

# Historic Kosher Chicago

The fluidity of Chicago's kosher shops, markets, cafés and restaurants would appear to be the one constant in their history. Cuisine preference, convenience, variety, and locality changed over time with the needs of the Jewish community. Businesses flourished, or failed, or tried again. Culinary memories abound. The following pages are in no way intended as a history. They are a pleasant reminiscence of some of the shops we frequented, a taste of our experience, and an occasional look at the people who brought us historic kosher Chicago.

## Blintzes Inn

(JEWISH PEOPLE'S INSTITUTE, 3500 DOUGLAS AVE. 1925-1940)



Sign from the historic Jewish People's Institute Blintzes Inn.

Collection of Chicago History Museum [donated to Chicago Jewish Historical Society after close of Museum exhibition, "Shalom Chicago" 2013]

"From 1927 until 1955, North Lawndale's Jewish People's Institute, with separate meat and dairy kitchens, was a fashionable venue for catered affairs, as well as for daily meals and sandwiches.

The lower level Blintzes Inn...was even divided into two areas: the western half of the restaurant served meat dishes, while the eastern half served dairy."

– *Chicago Food Encyclopedia*, edited by Carol Haddix and Bruce Kraig (University of Illinois Press, 2017)

Blintzes Inn menu cover, featuring a photo of the building exterior. Credit: Chicago History Museum

A la carte menu for Blintzes Inn. Credit: Chicago History Museum, ICHI-67076)



## Tel Aviv Kosher Restaurant

(10 SOUTH CLARK STREET, 1936 THROUGH THE MID-1950S)

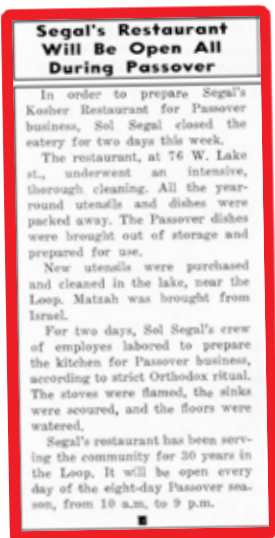
In October of 1936, the Tel Aviv Kosher Restaurant, on the second floor of the building at 10 South Clark Street, was the only kosher dining venue in the Loop. Physically removed from the bustle of the downtown business day below, it offered both convenience and quiet retreat. The restaurant was supervised by a committee of Rabbis from the Merkaz HaRabbanim (the Orthodox rabbinic organization that oversaw Chicago *kashrus* through the 1950s) and provided both daily meals and event catering.



Announcement encouraging reservations be placed for both Pesach Sedarim of 1934 (5694), to be held at the Tel Aviv Kosher Restaurant, and led by HaRav Gamzu of the Loop Synagogue. The availability of kosher-for-Pesach meals daily throughout the holiday is also noted.



Advertisement, The Sentinel, March 25, 1937



The Sentinel  
April 23, 1959 page 24

Twenty years later, the restaurant, renamed for its new proprietor, Sol Segal, featured an Israeli décor at the same location. It moved to 76 West Lake Street in the mid-fifties and operated at both locations for some time. Ads still referred to it as Segal's Tel Aviv or "formerly Tel Aviv", and it continued its Pesach traditions. The restaurant closed in 1969. Incidentally, Sol Segal was the father of the family who founded the Crate and Barrel stores and provided part of the funding for that enterprise. He passed away in 1993.

## Loop Kosher Cafeteria

(236 SOUTH WABASH,  
1954-1955)

Ad for the Loop Kosher Cafeteria appearing in The Sentinel, January 6, 1955



An attempt to bring a kosher cafeteria to the Chicago Loop area occurred in the mid-1950s. Morris Barach, a downtown diamond merchant, secured a location that could accommodate two operations – a daily cafeteria, and a private meeting and event catering and waitress service for up to 200 guests. After a mere six months of operation, however, he decided to sell, "at a great sacrifice to the right people" feeling unable to do justice to both the restaurant operation and his already established business.

## Bowl and Blintz

(SHERMAN HOUSE, ARCADE LEVEL,  
1971-1972)

The closure of Segal's left the downtown Chicago Loop without a kosher eatery. Beginning in 1971, there was an effort made to solicit membership subscriptions for a new restaurant in the area, resulting in the creation of Bowl and Blintz, a dairy restaurant located in the Sherman House Hotel at Clark and Randolph. Despite efforts to expand the menu, revamp the price structure, and improve customer service, Bowl and Blintz was short-lived, closing by the end of 1972.



Restaurant opening announced in The Sentinel April 8, 1971

## Café HaNegev

(6407 CALIFORNIA AVE.,  
MID-1980S)



Israeli scenic paintings brightened the walls of Café HaNegev, one of the early Israeli restaurants. It offered a self-service Middle Eastern meat menu along with American-style hamburgers and other sandwiches.

Israeli family in Café Hanegev 1987 Credit: Chicago History Museum, ICHi-039730; James Newberry, photographer

# Golda's Kosher Restaurant

(2340 DEVON AVE., 1960S,  
LATER TOUHY, THROUGH 1985)

In January of 1965, *The Sentinel* published an advertisement, placed by Sol Segal, welcoming a new kosher restaurant to the Chicago area. Well before that time, however, Golda Schachter had opened the first of her three Chicago neighborhood restaurants – Mendel's on Kedzie, in 1954. She later opened Golda's on Devon, which moved to Touhy, near the North Shore Bakery. The restaurant closed in 1985, and Golda herself passed away in December of 1986.



Golda Schachter, honored in 1974 for her fundraising efforts on behalf of Magen David Adom (Israel's national emergency, disaster, ambulance, and blood bank service) *The Sentinel*, September 26, 1974

Golda was a Holocaust survivor, who immigrated to the United States from Poland in 1950. A play by Joanna Kraus, entitled *Angel in the Night*, told the restaurateur's pre-Chicago story. In 1942, having witnessed the killing of her husband, Golda fled Warsaw. Seeking shelter and something to eat for herself and her children, an eight-year-old daughter and an infant son, Golda ventured onto a farm in Zoborow, Poland, and begged for assistance. For two years, a Catholic teen, Marisia Szul, hid the young woman and her children in the barn and cared for them, unbeknownst to her own family. The play was commissioned by a local non-profit and premiered at the National-Lewis University in Evanston in 1991.

# Jerusalem Kosher Restaurant

(3014 WEST DEVON AVE.,  
1980S THROUGH THE MID-1990S)



Partial menu, Jerusalem Kosher Restaurant

Jerusalem Kosher was a pizza shop owned and operated by husband-and-wife team Rafi and Sandy Salinas, with Rafi in the kitchen preparing the orders taken by Sandy in the front of the restaurant. Open seven days a week (closing early Friday afternoon and reopening two hours after sundown on Saturday), cuisine and décor were Israeli, the atmosphere was warm and welcoming, and many regular customers were known to the owners by name. The couple eventually returned to Israel, and the restaurant closed in the mid-1990s.

# Kosher Karry

(2828 MOZART  
1967-2002)

Kosher Karry, located on Mozart near Devon, was opened in 1967 by chef Sam Wainberg, shortly after his arrival in Chicago. Wainberg, a Russian émigré, claimed to have prepared meals for European notables, among them members of the Politburo.

Later owned by Rabbi Yaakov (Jack) Morgulis and his wife Nizria, the meat restaurant and carry-out was best known for its drumettes, made with Chef Sam Wainberg's secret recipe. In a memorial to Rabbi Morgulis, who passed away in December of 2017, internet



*The Sentinel*  
March 16, 1967

blogger *The Talmid* noted, “to this day other stores in Chicago try to market their “Kosher-Karry-Style Drumettes,” but all fall short.”

<http://shasdaf.blogspot.com/2017/12/in-memory-rabbi-yaakov-jack-morgulis-zl.html>



Kosher Karry was owned and managed by the Morgulis from 1992 until 2002, when its owners retired.

Street view: Rabbi Avrohom Isenberg at Kosher Karry

## La Misada

(HYATT REGENCY HOTEL,  
151 EAST WACKER DRIVE  
1988-1993)

In November of 1988, the Hyatt Regency Hotel opened what the *Chicago Tribune* announced would be the “only glatt kosher restaurant in downtown.” (*Chicago Tribune*, 9/20/1988) Along the way, it added hot and cold customized kosher meals to go. (*Chicago Tribune*, 1/5/1990) La Misada (the word *Misada* means restaurant in Hebrew) was in its third year of operation when Alon Ben Gurion, the grandson of Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, joined the staff of the Hyatt as the hotel’s food and beverage executive, overseeing the operations of the Hyatt’s varied restaurants. “We want La Misada to appeal to all people because of the quality of the food, the ambiance, the service, with the kosher aspect being just one part of the dining experience,” he said. “Food should always be an experience.” (*Chicago Tribune*, 9/12/1991)

Remembered by many as an outstanding restaurant, in the end La Misada reportedly failed for lack of support. (*Chicago Sun Times*, September 22, 2000, page 58)



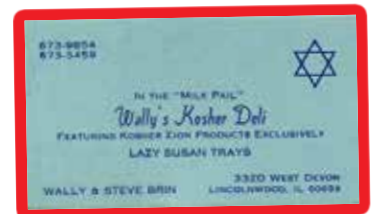
Menu, La Misada, August 1993

## Milk Pail

(3320 WEST DEVON  
1970-1999)

In his blog entitled *Digital Research Library of Illinois History Journal*, Illinois historian Neil Gale reminisced about working at Wally’s Kosher Deli in the Milk Pail, on Devon just west of McCormick during his high school years. (<https://drloihjournal.blogspot.com/2019/11/wallys-deli-in-the-milk-pail-lincolnwood-illinois.html>)

Gale described the owners, Wally and Steve Brin, as “nice people,” who were always upbeat and treated everybody kindly. Wally Brin owned the Deli from 1970 until 1986, when he retired. Steve took over at that time, and two years later, after his father’s passing, renamed the business, “Wally’s Milk Pail and Deli.” With a new partner, Harry Friedman, Steve turned the establishment into a strictly kosher deli and grocery store which he operated through 1999.



Credit for all 4 Milk Pail images:  
<https://drloihjournal.blogspot.com/2019/11/wallys-deli-in-the-milk-pail-lincolnwood-illinois.html>

# Reb's Kosher Grill

Reb's Kosher Grill, on California near Pratt, was a hangout for Academy students during the late sixties and seventies. The restaurant was named for its owner, Rabbi Marshal Kaplan, son of HTC Rosh Hayeshiva, Rav Hertsel Kaplan, who was a Rebbe at Ida Crown Jewish Academy and Hebrew Theological College. He was fondly referred to as "Rebs" by his students, hence the name "Reb's Kosher Grill".



<https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/cgs/1970/04/23/01/article/146.2>  
Sentinel 4/23/1970

# Selig's Kosher Deli

(309 SKOKIE VALLEY ROAD  
1982- 1998)

Located in the Crossroads Shopping Center in Highland Park, Selig's Kosher was a small restaurant of some eight tables sandwiched between a long deli counter and a grocery section. Owners Miriam and Selig Spun, both Holocaust survivors, came to the United States in 1947 and met ten years later in New York, where they married. According to the congratulatory text of a State of Illinois House Resolution, issued in June of 2000 prior to a dinner in their honor held by Congregation Bnei Ruven, the Spuns opened the deli counter and served hot corned beef sandwiches, "phosphates" and other delicatessen favorites at Joe Kirschenbaum's New York Kosher, the first strictly kosher supermarket on Devon Avenue in 1961. The store was sold in 1971, and the Spuns moved to Israel, where they lived for nine years, returning to Chicago in 1982. They opened Selig's Kosher Deli in that year, and kept the business going for sixteen years, serving, among other things, hot corned beef sandwiches and homemade chopped liver, and thriving on Miriam's recipes.

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