

Community members support woman with MS by joining her in walk

By MEGAN DELMONTE
Special to the Jewish Press

Jody Rappaport fits the definition of today's superwoman. She is a part-time physical therapist assistant in an orthopedic clinic and a mother of two active children. "Once my workday finishes, I am a soccer, gymnastic and chess mom, toting them around town," she says.

She also has found time to be involved at the Tampa Jewish Community Center and Congregation Kol Ami.

Still, there is one more thing that Rappaport must deal with on a daily basis – Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

MS is a chronic, often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous system. Symptoms may be mild, such as numbness in the limbs, or severe, such as paralysis or loss of vision. The progress, severity, and specific symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary from one person to another.

"When I first was diagnosed with MS, despite my clinical training in understanding this disease, I had very little to no practical understanding of what living with MS means," says Rappaport.

She found many of the answers to her questions on the national Multiple Sclerosis website. Perhaps more importantly she found there a community of supporters with first-hand

knowledge of those living with MS.

Three years ago, Jody decided to give back to the local MS Society chapter by forming a team to participate in the annual Tampa Walk MS. In 2008, "Jody's Crew" raised \$2,000 and in 2009, \$2,500.

She has also been on the Tampa MS Walk committee for the past two years.

When it came to forming a team, Rappaport looked to the Jewish community for support. In fact, from last year's team of more than 60 people, over two thirds of them are active in the JCC, JLT (Jewish Leadership Training Institute), Congregation Kol Ami or are from the Hillel School of Tampa, where Rappaport's children attend.

This year, Jody expects more of the same for the Tampa 2010 MS Walk on Saturday, March 27.

"Everyone knows someone who has MS. This is a wonderful opportunity to come together as a Tampa community and remind ourselves how much a community helps to support each other through good and hard times," she says.

To find out how to be part of Jody's team or make a donation, visit <http://main.nationalmssociety.org/goto/JodysCrew>.

Walk MS: Tampa 2010 is March 27, starting at the Lowry



Jody Rappaport with children Naomi, 5, Ilan, 7, and husband Yoav

Park Zoo, 1001 W. Sligh Ave. Check-in is at 5:30 p.m. and the walk will start at 6:30 p.m. All participants must check-in and turn in their waiver/pledge envelopes the morning of the walk.

For more information, call Olivia Moriarty at 1-888-950-9080 or visit www.midfloridamswalks.org.

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High on the Hog

Chefs' infatuation with pork has reached Jewish cuisine, prohibitions notwithstanding

By LISA KEYS

Tablet

NEW YORK — Utopia Bagels in Queens is known for its bacon-flecked egg bagel. In Manhattan, the restaurant JoeDoe boasts a sandwich called the "Conflicted Jew" — a concoction made with bacon, challah and chopped liver. During Chanukah, the Web site YumSugar suggested frying latkes in bacon fat. And last year, Top Chef winner Ilan Hall opened his Los Angeles restaurant, The Gorbals, and made a splash with bacon-wrapped matzah balls, pork belly braised in Manischewitz, and Israeli couscous pudding with bacon brittle.

"Pork has become very much in vogue," says food writer Ed Levine. "It tastes good. People can cook with it easily; you can make pork chops or roasts, or you can cook with bacon — and bacon makes everything taste better. You can't do the same thing with chicken."

But for Jewish chefs and foodies, such an indulgence is more complicated. Though the rules of kashrut forbid pork consumption, the advent of a bacon-cream cheese shmear, to choose instead of lox spread, suggests that adherence to anti-pork restriction is hardly what it used to be.

We're living in an era of "post-modern food," says Hasia Diner, a professor of American Jewish history at New York University and the author of *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish and Jewish Foodways*

in the Age of Migration.

The treif-meets-traditional combinations are just another example of a phenomenon that includes "jalapeno-Jack rugelach, chocolate chip bagels and, frankly, Tandoori salmon," she says. "Show me a salmon that went anywhere near India."

The particular mix of Jewish cuisine and pork is "part of the increasingly porous world we live in," Diner says. "The idea is that things don't have to be in fixed boxes: X is Jewish so it can't have pork; Y is Italian so it can't have pineapple and tuna. All of these are now open to the creativity and predilections of whomever wants to make or consume them."

Not everybody does. For Gil Marks, a kosher-observant rabbi, chef and cookbook writer, "the thought of a bacon bagel sort of turns the stomach," he says. "Not just from the religious perspective — though there is that — but from a sociological perspective. It's like an American eating a horse."

Nonetheless Marks, at work on an encyclopedia of Jewish food due out this summer, sees a bright side to the heretical trend.

"You always retain your roots, to a certain extent, no matter how hard we try to reject them," he says. "No matter how assimilated you are, certain things draw you back — like comfort food and nostalgia for childhood; when you were sick you got homemade chicken soup with matzah balls. By adapting these foods, you're embracing them in a certain way, without totally embracing them."

And to many Jews, the allure of pork is simply irresistible.

"It's the ultimate taboo," says Dan Levine, who as Porky LeSwine is the co-founder of BbqJew.com, dedicated to news about North Carolina pork barbecue, a topic that enjoys religious-like devotion.

"Where we live, pork is in so many dishes," says the resident of Chapel Hill, NC. "It's a flavoring ingredient in everything from vegetables to corn bread."

The "ultimate taboo" also makes a great marketing tool.

"It gives us a bit of identity and sets us apart in the barbecue world," says David Rosen, a co-founder of Jubon's, a competitive barbecue-making enterprise with a name that plays on the words "Jew"

and "Ubon's," the Yazoo City, MS, barbecue restaurant that mentored the team.

The team mascot is a yarmulke-wearing pig, and its slogan is "At least the salt is kosher."

"It's a little controversial, but so what?" Rosen says. "We're not out to offend."

This movement evolved thanks, in part, to the increased prominence of celebrity chefs, says Heather Lauer, author of *Bacon: A Love Story: A Salty Survey of Everybody's Favorite Meat*.

"Now we're watching more cooking shows and doing more cooking at home," she says. "Bacon is a secret weapon in the kitchen."

The Internet also plays a role in selling artisanal pork producers as well as purveyors of products like bacon mints and bacon-print shoes.

Others are less tolerant of the combination.

"It's sacrilege, in my opinion, and disrespectful of the tradition," says David Sax, the author of *Save the Deli: In Search of Perfect Pastrami, Crusty Rye, and the Heart of Jewish Delicatessen*. "Jewish food was defined by the fact that it was made in this way and didn't have these certain products."

And Hall says that this month, he got his first piece of "hate mail" from someone who called his creations "a cheap thrill."

Such rebukes have failed to slow the trend. Jubon's is winning accolades at barbecue contests across the country for its slow-cooked pork ribs, and a retired Israeli cardiologist named Eli Landau is self-publishing an entire cookbook devoted to pork, purported to be Israel's first.

Jews eating pork, as Diner points out, is simply a fact of modern life. Moreover, there's nothing particularly "traditional" about, say, cinnamon raisin bagels, either.

"There are people who believe there is a clear boundary between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic,'" she says. "But what we think is authentic was once brand new. Culture is always being reinvented, and every time it has a certain contentiousness to it."

(Lisa Keys is a freelance journalist in New York City. Reprinted from *Tabletmag.com*, a new read on Jewish life.)

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