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HISTORY

Boynos and Bagels

Seattle's thriving food scene owes much to its Jewish predecessors, from Pike Place Market stalls to present-day food trucks.

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The Jewish influence at Pike Place Market began with Solomon Calvo and Jacob Policar, Seattle's first Sephardic Jews. When they arrived in the city from Turkey in 1902, Calvo and Policar found they could communicate with Seattle's Greek fishermen and began working in the market's fish shops. Calvo eventually opened his own shop, Western Fish and Oyster Co., in 1912.

Many Sephardic immigrants found a home at Pike Place Market, including Morris Tacher, whose Tacher's Turkish Restaurant became a gathering place for Seattle's Sephardim. Though their mark at Pike Place has faded, Sephardic Jews today own Pure Food Fish Market, Three Girls Bakery, and Sweetie's Candy. "I'm really proud to be a Sephardic Jew," says Sweetie's owner Betty Halfon, who launched her 125-square-foot candy store in 1997. "As I've gotten older, I've come back to my roots. It means even more to be in the market with that history."

Over in Ashkenaz, Brenner Brothers Bakery and Delicatessen was loved for its pastries, kosher meats, rye bread, and colorful personalities, drawing long lines at its original Central District location and later on in Bellevue. The bakery racked up accomplishments beyond its delicious food, like earning a record for the world's largest bagel at the 1994 Bite of Seattle. Apart from the bagel feat, the bakery was known for doing good deeds, like hiring refugees and handing out food to those in need. According to Charles Brenner's obituary in the *Seattle Times*, a cousin who worked there gave free day-old cakes to single moms. Charles, a cofounder who passed away in 2012 at the age of 92, told the *Times* in 1985 that his father "told us you could never lose by helping someone out." That advice served well: Brenner Brothers lived a long life, closing down in 1996 after a 90-year run.

In recent years, as Seattle earned a spot on the map as a foodie city, excitement has grown around Jewish restaurateurs and entrepreneurs. Chef Robin Leventhal, who operated Crave on Capitol Hill and now lives and works in Walla Walla, appeared on season 6 of *Top Chef*, and local chain Homegrown, run by childhood friends Ben Friedman and Brad Gillis, focuses on sustainable sandwiches so wildly popular it is expanding to the Bay Area this year. And food truck Napkin Friends has created a popular menu of latke press sandwiches. "Paying homage to my heritage was important," says Napkin Friends' Jonathan Silverberg. "The whole idea is steeped in tradition but not stuck in it. We're using the basis of my cooking heritage of traditional Jewish food but looking at it in a different way."

While no kosher delis have survived here, pastrami lovers have flocked to Goldbergs' Famous Delicatessen in Factoria since 2005. But it may need to beef up for some competition: Silverberg has his sights set on his next project: a Jewish deli.

Walking Points