



Marlena Spieler

April 16, 1949 – July 6, 2023

September 13, 2023

An evening to celebrate Marlena's life with a gathering of family and friends. We'll be singing, dancing, sharing stories and memories, and enjoying food made from her recipes.



Marlena Spieler was a remarkable individual who will be deeply missed by her family, friends, and the culinary community. She wrote and contributed to over 70 cookbooks, including best-selling works about Jewish heritage food, Mediterranean cuisine, and flavors of California. From 2000 to 2010, Marlena shared her recipes and stories inspired by her travels in The San Francisco Chronicle's "Roving Feast" column.

Marlena added stamps to her passport at the drop of a hat. Her M.O. was to befriend a complete stranger (language no barrier), learn their favorite foods and restaurants, and later return to her family and friends with her trademark polka-dot bag overflowing with unfamiliar treats and her self overflowing with incredible stories.

In 2011, Marlena suffered a head injury from a car accident in San Francisco, resulting in the loss of her sense of smell and taste. Despite this setback, she persevered and slowly rebuilt these abilities over time. Marlena's determination and resilience were truly inspiring. Her memoir chronicling this experience is expected to be published posthumously next year.

Marlena Spieler's legacy as a gifted artist and writer, passionate and knowledgeable food enthusiast, beloved family member, and generous friend will forever be cherished. Her impact on the culinary world and the lives she touched will continue to inspire and bring joy to many. May her memory be forever a blessing.







OLD COUNTRY CABBAGE BORTSCH

Place in soup pot :

- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped carrots
- 2 cups shredded raw beetroot
- 2 cups peeled tomatoes, cooked
- canned or raw potato, cut-up

Cover with boiling water and simmer 20 minutes.

Add: 1 tbsp. butter

- 2 cups beef or vegetable stock
- 1 cup shredded cabbage
- 2 tbsp. honey
- 1 tbsp. vinegar
- 1 bay leaf

Simmer 15 or 20 minutes longer.

Add more stock if a thinner soup is desired, and more beetroot for a brighter colour.



Serve with sour cream and fresh chopped dill. Accompany with black bread, spread with sweet (unsalted) butter.

Marlena's Salsa

Middle East/Mexico

Yield: approximately 2 cups

This hot sauce, loosely based on both Mexican salsa and Yemenite Zhoog, is always delicious no matter what the proportions. I've made it with larger amounts of tomatoes, used canned instead of fresh, and substituted parsley for the cilantro; it is indestructible.

Serve with Kofta Kabob, Tahina Dip, or Hot Hungarian Mushroom Soup. With such a great quantity of garlic, this salsa keeps vampires away!

- 6 to 10 cloves garlic
- 5 to 8 jalapeños, stemmed but not seeded
- 3 tomatoes, quartered
- 1 bunch cilantro (approximately ½ cup)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 to 2 teaspoons cumin (or to taste)
- Salt to taste

1. Chop garlic in processor or blender, then add everything else.
2. Chop to desired consistency. It should be smooth and saucelike with only a little chunkiness.

Advance Preparation: This is strongest (and I think best) when freshly made but may be kept for 1½ to 2 weeks in the refrigerator.

from Hot & Spicy: Unusual, Innovative Recipes from the World's Fiery Cuisines (1985)



Illustrations by Dan Hubig & John Ueland for Marlena's "Roving Feast" SF Chronicle column (2000-2010)

CHOPPED CHICKEN LIVERS

IT IS SAID THAT REMNANTS OF THIS CLASSIC DISH WERE FOUND IN SITES DATING BACK TO 1400 AND HAVE BEEN EATEN IN VARIOUS GUISES EVER SINCE. THE FRENCH LOVE OF LIVER-ENRICHED PÂTÉS IS AN INHERITANCE FROM THE JEWS OF ALSACE, STRASBOURG AND THE EAST WHO BROUGHT THEIR SPECIALITIES WITH THEM WHEN THEY FLED, AND SHARED THEM AT THEIR TABLE.

SERVES FOUR TO SIX

INGREDIENTS

250g/9oz chicken livers
2–3 onions, chopped, plus ½ onion,
finely chopped or grated
60ml/4 tbsp rendered chicken fat or
vegetable oil
3–4 spring onions (scallions),
thinly sliced
2–3 hard-boiled eggs, roughly
chopped or diced
10ml/2 tsp mayonnaise or firm
chicken fat (optional)
5–10ml/1–2 tsp chopped fresh dill
salt and ground black pepper
chopped fresh dill or parsley, to garnish
lettuce, thin slices of crisp matzos
or rye bread and a few slices of dill
pickle, to serve



1 Grill (broil) the chicken livers lightly to bring the blood out on to the surface and render them kosher. Rinse, place in a pan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, simmer gently for 5–10 minutes, then leave to cool in the water. (The livers should be firm but not dry and brown.)

2 In a large pan, fry the onions in the fat or oil over a medium heat, sprinkling with salt and pepper, until well browned and beginning to crisp, and caramelized around the edges.

3 To hand-chop the livers, use a round-bladed knife and chop the livers finely. Place in a bowl and mix in the fried onions and oil. If using a food processor, put the livers and fried onions in the bowl of the food processor with just enough oil from the fried onions to process to a thick paste.



4 In a bowl, combine the livers with the finely chopped or grated onion, the spring onions, hard-boiled eggs, mayonnaise or chicken fat, if using, and chopped dill. Cover and chill the livers for an hour or so until firm.

5 When ready to serve, mound the chopped livers on plates and garnish with the chopped fresh dill or parsley. Serve with lettuce, matzos or rye bread and dill pickles.

VARIATIONS

- To make traditional chopped liver, use calf's liver in place of the chicken livers.
- For a Hungarian accent, use a combination of onions: lots of very, very browned chopped onions, a little raw chopped onion and a handful of thinly sliced spring onions.



from The Jewish Heritage Cookbook

Spaghetti al Limone

By [The New York Times](#)

<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1018692-spaghetti-al-limone>



Michael Kraus for The New York Times

Time 45 minutes

Rating 4 ★★★★★ (1,796)

Notes [Read 132 community notes](#) ↕

Save

Give



INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

1 lemon

1½ cups dry white wine

¾ to 1½ cups heavy cream, to taste

1 pound spaghetti

3 tablespoons butter, in pieces

3½ to 4 ounces Parmesan cheese,
freshly grated

1 to 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, to
taste

Sea salt and fresh black pepper, to taste.

Add to Your Grocery List

[Ingredient Substitution Guide](#)

[Nutritional Information](#)

This creamy yet bright lemon pasta, from the cookbook author Marlena Spieler, is simple, elegant and destined to become one of your favorite weeknight dishes. First, combine white wine with the zest of a lemon and reduce until syrupy. Add a generous amount of cream and allow to simmer until it thickens slightly. Toss the pasta with the sauce, a bit of pasta water and Parmesan cheese and stir to coat, adding pasta water if the sauce isn't coming together. Top with extra Parm if you so desire (we always do). If you need a bit more heft, consider topping the noodles with sautéed fish, shrimp or chicken.

Featured in: [When Life Hands You Lemons](#), [Make Pasta and Confit](#)

PREPARATION

Step 1

Zest lemon and slice zest into matchsticks. Juice lemon, strain and reserve. Place zest in large nonreactive pan with wine and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium high and cook until it reduces to a syrupy mixture, about ¼ cup, about 10 minutes.

Step 2

Remove from heat and pour in about ¼ cup of cream. Stir, then pour in remaining cream. Return to stove and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer until it is thickened and reduced slightly, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat.

Step 3

Meanwhile, bring large pot of generously salted water to boil. Cook pasta until al dente; reserve ½ cup cooking water and drain.

Step 4

Return hot pasta pot to stove. Pour in cream, butter and lemon juice, stir, then add hot drained pasta and a few tablespoons of cooking water. Toss together and add cheese in three or four parts, tossing each to meld with sauce. Add more cooking water if sauce is too thick and crumbly.

Step 5

Ladle onto plates and drizzle each portion with olive oil, then add a little salt and pepper.

Yesh Kokhavim: There Are Stars by Hannah Szenes

There are stars
whose light reaches the earth only
after they themselves have
disintegrated and are no more.

יש כוכבים

שְׁאוֹרֵם מִגֵּיעַ אֶרְצָה רַק כְּאִשֶּׁר הֵם
עֲצָמָם אֲבָדוּ וְאִינָם

And there are people
whose scintillating memory lights
the world after they have passed
from it.

יש אֲנָשִׁים

שֶׁזִּיו זְכָרָם מְאִיר כְּאִשֶּׁר הֵם עֲצָמָם אִינָם
יוֹתֵר בְּתוֹכָנוּ

These lights –
which shine in the darkest night –
are those which illumine for us the
path.

אורות אֵלֶּה

הַמְבַּהֲקִים בְּחֹשֶׁךְ הַלַּיְלָה – הֵם
שֶׁמְרַאִים לְאָדָם אֶת אורות הַדֶּרֶךְ

Blessing over Apples and Honey

Rosh Hashanah begins on September 15th, marking the Jewish New Year. Marlana loved the tradition of eating apples dipped in honey to symbolize a sweet new year, for which we recite this blessing:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu
melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא
פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Blessed are you, Lord God, eternal
one, who creates the fruit from the
earth.

Y'hi ratzon milfanecha, Adonai
Eloheinu v'Elohei
avoteinu v'imoteinu, shetchadesh
aleinu shanah tovah um'tukah.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,
שֶׁתְּחַדֵּשׁ עֲלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה.

May it be Your will, Eternal our God,
that this be a good and sweet year
for us.





Follow this link for
Marlena's online
memorial.