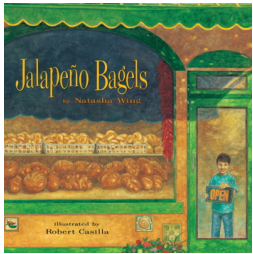


Jewish American Heritage Month Book Recommendations

OREGON JEWISH MUSEUM AND
CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

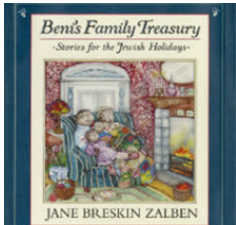
Fiction

Picture Books



Jalapeño Bagels by Natasha Wing, Illustrated by Robert Casilla
Grades pre K-3

This picture book explores the ideas of multicultural Jewish identity through food. Pablo wants to bring a food to represent his culture to International Day at school. But his mom is Mexican and his dad is Jewish, so he isn't sure what to bring. He decides to embrace elements of both his cultures and create jalapeño bagels to bring to school. This book talks about the experiences of interfaith families and the diversity of the Jewish American experience.



Beni's Family Treasury: Stories for the Jewish Holidays Written and Illustrated by Jane Breskin Zalben
pre K-3

This collection of stories introduces the Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, Hanukkah, Purim, and Passover. It is a fantastic introduction to Jewish holidays and the flow of the Jewish year. The cozy pictures introduce the youngest readers to Jewish celebrations throughout the year. It highlights how families from different religions may celebrate different holidays.



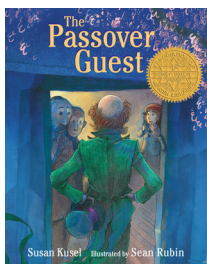
Fridays are Special by Chris Barash, Illustrated by Melissa Iwai
ages 2-4

This book is perfect for introducing toddlers to Jewish culture through the ritual of Shabbat. For this child's family every Friday night is Shabbat. Shabbat brings family, special food, charity, and special blessings. This is a great way to introduce Jewish traditions and celebrate how different families gather spend time together.



Tia Fortuna's New Home: A Jewish Cuban Journey by Ruth Behar, Illustrated by Devon Holzwarth
Grades: pre K- 3

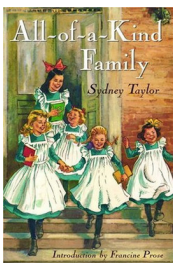
Young Estrella's Tia Fortuna loves her home in Miami but will be moving into an assisted living facility. As they are packing together Estrella becomes fascinated by pictures and objects from Tia Fortuna's youth. While helping her move Estrella is able to learn about her Sephardic culture. This poetic picture book introduces Cuban American and Sephardic Jewish culture to young readers. It also shows how families can help and support each other through big changes.



The Passover Guest by Susan Kusel, Illustrated by Sean Rubin
Grades pre K-3

This Sydney Taylor Award winning picture book retells a classic Jewish folktale in Great Depression era Washington DC. Kusel introduces young readers to the traditions of Passover and Jewish values such as welcoming the stranger. Kusel places Jewish history and culture at the very heart of American society. This book is a joyful and fun way to introduce young readers to the traditions of Passover and show how small miracles happen when we help each other.

Middle Grade



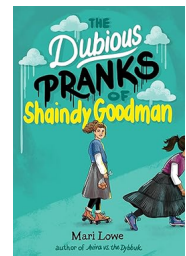
All-of-a-Kind Family by Sydney Taylor
Grades 3-7

This classic of Jewish American literature is as engaging today as it was when it was published in 1951. All-Of -A-Kind Family is set in the vibrant world of New York's Lower East Side at the turn of the 20th century. It introduces young readers to Jewish holidays, Jewish food, Jewish values, and the history of Jews in the United States. The series follows five sisters through the twists and turns of childhood over 100 years ago. It introduces young readers to Jewish immigrant history and Jewish tradition. This is one of the most defining work of American Jewish children's literature and remains moving today.



The Book of Elsie by Joanne Levy
Grades 4-8

"The Book of Elsie" introduces middle grade readers to the Jewish holiday of Purim through a young girl's perseverance in the face of adversity. Elsie is excited for Purim and is looking forward to dressing up as her hero Queen Esther at her synagogue's Purim party. When the party faces multiple roadblocks, including antisemitic vandalism, Elsie is able to rally her community for support by drawing on strength she didn't know she had.



The Dubious Pranks of Shaindy Goodman by Mari Lowe
Grades 5-9

"The Dubious Pranks of Shaindy Goodman" is a relatable coming of age story about making mistakes, facing bullying, and making amends. Shaindy is an Orthodox Jewish twelve year old who attends a religious girl's school. Like many middle schoolers Shaindy is insecure, and faces the kind of quiet bullying many kids face during middle school. When one of the "cool girls" at her school starts to trying to make friends with Shaindy, Shaindy finds herself asked to participate in mean spirited pranks. Shaindy turns to her faith during the Jewish High Holy Days to help her make better choices and be a better friend.



Golemcrafters by Emi Watanabe Cohen
Grades 4-8

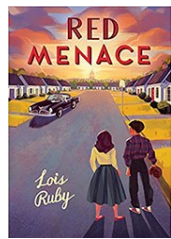
"Golemcrafters" is a middle grade fantasy novel which introduces young readers to Jewish folklore. Golems are a creature from Jewish folklore which are created to protect the community. Faye and Shiloh Meisel are siblings from an interfaith family, their mom is Japanese and their dad is Jewish. At home they struggle with ideas of identity and with seeing antisemitism in the world around them. During spring break they get a chance to visit their Jewish grandfather in New York where they encounter a strange parallel world.



One Little Goat by Dara Horn, Illustrated by Theo Ellsworth
Grades 5-9

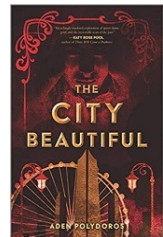
Dara Horn's first middle grade novel is a weird and wonderful romp through the traditions of Passover. This graphic novel follows the "Wise Child" and a little goat as they time travel through Passover Seders looking for a lost piece of matzo. After being trapped at his family's never ending seder for a full six months, The Wise Child meets a little goat who brings him on a quest to find the family's lost afikomen, the piece of matzo ritually hidden during the seder. This quirky read introduces the traditions of the Passover holiday as well as tidbits of Jewish history and folklore.

Young Adult



Red Menace by Lois Ruby
Grades 6-12

"Red Menace" highlights antisemitism during the Red Scare of the 1950s. Young Marty Rafner is a typical Jewish boy of the 1950s. He loves playing baseball is studying for his Bar Mitzvah. But he finds all is not well when the threat of McCarthyism touches his home. Marty's mother, who is a strong believer in the freedom of speech becomes the target of a government investigation. For Marty this is not only frightening but feels deeply unfair. The story follows Marty's moral journey as he sees the ideals of American freedom he learned about in school undermined by the actions of McCarthy.



City Beautiful by Aden Polydoros
Grades 9-12

"The City Beautiful" is a gothic thriller set in the midst of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. This novel is an engaging murder mystery that also introduces readers to Jewish folklore. Each of the characters represents a different type of Jewish immigrant experience at the turn of the century. The three main characters tackle grief, and navigate the different ways of being Jewish in a new environment.



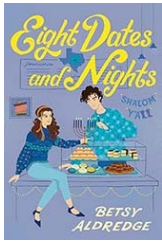
When the Angels Left the Old Country by Sacha Lamb
Grades 9-12

"When the Angels Left the Old Country" is a brilliant mixture of young adult fantasy and historical fiction. Readers travel alongside an angel and a demon from the shtetls of Eastern Europe to New York's Lower East Side. It is a journey taken by thousands of real Jewish immigrants translated into an engaging fairy tale. They follow the residents of the shtetl as they all try to create new lives in the United States. Supernatural characters such as dybbuks (ghosts) introduce readers to Jewish folklore. While remaining grounded in real places and historical events Lamb creates a rich fantasy world. Readers of Libba Bray's "Diviners" series will particularly enjoy this read.



Just a Hat by S. Khubiar
Grades 9-12

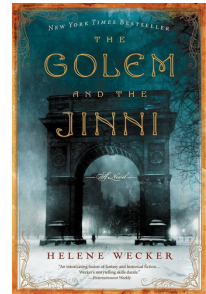
"Just a Hat" is a coming of age story of a young Iranian Jewish American boy named Joseph Nissan growing up in Texas in 1979. The novel introduces readers to various aspects of Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Jewish culture. Joseph is a second generation American and balances pride in his identity with a wish to fit in. He experiences antisemitism in his personal life but maintains a strong Jewish identity. The novel deals with difficult topics such as racism, immigration, and interfaith relationships. However Joseph's narration maintains a sense of humor and a sense of strength that will be relatable to young readers.



Eight Dates and Nights by Betsy Aldredge
Grades 9-12

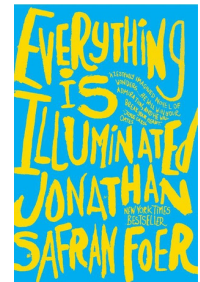
"Eight Dates and Nights" is a classic teen romance from a Jewish perspective. This novel will be loved by romance readers and is a fun introduction to the genre. The novel introduces readers to the traditions of Hanukkah and shows Jewish young adults finding joy in Jewish tradition.

Adult



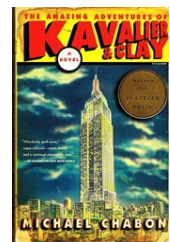
The Golem and the Jinni By Helene Wecker

This fantastical novel set in turn of the century New York introduces the reader to two mythical creatures arriving on American shores. Chava is a golem, a mythic protector hailing from Ashkenazi folklore, created by a corrupt mystic. She finds herself alone in New York after the man she was created to marry dies during the long voyage. She must assert her own humanity and build a life in New York's Lower East Side. Meanwhile Ahmad, a jinni trapped in a flask for 1000 years is accidentally released into the neighborhood of Little Syria. He is trapped in human form and begins a quest to recover his powers. The two eventually meet and form a bond that crosses cultures. This a historically grounded work of fiction that brings to life the vibrant immigrant neighborhoods of New York City.



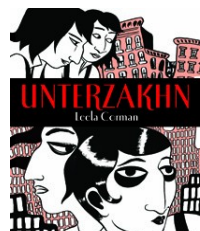
Everything is Illuminated By Jonathan Safran Foer

This novel contains two semi-autobiographical stories wound together in perfect harmony. Safran Foer's 2002 novel follows his own family's history and the real history of the Jewish shtetl of Trachenbrod in what is today Western Ukraine. The novel explores how the trauma of the Holocaust effects American Jewish families. It also shows how these families uncover the stories of their loved ones. The novel follows a young Jewish man as he embarks on a journey to find the woman who had rescued his grandfather during the Holocaust. The novel follows his journey with equal parts grief and dry humor. It is a beautiful story that highlights the importance of memory.



The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay by Michael Chabon

Michael Chabon is a huge contributor to modern American Jewish literature. "Kavalier and Clay" is a Pulitzer prize winning piece of historical fiction tackling the experiences of American Jews during WWII. Set in Brooklyn in 1939 the novel follows comic book writing Jewish cousins Joe and Sammy. Although fictional, the novel is based on the real life stories of Jewish men like Will Eisner and Stan Lee who created the Golden Age of American Comics. The novel follows Joe and Sammy's creation of their wildly popular anti-Nazi comic "The Escapist" which mirrors real life comics of the time.



Unterzakhn by Leela Corman

This compelling graphic novel tells the stories of twin sisters Fanya and Esther, two young Jewish immigrant women navigating life in New York City's Lower East Side at the turn of the twentieth century. They take starkly divergent paths, showing the breadth of Jewish women's experiences at a time shaped by sexism, antisemitism, and anti-immigrant sentiments. The novel is neither sentimental, nor nostalgic, it pulls no punches in dealing with the realities of women's lives at the time while still highlighting the beauty and connections that women were able to forge.



Sisters of Fortune by Esther Chehebar

This Austen-esque romance-meets-family dramedy highlights the vibrant Syrian Jewish community of Brooklyn. This novel is a window into how love, sex, and marriage are dealt with in religious Jewish communities. Focusing on the lives of three sisters, Chehebar brings to life a world focused around women. She highlights how some of the same kinds of social pressures the Bennet sisters faced 200 years ago still effect how women experience dating and marriage today. She also provides a window into the beautiful traditions of Mizrahi Jews and provides an accessible introduction to both Syrian Jewish culture and Modern Orthodox Jewish life.



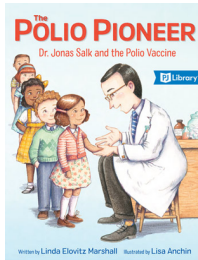
Non-Fiction

Picture Books



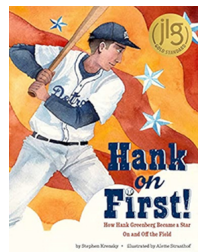
Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 Written by Michelle Markel, Illustrated by Melissa Sweet
Grades K-5

This story is based on the life of Clara Lemlich, a young Jewish immigrant working in the garment industry in New York City in the early 1900s. Clara and the other women in the garment industry faced brutal working conditions in factories and sweatshops. In 1909 Clara organized a march of 20,000 women, mostly young girls working in the garment industry. Their work paved the way for many of today's labor laws.



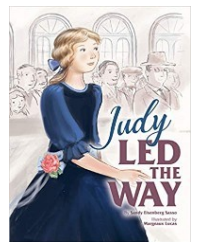
The Polio Pioneer: Dr. Jonas Salk and the Polio Vaccine by Linda Elovitz Marshall, Illustrated by Lisa Anchin
Grades: 2-5

This picture book biography of Dr. Jonas Salk highlights the contributions of American Jews to science and medicine. The story emphasizes real world applications of the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world). Marshall notes that before the Salk vaccine thousands of Americans were sickened by polio. Because of the success of the vaccine the disease has been nearly eradicated world wide.



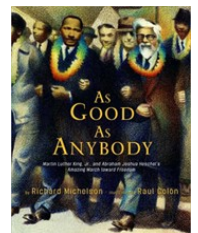
Hank on First by Stephen Krensky, Illustrated by Alette Straathof
Grades 3-5

This picture book introduces young readers to Hank Greenberg, the first Jewish star in Major League Baseball. In 1934 he was faced with the hard decision of whether or not to play during the holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Would he play an important game, or observe the holiest day of the year? Readers grapple with Hank's tough decision and his feelings of being an outsider. The text calls on readers to ask themselves if they would give up something important to them in order to stand up for what they believe in.



Judy Led the Way by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, Illustrated by Margeaux Lucas
Grades 2-5

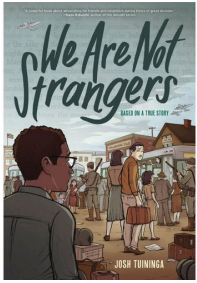
"Judy Led the Way" tells the true story of Judy Kaplan, a young girl who changed American Judaism. In 1922 she became the first girl to read from the Torah in front of her congregation during her Bat Mitzvah, an ancient Jewish coming of age ceremony. This book is a great way to introduce kids to different culture's coming of age rituals. It also highlights how young people can create great change in their communities.



As Good As Anybody: Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March Toward Freedom by Richard Michelson, Illustrated by Raul Colón
Grades K-5

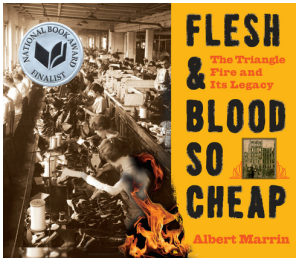
This beautifully illustrated picture book details the friendship and solidarity between Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. In 1965 the two men marching arm in arm from Selma to Montgomery. Michelson details how the two men came together through shared belief in peace and dignity. Showing how we can model their friendship as an example of real solidarity.

Middle Grade



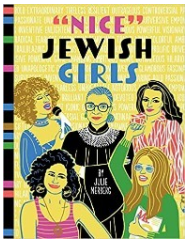
We Are Not Strangers by Josh Tuininga
Grade 6-12

This graphic novel tells the true story of Jewish Americans helping their Japanese American neighbors during the Second World War. Tuininga shares the history of the Sephardic Jewish community in Seattle. The story is grounded in his own family history. He shares the story of how this community came together to protect Japanese homes and businesses. They kept stores running, sometimes for years, while their owners were imprisoned in internment camps. This graphic novel highlights how minority communities have come together to support each other.



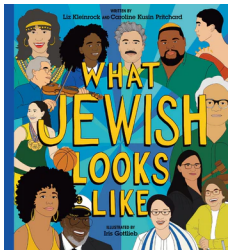
Flesh and Blood So Cheap: The Triangle Fire and Its Legacy by Albert Marrin
Grades 6-9

This Sydney Taylor Book Award winner introduces middle grade readers to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. This was one of the worst industrial disasters in American history. Jewish immigrant women worked in terrible sweatshops in New York's garment industry. A fire broke out in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory because the doors were locked during working hours, the workers were locked inside. This is a great introduction to Jewish American history, the history of immigration to the US, and American labor history.



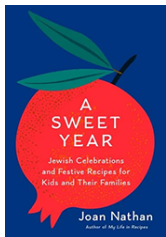
"Nice" Jewish Girls by Julia Merberg, illustrated by Georgia Rucker
Grades 5-9

Great for young activists and lovers of history alike, this collection of short biographies highlights the accomplishments of 36 Jewish women. Most, though not all of the biographies are about American Jewish woman. The biographies cover both contemporary figures, and influential women of the 20th century. From feminist icons like Gloria Steinem to the supreme court power house Ruth Bader Ginsberg, readers are sure to be inspired by these Jewish women.



What Jewish Looks Like by Liz Kleinrock and Caroline Kusin Pritchard, illustrated by Iris Gottlieb
Grades 5-8

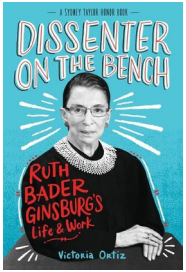
This anthology is a celebration of modern Jewish life. The collection of short biographies is broken up based on themes, each covering people who exemplify a different Jewish value. From "Hamilton" star Daveed Diggs to disability rights advocate Judy Heumann "What Jewish Looks Like" highlights the diversity of the Jewish experience and the huge contributions of the Jewish community.



A Sweet Year by Joan Nathan
Grades 4-9

This is a great book for middle grade readers who are experimenting in the kitchen by themselves for the first time. Jewish chef and food writer extraordinaire Joan Nathan creates a cookbook that is both a collection of recipes and an introduction to Judaism. Nathan explains Jewish holidays, Jewish dietary laws (kosher), and the cultural importance of certain foods. From traditional potato latkes to colorful and modern rainbow challah Nathan's recipes will inspire cooks young and old alike.

Young Adult



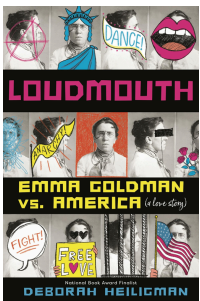
[Dissenter on the Bench: Ruth Bader Ginsberg's Life and Work](#) by Victoria Ortiz
Grades 8-12

This engaging biography of Ruth Bader Ginsberg connects her landmark legal cases with her experiences as a Jewish woman. Readers learn about Ginsberg's childhood in a Jewish family and her experiences facing both sexism and antisemitism young woman. It follows her career from her days in university through the Supreme Court. Ortiz creates an accessible biography which introduces readers to the career of one of the most influential Jewish American women of the past century.



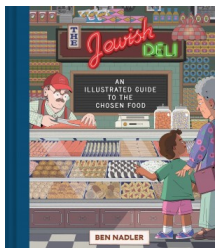
[The Joe Shuster Story](#) by Julian Voloj and illustrated by Thomas Campi
Grades 9-12

This non-fiction graphic novel tells the story of the Jewish men behind the boom in the American comic book industry in the mid 20th century. Joe Shuster and Jerome Siegel were two Jewish kids growing up in Cleveland during the Great Depression. Joe was the child of immigrants and had been drawing since early childhood. Joe Shuster would go on to help create the most famous superhero in the US, Superman.



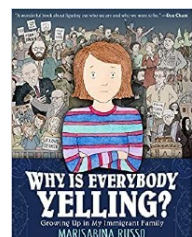
[Loudmouth: Emma Goldman vs. America \(A Love Story\)](#) by Deborah Heiligman
Grades 11-12

This YA biography encourages readers to ask big questions about the role of First Amendment freedoms in the US throughout our history. Heiligman encourages readers to develop a critical understanding of Emma Goldman both as a political figure and as a woman. Through the contradictions and complexities of Emma Goldman's life readers are asked to think critically about what the democratic values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness means to them. This book discusses some upsetting themes and difficult histories so is recommended for older readers, but is a fascinating introduction to a particularly complicated figure in Jewish American history.



[The Jewish Deli: An Illustrated Guide to the Chosen Food](#) written and illustrated by Ben Nadler
Grades 8-12

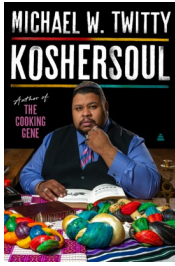
Equal parts delectable and educational, this beautifully illustrated history of the Jewish deli opens up the customs, ingredients, and institutions of Jewish cuisine in the United States. This book is a funny and engaging introduction to Ashkenazi Jewish food which is sure to get readers questioning, laughing, and hungry! Learn about iconic delis such as NYC's Katz's Deli and be inspired to try your hand at delicious pastries like hamantaschen.



[Why is Everybody Yelling?](#) written and illustrated by Marisabina Russo
Grades 7-12

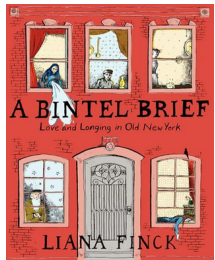
Growing up in the shadow of the Holocaust, young Marisabina navigates growing up in a divided and deeply traumatized family. Despite being set in the 1950s and 60s, many of Marisabina's experiences will resonate with readers today who share her experiences of being a first generation American and balancing multiple cultures at once. As she grows up Marisabina begins to uncover family secrets, question her own place in her family, and establish her own identity.

Adult



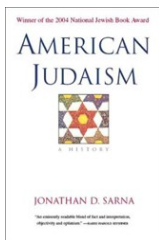
[Koshersoul](#) by Michael W. Twitty

Michael Twitty is a James Beard award winning food historian and educator. His work describes the intricacies of the Black Jewish experience. Part cookbook, part history, and part memoir *Koshersoul* brings great emotional depth to the stories at the intersection of the Black and Jewish experience. Twitty describes the history of traditional cuisines of Black Jews, such as the traditional foods of Ethiopian Jews, but also creates vibrant fusion dishes that represent the mixed identities of many Black American Jews. the vibrant story of food, Twitty deals with big questions of identity, belonging, prejudice, and pride.



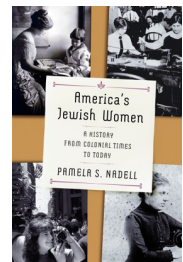
[A Bintel Brief: Love and Longing in Old New York](#) by Liana Finck

For lovers of graphic novels and historical gossip, "A Bintel Brief" shares letters written over a century ago to colorfully illustrate Jewish immigrant life in early 20th century New York. This collection of "Dear Abby" style letters was gathered from the archives of the Yiddish newspaper *The Jewish Daily Forward*. "A Bintel Brief" or "A Bundle of Letters" was a popular advice column running in the newspaper from 1906 through the 1970s. The letters show the ups and downs of family and work life 100 years ago in ways that are shockingly relatable today.



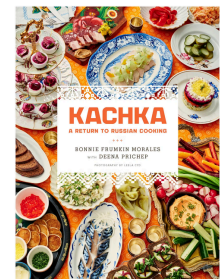
[American Judaism: A History](#) by Jonathan Sarna

For those looking for a deep dive into the Jewish American experience this text is a comprehensive guide to over 350 years of Jewish American history. From the early Sephardic community in Colonial America, through the founding of the nation, and each wave of Jewish immigration Sarna follows how the American experience has shaped the Jewish community, and how the Jewish community has shaped the United States in turn.



[America's Jewish Women: A History From Colonial Times to Today](#) by Pamela Nadell

This is an ambitious history book which talks about the lives of Jewish women throughout American history. From Emma Lazarus to Bella Abzug, Nadell covers over 350 years of history through the extraordinary lives of Jewish American women. Nadell begins in the 1600's when Jews first began settling in Colonial America. She then takes the reader through the growing Jewish community of the 19th century. She highlights the massive political and cultural changes of the 20th century. Particularly in her history of the feminist movement she highlights how Jewish women have been at the forefront of change in the US.



[Kachka: a Return to Russian Cooking](#) by Bonnie Frumkin Morales and Deena Prichep

This is the perfect read for cookbook lovers as well as lovers of the vibrant Portland food scene. *Kachka*, both the cookbook and the popular restaurant, highlights the cuisine of Soviet Jews. Jews of the Russian Empire began coming to the United States in large numbers in the 1880s, but this is a cookbook of food brought by a later wave of Jewish immigration. Facing antisemitism, some 500,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union emigrated to the US between the 1960s and the early 2000's. Among them were the parents of, Bonnie Morales, the executive chef and co-owner of *Kachka*. This cookbook connects Oregon's local history of Jewish immigration with the centuries old food traditions of Russian Jews.

