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december 2007

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# CHANUKAH



GIFTED HOSTESS AND KOSHER CHEF SAMANTHA GARELICK

SHARES RECIPES AND IDEAS FOR A RELAXED CELEBRATION

## L.A. STYLE

"I love the story of the miracle of Chanukah," says the luminous Samantha Garelick, who, with her handsome screenwriter husband, Jeremy, moved in the fall of 2006 from New York to Los Angeles. "For me, though, it's the little miracles of life that are the most meaningful." Whether it's the friends and family who come together around her table to celebrate all manner of occasions or the sparkle in her nieces' eyes as they spin the dreidel by the swimming pool, the small miracles seem to add up to a very happy life. "When I look around my table, after putting so much love and energy into creating a holiday meal, I'm overjoyed," Samantha says. • Those who feast on her new-kosher cuisine are delighted, too—be they her frequent guests or the clients she cooks for as a sought-after chef-for-hire in and around Beverly Hills. Either way, the thing she wants people to recognize is that kosher doesn't mean old-fashioned, and preparing it doesn't have to be a hassle. What it does mean—in California, certainly, and in a growing movement across the United States—is fresh, locally grown seasonal ingredients cooked simply and bursting with flavor. "This is really fuss-free food," she says. "And that strikes people as something of a miracle too."

## ABOUT Samantha



The daughter of a cantor, Samantha Garelick grew up in a kosher home. At culinary school after a stint in finance, she experimented with a wide variety of cuisines. “Ultimately, my husband suggested that I could apply what I learned to the world of kosher food,” she says. “What I initially saw as restrictions on my culinary creativity evolved into a great challenge: how to make imaginative, delicious food within the guidelines of Jewish law. I found my niche and my husband was very happy.”

When Jeremy Garelick sold his screenplay for a Jennifer Aniston–Vince Vaughn film called *The Break-Up* to Universal Pictures, the couple packed their bags and moved, as Samantha says, from “the Upper West Side shtetl of New York to the Pico/Robertson shtetl of Los Angeles.”

These days, Samantha cooks for private clients in L.A. and teaches kosher-cooking classes on both coasts. She says she’s constantly refining her curriculum, which emphasizes cooking seasonally and buying locally grown produce whenever possible. “Shabbat lunch doesn’t have to be about the kugel and cold cuts!” she says.

Samantha is always finding new ways to celebrate “the kosher lifestyle” and contribute to the kosher community. She recently founded the Kosher Wine Society of Los Angeles, and organizes dinners and wine tastings at kosher restaurants around the city. She writes articles and recipes for [www.thekosherhostess.com](http://www.thekosherhostess.com) and consults for Wild Pomegranate ([www.wildpom.com](http://www.wildpom.com)), a kosher gift company. She just launched her own site, [www.thekoshergirl.com](http://www.thekoshergirl.com).

“I couldn’t be happier with my decision to leave the world of finance to enter culinary school,” she says. “It allowed me to spend my days doing what I love.”

menu • ultimate latkes • ginger pomegranate punch • winter salad  
grilled steak with *chimichurri* sauce

## Ultimate Latkes

MAKES 10–12 LATKES

*A few shortcuts make my thin, crisp version of this holiday staple simpler—and gourmet variations make it spectacular. I’ve given you a trick for creating perfectly “grated” potatoes with your food processor. If you’re extra short on time, pick up a bag of preshredded frozen potatoes and skip steps 2–4. (Note: You’ll still have to chop them for a few seconds in the bowl of your food processor, or the latkes will fall apart.)*

PREP TIME: 25 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

**3 medium to large russet potatoes (about 2 pounds)**

- 1 large onion, roughly chopped (about 1 cup)**
  - 1 egg**
  - 1 pinch of freshly grated nutmeg**
  - 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
  - ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
  - ½ cup canola oil**
- 1.** Line a cookie sheet with 2–3 layers of paper towels. Set aside near the stove.
  - 2.** Fill a bowl with cold water. Peel potatoes, placing each one in the water to let sit until you are ready to slice them (and again until you are ready to shred them).
  - 3.** Slice potatoes lengthwise into quarters or sixths, so they will fit through the feeder tube of your food processor. Using the shredder blade, shred potatoes.

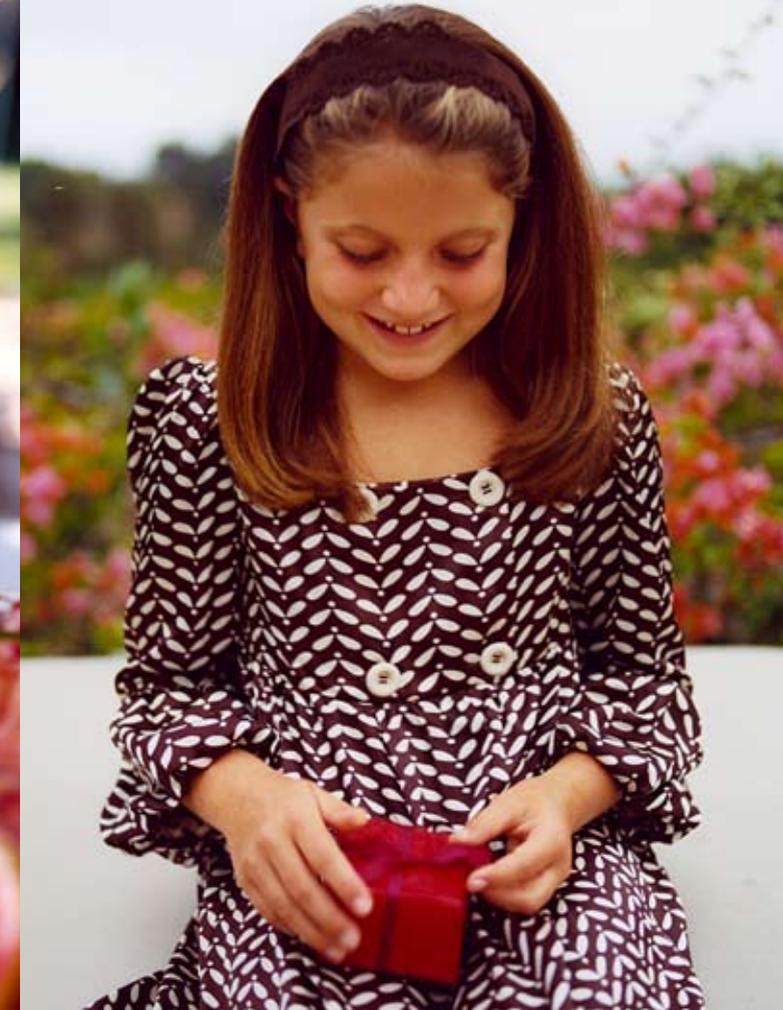
- 4.** Place the shredded potatoes in a fresh bowl of cold water. There should be just enough water to cover the potatoes.
- 5.** Replace the shredder blade on your food processor with the standard one. Place onions in the bowl of your food processor and process for about 30 pulses or until they are very finely chopped.
- 6.** Pull shredded potatoes out of the bowl of water and add to food processor, reserving the water. Pulse 10 times.
- 7.** To drain excess liquid from onions and potatoes, spread a clean dish towel on your work space and pour contents of the food processor bowl onto towel. Wrap towel around the onion and potato mixture and wring it out over the sink. Place mixture in a large bowl. »

*(Latke recipe continued on page 92)*

FOOD STYLIST: WILLIAM SMITH; PROP STYLIST: JAN APPLETON; STYLIST: CANDY POSKIN; HAIR AND MAKEUP: YUKIKO KINKEL



Samantha Garelick, opposite. This page, clockwise from top left: Ginger Pomegranate Punch; Samantha’s niece, Rachel, opens a gift; Jeremy passes the latkes.



## Sam’s Tips FOR THROWING A GREAT PARTY

✿ I keep a list of everything I plan to serve—and in what order—to ensure that I won’t forget those pickles that I stashed in the back of the refrigerator. I personally love to make my list on a special chalkboard that hangs on a hook in my kitchen.

✿ Take advantage of what the store has to offer. If you’re preparing the Winter Salad and you know you’ll be short on time, use pre-washed baby arugula and the precooked, vacuum-sealed roasted beets that they sell at the market.

✿ The night before a party, set out all the serving pieces you’ll need the next day. Write the names of the dishes you’re serving on sticky notes and affix them to the platters.

✿ Consider setting the table the night before. That way, you won’t get flustered if you are held up at work on the day of the party.

✿ I always accept help from my guests. People feel more at home when they contribute, and everyone will enjoy your party—including you!



## Ginger Pomegranate Punch

MAKES ABOUT 2 QUARTS

*This seasonal, jewel-toned cocktail will enliven any gathering. The ginger adds a spicy kick to the antioxidant-rich juice.*

**PREP TIME:** 10 MINUTES

**COOK TIME:** 15 MINUTES

- 1 4-inch piece of ginger, peeled and chopped
  - $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar
  - $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups water
  - 3 cups pomegranate juice
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  cup freshly squeezed lime juice from about 4 limes
  - $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups chilled vodka
  - 4 cups ginger ale
- Pomegranate seeds, lime slices, or mint sprigs for garnish

1. Make ginger syrup by combining ginger pieces, sugar, and water in a small sauce pot. Place the pot over low heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Strain syrup into a container and let cool.
2. In a large pitcher, combine the pomegranate juice, lime juice, vodka, and ginger syrup. If you are planning to serve the punch within an hour, add the ginger ale. Otherwise, add it just before serving. Stir.
3. Pour the punch into ice-filled glasses. Garnish with any combination of pomegranate seeds, lime slices, and mint.



## INFUSED OIL

### HOW TO Make It:

1. **START** by gathering a number of small glass bottles with cork tops or drizzle spouts.
2. **RUN** the bottles through your dishwasher on the hottest cycle (preferably by themselves); or wash them well with soap, rinse, then drop them into a pot of boiling water to sterilize them. Air-dry the bottles until every drop of water is gone.
3. **COLLECT** your flavor ingredients, such as citrus zest, whole chile peppers, sliced garlic, spices (black peppercorns, green peppercorns, coriander seeds, cardamom seeds, and red pepper flakes), and fresh herbs such as rosemary, sage, lemon thyme, parsley, and chervil.
4. **WASH AND DRY** the herbs well. "Bruise" the herbs and spices to release their flavor by mashing them a bit with a mortar and pestle or the back of a fork, then stuff them inside the bottle.
5. **CHOOSE** a tasty, fresh oil. I prefer extra-virgin olive oil, but you can also experiment with nut oils like hazelnut and walnut. Using a funnel, pour the oil into the bottle, almost to the top.
6. **SEAL** bottle. The oil will have a subtle flavor within one hour and will strengthen over time.
7. **STORE** in the refrigerator to prevent bacterial growth. If oil solidifies, run the bottle under warm water for a few seconds. Return to refrigerator immediately after use.



### why oil?

In 165 B.C., the holy Temple was destroyed by the Greek-Syrians while they were fighting with the Jews. When the battle ended, the Jews were victorious and began restoring the desecrated ruins of the Temple. They were determined to relight the holy menorah, which in the past had burned continuously as a symbol of God's eternal presence. However, all but one tiny jar of the oil bearing the high priest's holy seal had been destroyed. This jar contained only enough oil to keep the relit menorah burning for one day, but instead, it kept the flame burning for eight days, just enough time to produce more oil. For this reason, we celebrate Chanukah and the miracle of oil and enjoy such foods as latkes and doughnuts—and less oily ones like infused olive oil.

## THE *Miracle* OF OIL

### A MODERN TWIST

At my Chanukah parties, we infuse our own oils with fresh ingredients. Since the task of frying the latkes usually falls to one person, this activity serves as a wonderful way to include everyone in the celebration. The flavors of the infused oils just get better with time. Store the bottles in the fridge for up to 10 days.

#### HOW TO Use It:

Instead of making fried food the focus of your Chanukah meals, incorporate infused oils. Here's how:

- ✿ Substitute an infused oil for the regular stuff in your next vinaigrette.
- ✿ Drizzle on grilled or broiled meat or fish.
- ✿ Use it to dip hunks of challah or crusty bread.
- ✿ Brush some on the bread of your next sandwich instead of using mustard or mayonnaise.
- ✿ Sprinkle on steamed vegetables, then scatter a few grains of sea salt on top.

Infused olive oil, above and right, is a great gift. Make small batches as the oils don't keep long. Opposite, top, a variety of herbs and aromatics are both beautiful and flavorful; Samantha's friends have a toast, below.





## WINE pairings

There's no better way to celebrate than with champagne. Laurent-Perrier's kosher **Brut L-P Champagne** (\$79.99) is a creamy, elegant bubbly with peach and citrus notes and a deliciously bracing dryness. It will set the perfect tone for the eight nights of Chanukah and will serve as a terrific prelude to the dinner.

With beef on the menu and winter approaching, a robust red would be a good choice to accompany the meal. The **Barkan Altitude Series +624 Cabernet Sauvignon 2003** (\$39.99) makes a marvelous match. Barkan is one of Israel's largest and most acclaimed wineries,

and the 2003 cabernet shows why: It is a well-proportioned wine redolent of black cherries, currants, and licorice, with a good, pleasantly spicy finish.

Another option is the **2004 Baron Herzog Old-Vine Zinfandel** (\$13.99). This is a light-color zin that emphasizes elegance rather than power. The palate features brambly red fruit and a hefty pinch of black pepper.

Opening a dessert wine makes the end of the meal all the more pleasurable. Deliciously perfumed and utterly seductive, the **2006 Bartenura Moscato d'Asti** (\$11.99), from Italy, is a great choice. —Michael Steinberger



## Winter Salad

SERVES 8

*Sweet oranges, beets, and crisp, fresh fennel offset the arugula's bite.*

**PREP TIME:** 20 MINUTES

**COOK TIME:** 45 MINUTES

- 2 large red beets, washed
- ¼ cup slivered almonds
- 2 large oranges
- 1 fennel bulb
- 1 tablespoon fruity vinegar such as raspberry, pear, or balsamic
- 3 tablespoons infused oil (see *method, page 63*) or extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- 2 bunches (about 8 cups) arugula leaves, washed and dried

1. Heat oven to 400°F. Wrap the beets in foil and place in the oven on a baking sheet. Roast for 90 minutes, then let cool. Peel and slice the beets into ¼-inch-thick rounds and then into long matchsticks. Set aside in a bowl.
  2. Reduce oven temperature to 350°F. Spread nuts on a baking sheet and roast for 8 minutes, until lightly browned.
  3. To section the oranges, cut off their tops and bottoms with a sharp knife, then gently slice off all of the skin and white pith while leaving the orange flesh intact. Holding an orange in one hand, cut toward its center, following the line of the thin membranes that separate the sections. Do this over a bowl to catch the juice. Set the orange segments aside in another bowl.
  4. Slice off the top of the fennel bulb, discarding the stalks and fronds. Slice the fennel into thin bite-size pieces.
  5. To make vinaigrette, whisk together the reserved orange juice, vinegar, 1 tablespoon infused oil or olive oil, and salt and pepper to taste.
  6. In a large bowl, combine the fennel and the arugula leaves and toss with the vinaigrette. Top with the beets and orange segments. Sprinkle with the almonds, drizzle with an additional teaspoon of infused oil, and serve.
- Note:** The beets may be roasted up to two days in advance and kept in the refrigerator. Peel off the skin just before slicing.

## Grilled Steak With Chimichurri Sauce

SERVES 6-8

*Chimichurri is an Argentinian garlic-herb sauce that pairs perfectly with grilled meats. It's easy to prepare, and any leftover sauce is excellent on chicken or a burger.*

**PREP TIME:** 20 MINUTES

**COOK TIME:** 15 MINUTES

- 3 pounds London broil or other steak such as ribeye
- ½ cup plus 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ½ cup plus 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 bunch (about 4 cups) Italian flat-leaf parsley, stems removed
- 4 large cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 shallot, peeled and chopped
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon paprika, preferably smoked
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

1. With a sharp knife, score the meat in a crisscross pattern, 6–8 times per side. (The cuts should be shallow, no more than ¼" deep.) Place the meat in a 9" x 13" baking dish. Drizzle 3 tablespoons of the red wine vinegar and 3 tablespoons of the oil over the meat. Let marinate while you prepare the sauce.
  2. To prepare the sauce, combine the remaining vinegar and oil, parsley, garlic, shallot, lemon juice, paprika, a teaspoon of salt, and five grindings of pepper in a blender or food processor. Purée until smooth.
  3. Heat a grill or grill pan over medium-high heat until hot. Pat steaks dry with paper towels, then sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook for 4–5 minutes per side for medium rare.
  4. Let steaks rest for 5 minutes, then cut them into thin slices on an angle, across the grain. Drizzle the *chimichurri* sauce over the top and serve.
- Note:** The *chimichurri* sauce may be made up to one week ahead of time and kept in the refrigerator in a sealed container. Bring it to room temperature before serving. »



Samantha and her guests share good food and conversation, above. Opposite, clockwise from top: Grilled Steak With *Chimichurri* Sauce; Winter Salad; Samantha and her friend Dara, left, sip champagne.



## Two takes ON THE DREIDEL GAME

### BASIC INSTRUCTIONS— AND A WHOLE NEW WAY TO PLAY

Each player begins with an equal number of pieces in the form of pennies, candies, peanuts, or any other small object. At the beginning of each round, every player puts the same number of pieces into the pot. Each player spins in turn and, depending on the character that lands face-up, follows these instructions:

- NUN:** Take nothing and pass the dreidel to the next player.
- GIMEL:** Take the entire pot. (When the pot empties, each player adds one piece to refill it.)
- HE:** Take half the pot. (If the pot contains an odd number, take half plus one.)
- SHIN:** Put one of your pieces into the pot.

You are eliminated from the game when you are out of pieces, though more generous variants allow the bankrupt player to borrow from her opponents. When one player collects all the pieces, the game ends. ●



### Blessing and action

Begin by lighting the *shamash*, which is the candle that's used to light the others. On the first night, place one candle in the menorah, on the far right. Use the *shamash* to light this candle, then place it in its designated spot, usually in the middle of the menorah. Each night of Chanukah, add a new candle, so that there are two on the second night, three on the third, and so on. Light the candles from right to left.

While you light the menorah, recite the following:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'Olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'had'lik neir shel Chanukah.*

Blessed are You, Sovereign of the Universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, commanding us to light the lights of Chanukah.

### A NEW TAKE ON *Dreidel*

This year, when the kids go to bed, play a whole new way. No-Limit Texas Dreidel combines the traditional Chanukah game with Hold 'Em, complete with opportunities to bluff and "go all spin." If you're playing for chocolate or other high stakes, you'd better make sure to put your dreidel face on. For more information, visit [www.moderntribe.com](http://www.moderntribe.com).

—Eliza Edel

For information about the products in this story, see the Souce Guide on page 94.

