini marshmallows on the tops of the ceiling fan blades and turned it on right when we said “hail”. The new website JewBelong helped add some much needed modern readings and even a Passover play!

But our Seders also have a serious side. A new tradition that I learned from a friend up in Boston is now going to be a staple for ours. Just after the ten plagues, we asked all of the firstborn sons (but you could do daughters too) to stand up and leave our seder table. They spent a little time in the kitchen doing shots of Slivovitz and congratulating one another on escaping the plight of the tenth plague. But the rest of us just sat quietly at the table and took in what our table looked like without these firstborn men and boys. It was a moment that friends and family still talk about from that Seder. The tenth plague became very real.

The ideas above just scratch the surface of the way we have been trying to liven up our Seders and make them memorable and engaging. But if I have learned anything, it is that we are a mighty village! Everyone has Seder traditions and ideas that are worth sharing and trying. What’s old to you may be new to me and vice versa. **So let’s crowdsource this year’s Seders and see if we don’t ALL end up with a Passover celebration that is different from all other YEARS!**

The 15 parts of Seder:

Kadeish: blessings and 1st cup of wine

Urchatz: hand washing

Karpas: dipping greens in saltwater

Yachat: breaking the middle matzah (afikomen)

Magid: telling the story of the Exodus

Ha Lachma Anya- invitation to the Seder

4 questions

4 Sons

2nd cup of wine

10 plagues

Dayenu

Rohtzah: Handwashing #2

Motzi: blessing for matzah

Matzah: eat the matzah

Maror: bitter herbs

Korech: the Hillel sandwich

Shulchan Orech: THE MEAL

Tzafun: eating the Afikomen

Bareich: blessing after the meal

Kos shlishi: 3rd cup of wine

Elijah's cup

Hallel: songs of praise

4th cup of wine

Nirtzah: Next year in Jerusalem!

Chad Gadya