

MODERN KOSHER

Global Flavors, New Traditions



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It's an annual Passover matzo-ball conundrum: "sinkers" or "floaters" for matzo balls. Both are valid choices, at least in theory, but if I wanted a heavy ball in my soup, I'd go with Mexican *albondigas* (meatballs).

I knew the theory of floaters, at least part of which involves incorporating beaten egg whites (along with seltzer water and baking powder) into the matzo balls to make them light, fluffy, and airy. The issues were not beating the egg whites enough or incorporating the solids into the egg whites too heavily. So, I knew I would have to beat the egg whites nearly to the point of stiff peaks. I would also have to be very, very gentle in folding in the matzo meal.

But I also had a trick up my sleeve, a little bit of modernist cuisine. Not the whizbang, smoke and mirrors showmanship side of it but, rather, the practical side. The substance in egg whites that lets them do their magic is called lecithin. It is an excellent emulsifier. One of the basic tools of the modern gastronomy arsenal is soy lecithin, which is available at vitamin and supplement stores like GNC or online from such exotic retailers as Walmart (and which is kosher for Passover according to Sephardic Jews but not most Ashkenazis). So, to amp up the effect of the egg whites, I decided to kick up my matzo balls with a tablespoon of soy lecithin. The result was floating, pillowy matzo balls.

TOMATO MATZO BALL SOUP WITH PICKLED GARLIC CHIVES

SERVES 4 TO 6

FOR THE PICKLED GARLIC CHIVES:

4 to 6 garlic chives
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon brown sugar
¼ cup apple cider vinegar

FOR THE SOUP:

6 medium tomatoes
2 large white onions, quartered
3 cloves garlic, peeled
3 tablespoons grapeseed, canola, or another neutral oil
2 leeks, white parts only, cleaned, quartered lengthwise, and thinly sliced
8 cups Chicken Stock
2 jalapeño chiles, seeded and sliced
Juice of 4 key limes

TO MAKE THE PICKLED GARLIC CHIVES: Trim the garlic chives to about 3 inches, or wherever the chive stems get excessively fibrous. Combine the salt, brown sugar, and vinegar in a large bowl and whisk to fully dissolve the solids.

Bring a saucepan of water to boil over high heat. Add the garlic chives to the boiling water and blanch until their color brightens, about 15 seconds. Do not let them fully wilt. Immediately transfer the garlic chives to the pickling liquid, adding water as needed to cover. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

TO MAKE THE SOUP: Preheat the oven to 350°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Place the tomatoes, onions, and garlic on the prepared sheet and roast until blistered and the onions begin to brown, about 30 minutes.

(continued)

FOR THE MATZO BALLS:

3 large eggs

1 tablespoon grapeseed, canola,
or another neutral oil

1 tablespoon seltzer water

½ cup matzo meal

1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon soy lecithin

½ teaspoon baking powder

In a large soup pot, sweat the leeks in the oil over low heat until just translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the roasted vegetables and chicken stock and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes.

TO MAKE THE MATZO BALLS: While the soup is cooking, separate the egg whites from the yolks, reserving the yolks, and transfer the whites to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Beat the whites on high speed until they form stiff peaks, about 5 minutes. Whisk the oil and seltzer into the reserved yolks and gently fold into the whites. Combine the matzo meal, salt, soy lecithin, and baking powder in a medium bowl and fold into the egg mixture as gently as possible using a plastic spatula. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, line another baking sheet with parchment paper. Remove the matzo ball material from the refrigerator. Working with moist hands (have a bowl of water handy to refresh), take a heaping tablespoon of the matzo ball material and form into a ball. Repeat with the remaining matzo ball material.

TO FINISH THE SOUP AND SERVE: Bring the soup back to a boil and gently add the matzo balls to the pot. Reduce the heat, add the chiles and lime juice, and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Ladle the soup into soup bowls. Float 2 or 3 matzo balls in each bowl and garnish with the garlic chives.

NOTE: Many Ashkenazi Jews will look at this recipe and ask (at the very least) whether soy lecithin—made, of course, from soybeans—is kosher for Passover. Spoiler alert: It depends. Ashkenazi rabbis have long treated beans as among the foods that are otherwise kosher but because they involve (or might appear to involve) leavening are not kosher for Passover, or *chametz*. Ashkenazi Jews also see rice, corn, legumes, and some other foodstuffs that rise in response to contact with water (*kitniyot*) as *chametz*. Sephardic Jews, on the other hand, do consume *kitniyot* on Passover.

In the past, in the United States, this was not a significant issue. Once again, though, Israel comes into play. While the majority of American (indeed world) Jews are Ashkenazi, the majority of Israeli Jews are Sephardic. That has had a significant effect on the worldwide Jewish perception of such issues.