ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER



"I'LL HAVE WHAT SHE'S HAVING" THE JEWISH DELI – DOCENT GUIDE

STUDENT FIELD TRIPS: 20 MINUTE TOUR (*In Our Voices* field trip segment)

OVERVIEW

More than a place to get a meal, the Jewish deli is a community forged in food. *"I'll Have What She's Having": The Jewish Deli* explores how Jewish immigrants imported and adapted traditions to create a uniquely American restaurant.

While Jews have lived in the United States since the colonial era, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw an influx of Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe to America. As they settled into their new homeland, many of these immigrants began to sell food in their communities, starting businesses that grew into the restaurants we know today. Delis also served as a lifeline for many Holocaust survivors and refugees who came to the United States and acclimated to a new country. Jewish delis provided a livelihood and purpose for the immigrants who became owners, waiters, cooks, and customers. This exhibition gives visitors a taste of deli history through authentic artifacts and explores how Jewish American culture is created, maintained, and reborn across generations.

GOALS AND THEMES

The purpose of this tour is to facilitate visitors' exploration of the themes of food culture, immigration, community, hope, and possibility. It also demonstrates some of the important contributions Jewish immigrants have made to American society.

EXHIBITION FRAMEWORK

Section 1: Food of Immigration
Section 2: From Street to Shop
Section 3: Meat Production
Section 4: Mogen Dovid
Section 5: The Food
Section 6: Midcentury Heyday

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Section 7: Who's at the Table
Section 8: No Substitutions
Section 9: Survivor Communities
Section 10: Popular Culture
Section 11: Shifting Landscapes

Introduction	3 minutes
Section 6: Midcentury Heyday/Deli at War	7 minutes
Section 9: Survivor Communities	7 minutes
Conclusion	3 minutes

INTRODUCTION (3 minutes)

Questions:

- **How is food connected to your family history?**
- **What foods/recipes does your family eat that have been passed down from previous generations? What stories do those foods/recipes tell about your family's past? What do they tell about your family today?**
- **Why do you think an exhibition was created about the Jewish deli?**

Introduce the key message:
The Jewish Deli is an exhibition about Jewish immigration and food culture. Deli is short for "Delicatessen," a German word that loosely translates to "a place to find delicious things to eat." Jewish delis rose to prominence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as a source of livelihood and a way to maintain a connection to the culture Jewish immigrants had left behind. Jewish delis combined regional food traditions from Central and Eastern Europe with available ingredients in the United States, resulting in an entirely new American Jewish phenomenon, enthusiastically embraced by Jews and non-Jews alike. Jewish delis played a role in the American war effort during WWII and offered Jewish refugees and Holocaust Survivors a welcoming community as they adjusted to life in their new country.

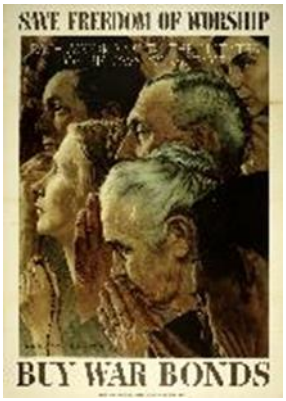
What their experience will be like:
The exhibition is organized thematically and tells the story of the Jewish deli through authentic artifacts such as menus, signs, advertisements, uniforms, and photographs. On our tour we'll be focusing specifically on how Jewish delis were connected to WWII and the Holocaust. *[You may be given time during the tour to explore some of the galleries on your own.]*

Transition:

- **Why would a Holocaust museum have an exhibition about Jewish delis?**
- **How do you think Jewish delis could have a connection to the Holocaust?**

As Nazi Germany grew in power, Americans learned about what was happening to Jews in Germany and later in German-occupied territories. After the U.S. entered World War II, many American Jews were heavily involved in raising funds for the war effort, and delis were a site for this to happen.

MIDCENTURY HEYDEY/DELI AT WAR (5 minutes)



Norman Rockwell - "Save Freedom of Worship: Buy War Bonds", c. 1940s

- **Why do you think this poster might appeal to Americans in the 1940s?**
- **Why do you think the poster's focus is on freedom of worship?**
- **What are war bonds? Why would someone want to buy them?**

War is expensive. World War II was very expensive. The United States spent more than $300 billion fighting the Axis Powers and supplying our Allies—that equals more than $4 trillion today! To help fund this effort, the government turned to ordinary Americans. The United States Treasury offered Americans a series of War Bonds they could purchase during the war. A War Bond was both an investment in one's country and an investment in one's own financial future. Here's how it worked: You could purchase a $25 War Bond for $18.75. The government would take that money to help pay for tanks, planes, ships, uniforms, weapons, medicine, food, and everything else the military needed to fight and win. That's the investment in your country. Ten years from the time you purchased your War Bond, you could redeem it and get $25. That's the investment you made in your own financial future. [nationalww2museum.org]

In New York, Sixth Avenue Delicatessen waiter Louis Schwartz helped raise more than nine million dollars in war bonds over the course of World War II. The bonds Schwartz sold paid for 66 P-47 Thunderbolt fighter planes, each of which bore the moniker "Louie the Waiter." Schwartz developed a rhyme to solicit the purchase of war bonds from deli patrons: "You'll buy war bonds sooner or later, so get them from Louie the Waiter!"



"Senda Salami to Your Boy in the Army," sign from Katz's Delicatessen, New York, c. 1940s

- **Why do you think this sign might be an effective way to sell salami?**
- **Why would someone want to send salami to a servicemember?**
- **How would this help support people fighting in the U.S. Army?**

Founded in 1888, Katz's Delicatessen is likely the oldest continuously operating deli in the United States. The formerly kosher deli was started by two brothers with the last name Iceland. The Katz family first joined as business partners and by 1917 had bought out the brothers. At a time when most deli food was being sold from carts and barrels on the street, Katz's was an established brick-and-mortar delicatessen, one that has stood the test of time to stay in business for more than 130 years.

An estimated half-million American Jews served in the United States military during World War II. Military rations did not accommodate the dietary observances of religious service members. The phrase "Eating ham for Uncle Sam" was a playful acknowledgment of how difficult it was for service members to keep kosher while in the military. [Kashrut is the body of the Jewish dietary laws regarding permissible foods and how they are to be prepared and eaten. Kosher foods are those acceptable for consumption according to these laws. The basic provisions of kashrut are that milk and meat cannot be consumed, cooked, or stored together; and that pork and shellfish are not to be eaten.]

Delicatessens and kosher butcher shops heavily promoted the idea of sending kosher hard salami to Jewish service members during World War II. The slogan "Senda salami to your boy in the army" was originally developed by Sixth Avenue Delicatessen waiter Louis Schwartz but was used widely by other delis, including Katz's Delicatessen, which proudly displays the slogan to this day.

Transition: In addition to supporting the war effort and the soldiers fighting in the war, Jewish delis were also heavily connected to the Holocaust Survivor community. There are many stories behind the origins of deli owners – including those here in the Chicago area. We'll focus on a few of those next.

SUVIVOR COMMUNITIES (9 minutes)

Questions

- **What are some reasons you think Jewish Holocaust Survivors frequented Jewish delis after immigrating to the U.S.?**

- **Why do you think some Survivors opened delis themselves, or sought employment at a deli?**

For many of the four hundred thousand Holocaust survivors and refugees who came to the United States, delis were a lifeline as they acclimated to a new country. The establishments provided a livelihood and purpose for the immigrants who became owners, waiters, cooks, and customers. In Jewish communities across the United States, the fellowship that delis offered helped survivors heal from the deep trauma of genocide.

[Listed below are 9 Chicago-area delis whose owners were Holocaust Survivors. Choose only a few of these stories to share. Alternatively, you can give them time to explore this section on their own and report back a Survivor story to the group.]

SELMA'S DELICATESSEN – Chicago





First photo: Ben Gerson, Lill (Gerson) Hirsch (in the middle), and Selma Gerson, Chicago, IL, 1939
Second photo: Ben Gerson serving in the U.S. Army, Germany, c. 1945
Third photo: Ben Gerson with grandson Ron Fierstein in Selma's, c. 1970

Four members of the Gerson family settled in Chicago in 1936, having fled Lutz, Germany, and the Nazi regime. Ben Gerson served with the 120th Engineer Combat Battalion of the U.S. 45th Infantry and received a Purple Heart during his service and participated in the liberation of Dachau in 1945. In the late 1950s, Ben and his sister Selma purchased a deli on Devon Avenue where Selma had been working and named it Selma's Delicatessen. The business supported the Gerson family for more than 25 years.

LEON'S DELICATESSEN – Skokie




Photo 1: Leon and Fela Lesorgen in Leon's Delicatessen, Skokie, IL, c. 1980
Photo 2: Leon's Delicatessen, Skokie, IL, c. 1980
Not pictured: Fela Lesorgen's meat grinder, early 20th century

Generations of kids growing up at East Prairie School in Skokie knew Leon's Delicatessen for its assortment of candy bought during lunchtime, while their parents stopped in for Fela Lesorgen's famous chopped liver and tuna salad. Both Fela and Leon had survived the ghettos and camps of Nazi controlled Europe. Born in Sosnoweic, Poland, the couple were strangers before they met in Chicago after the war and later married. Together, they opened Leon's Delicatessen in 1960 on Howard Street in Skokie. The deli closed in the late 1980s.

"My parents could never take a vacation together. Someone always had to be at the store. We all grew up working by their side." - Regina Corush, daughter

<u>"JACK'S" / LUDINGTON COFFEE SHOP – Chicago</u>





Photo 1: Jack Kamen in uniform, c. 1943
Photo 2: Sabina Kamen working at Jack's, Chicago, IL, c. 1960

Yakov Kamentska, fled Drohiczyn, Poland, to the U.S., changed his name to Jack Kamen and joined the army to fight the Nazis. After the war, Jack met Roy Warshawsky, another survivor from Drohiczyn who owned the Ludington Building at Wabash and State Streets in Chicago. There Jack and his wife Sabina opened the Ludington Coffee Shop, or "Jack's," on the 8th floor in 1958. Roy didn't allow vending machines in the building to direct business to Jack's. At Jack's, one could order Sabina's home cooked dishes, Vienna Beef hot dogs, and Burney Brothers' baked goods, alongside 10-cent coffee. After Jack died in 1968, Sabina continued to run the shop for another decade.

<u>HUNGARIAN KOSHER FOODS – Chicago</u>





Photo 1: Wedding of Margit Weisz and Sandor Kirsche, Freising, Germany, October 21, 1947
Photo 2: Margit and Sandler Kirsche, c. 1990
Not pictured: Business card, shopping bags, and advertisement from Hungarian Kosher Foods, Skokie, IL

Margit Weisz and Sandor Kirsche both survived Nazi ghettos, Auschwitz, and numerous labor and concentration camps. They met after liberation in Freising, Germany in December 1945, married in October 1947, and arrived in Chicago in February 1948. After years of working in the food industry, the couple bought a meat market with the dream of expanding to an "all kosher, only kosher, one stop kosher shop" supermarket. In April 1986 Hungarian Kosher Foods opened - America's first all-kosher supermarket. Hungarian became a landmark in Chicago and was known around the world. Generations of the Kirsche family worked at Hungarian. It was much more than a supermarket; it was a meeting place and a “home” for customers with the goal to serve the Jewish community.

HELFELD’S DELICATESSEN – Chicago



Photo: Mark Helfeld at Helfeld’s, Chicago, IL, 2022

Jakub Helfeld-Grutz was deported to the Stanisławów ghetto at 11 years old and then on to the Janowska concentration camp. In 1942, Jakub’s non-Jewish brother-in-law helped Jakub escape and hid him in Stryi, Poland until the area was liberated in July 1944. Jakub adopted the surname Grutz to prevent being identified as Jewish and did not practice Judaism again until years later when he moved his family to the U.S. In Chicago and Florida, Jakub and his son Mark opened several Jewish delis. In

honor of the family name they lost because of the Holocaust, Mark and his daughter Emiliana have taken the last name Helfeld and opened Helfeld's in 2022.

ROMANIAN KOSHER SAUSAGE CO. – Chicago





Photo 1: Romanian Kosher, Touhy Ave. and N. Clark St. in Rogers Park, Chicago, IL, 2022
Photo 2: A Romanian Kosher butcher prepares an order as beef salamis dangle above him, Chicago, IL, 2022

"The fact that they survived and thrived as immigrants lent a certain meaning to the business, and it also helped them get away with not-such-great customer service. It was seen as part of the charm." – Katherine Loeb

Romanian Kosher began in a small kitchen in Bucharest where Irene and Eugene Loeb developed recipes and made sausages themselves. After World War II, the couple fled communist Romania, first settling in the Dominican Republic, where they reestablished the business before moving to Chicago. The Loebs opened their third store, Romanian Kosher Sausage Co. in 1957. The store quickly became well-known for its kosher salami and other hard-to-find products like kishke and Romanian pastrami. Romanian is a family affair, today it is run by Irene and Eugene's granddaughters, Katharine Loeb and Karen Levin. Katherine said of her father when he was brought into the family business, "With Eastern European parents, it's much more hierarchical so I don't know if it was framed as an invitation."

KAUFMAN'S BAGEL AND DELICATESSEN – Skokie




Photo 1: Bette Dworkin, Kaufman's Bagel and Delicatessen, Skokie, IL, 2022
Photo 2: Kaufman's Bagel and Delicatessen, Skokie, IL, 2022

"Everyone could speak their own language. There was no judgment, no issue if you happened to have a number on your arm," – Bette Dworkin, Kaufman's owner

Holocaust survivor Maury Kaufman opened Kaufman's in the 1960s as a haven for the tens of thousands of other Jews and survivors that settled alongside him in Skokie. Survivors were not only clients, many were also employees. In 1984, Kaufman sold the deli to Judy and Arnold Dworkin, and today it's run by their daughter Bette Dworkin.

Bette has said of the business, "I have come to a better understanding that Kaufman's is about far more than the food–although that's a very big piece. But it's also about a sense of community, a place to meet, to see old friends, and feel comfort. Kaufman's, through the visions of both Maury Kaufman and Arnold Dworkin is about traditions."

THORNDALE DELI – Chicago



Photo: Don Shaw, Harry Kalish, and Abe Jakubowicz at Thorndale Deli, Chicago, IL, c. 1965
Not pictured: Box of matchbooks from Thorndale Deli, Chicago, IL, c. 1970

Childhood friends Harry Kalish and Abe Jakubowicz grew up together in Lodz, Poland before WWII. Both survived the Holocaust and immigrated to Chicago. Abe opened Thorndale Deli and Harry joined as his business partner in 1964. The deli was beloved in the Edgewater neighborhood. Long time employee, Don Shaw bought the business when Harry and Abe retired.

THE BAGEL RESTAURANT AND DELI – Chicago





Photo 1: Danny Wolf in The Bagel, Chicago, IL, 2022
Photo 2: Passover seder in the café of the Kammerspiele theater, Hamburg, Germany, c. 1946-1947
Not pictured: "Don't cry, little Dan!" Portrait of Danny Wolf by RMG, Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia, April 29, 1945; Portraits of Ruth and Ewald Wolf, by Bedřich Wachtel, Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia, 1944; Identification Cards issued by the Jewish Community of Hamburg for Dan, Ewald, and Ruth Wolf, 1945-1946

Danny Wolf, owner of The Bagel, was born in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, where he spent the first nine months of his life before his family was liberated in 1945. After the war, Danny's

grandparents, Elsa and Herman Golenzer, operated a café in Kammerspiele theater in the Jewish district of Hamburg before immigrating to the U.S. Herman was one of the founders of the post-war Jewish community and synagogue in Hamburg. They moved to Chicago and opened The Bagel in 1950. The restaurant became an anchor for the city's survivor community.

Danny took over leadership of the family business in 1969. As a gay Jewish Holocaust survivor, Danny advocated for equality, empathy, and the vitality of his community. Under Danny's stewardship, The Bagel was an anchor of Chicago's Lakeview business community and a haven for LGBTQ+ groups. Danny and his life partner Mitchell Kaufman were together for over 60 years. Danny Wolf passed away in 2022.

Today, The Bagel is owned by local restaurateur Marvin Barsky, who said recently, "I'm grateful, Danny. It's still The Bagel. It's still the tradition. It's still the food. It's still the real Jewish deli."

CONCLUSION (3 minutes)

Questions

- **How is food connected to your family history?**
- **What foods/recipes does your family eat that have been passed down from previous generations? What stories do those foods/recipes tell about your family's past? What do they tell about your family today?**
- **What culture/community (or cultures/communities) do you belong to? Does food bring the community together? In what way?**
- **Have you had an experience in which you've learned about a culture/community other than your own through their food? What did you learn?**

Transition to Karkomi: To more deeply understand the significance that Jewish delis played for some Holocaust Survivors, we need to look closer at the Holocaust and consider what the Survivors had experienced before coming to the U.S. and joining the community surrounding Jewish delis.

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"I'LL HAVE WHAT SHE'S HAVING" THE JEWISH DELI – DOCENT GUIDE

ADULT GROUP TOURS

OVERVIEW

More than a place to get a meal, the Jewish deli is a community forged in food. *"I'll Have What She's Having": The Jewish Deli* explores how Jewish immigrants imported and adapted traditions to create a uniquely American restaurant.

While Jews have lived in the United States since the colonial era, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw an influx of Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe to America. As they settled into their new homeland, many of these immigrants began to sell food in their communities, starting businesses that grew into the restaurants we know today. Delis also served as a lifeline for many Holocaust survivors and refugees who came to the United States and acclimated to a new country. Jewish delis provided a livelihood and purpose for the immigrants who became owners, waiters, cooks, and customers. This exhibition gives visitors a taste of deli history through authentic artifacts and explores how Jewish American culture is created, maintained, and reborn across generations.

GOALS AND THEMES

The purpose of this tour is to facilitate visitors' exploration of the themes of food culture, immigration, community, hope, and possibility. It also demonstrates some of the important contributions Jewish immigrants have made to American society.

EXHIBITION FRAMEWORK

Section 1: Food of Immigration
Section 2: From Street to Shop
Section 3: Meat Production
Section 4: Mogen Dovid
Section 5: The Food
Section 6: Midcentury Heyday

Section 7: Who's at the Table
Section 8: No Substitutions
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Section 11: Shifting Landscapes

Introduction	3 minutes
Section 1: Food of Immigration	5 minutes
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Conclusion	3 minutes

INTRODUCTION (3 minutes)

Questions:

- **How is food connected to your family history?**
- **What foods/recipes does your family eat that have been passed down from previous generations? What stories do those foods/recipes tell about your family's past? What do they tell about your family today?**
- **What is a deli? What's a Jewish deli?**
- **Has anyone been to a Jewish deli? What was it like? What types of food were served?**
- **Why do you think an exhibition was created about the Jewish deli?**

Introduce the key message:
The Jewish Deli is an exhibition about Jewish immigration and food culture. Deli is short for "Delicatessen," a German word that loosely translates to "a place to find delicious things to eat." Jewish delis rose to prominence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as a source of livelihood and a way to maintain a connection to the culture Jewish immigrants had left behind. Jewish delis combined regional food traditions from Central and Eastern Europe with available ingredients in the United States, resulting in an entirely new American Jewish phenomenon, enthusiastically embraced by Jews and non-Jews alike. Jewish delis played a role in the American war effort during WWII and offered Jewish refugees and Holocaust Survivors a welcoming community as they adjusted to life in their new country.

What their experience will be like:
The exhibition is organized thematically and tells the story of the Jewish deli through authentic artifacts such as menus, signs, advertisements, uniforms, and photographs. This tour will provide an overview of the themes of the exhibition and highlight a selection of objects in each section, with a special focus on how Jewish delis were connected to WWII and the Holocaust. *[You may be given time during the tour to explore some of the galleries on your own.]*

Transition:

- **Why would a Holocaust museum have an exhibition about Jewish delis?**
- **How could Jewish delis have a connection to the Holocaust?**

The exhibition is divided into sections thematically and examines how the Jewish deli developed from Jewish immigrants bringing and adapting their own food traditions. We are going to start at the beginning and look at the early origins of the Jewish deli.

FOOD OF IMMIGRATION (5 minutes)

The story of the Jewish delicatessen is as much about immigration as it is about food. Between 1880 and 1924, more than two million Jewish immigrants made new homes in the United States. The emergence of delis can be traced to an influx of Jewish immigrants from the Rhineland—an area of Central Europe that is part of present-day Germany—to New York City in the mid-nineteenth century. These newcomers were soon followed by Jews from Eastern Europe and the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Jewish deli combined dishes from various regions of Central and Eastern Europe as Jews from different countries met in America. Food such as pickles, knishes, gefilte fish, borscht, pastrami, smoked fish, bagels, babka, and rugelach began to be served under one roof for the first time. Many of these dishes are not specifically Jewish in origin but reflect regional cuisine that European Jews adapted to fit the kosher dietary laws dictated by Jewish tradition. Over time, these foods became the hallmarks of the Jewish deli in the United States.





Photo 1: Jefferson Street near 13th, Chicago, IL, 1907
Photo 2: Merchants and shoppers along Maxwell Street at the Sunday market in Chicago, IL, c. 1905
Photo 3: Jefferson Street in the Maxwell Street Market area, a sign in Yiddish reads "Fish Market,"

Chicago, IL, c. 1905
Not pictured: Sign from S. Rosen's, Chicago, IL, c. 1920

Maxwell Street – Chicago

Eastern European Jewish immigrants settled on the Near West Side of Chicago beginning in the 1870s and the Maxwell Street area eventually became home to over 50,000 Jews and 40 synagogues.

The Maxwell Street Market, centered on Maxwell Street from Jefferson Street to Halsted Street, was established in the late 19th century, and officially recognized by the City of Chicago in 1912 as the city's open-air market. Vendors came to Maxwell Street on Sundays to earn a livelihood from pushcarts and street stands in front of busy storefronts. Shoppers could buy anything ranging from kosher meat to clothing to tailoring services. The Market and shops offered discounted items to consumers and served as an economic hub for entrepreneurs looking to get ahead. The Market was a multicultural phenomenon and referred to as the "Ellis Island of the Midwest."

S. Rosen's was founded in Chicago in 1909 by Sam Rosen, who left his home in Poland at age 9 to become an apprentice baker in Germany. Rosen came to the U.S. at age 13, opened his own bakery in New York at 16, and helped organize the first baker's union in that city. Rosen moved to Chicago in his early twenties and purchased the New York Baking Company, renaming it after himself, and introduced his now-famous rye bread to the Windy City.

Transition: Immigration is a story known to many. Many of us have family stories related to our own family's immigration, whether it was us who immigrated recently or generations earlier during a large wave of immigration like the Eastern and Central European Jews in the 1880s-1924, which this exhibition mainly focuses on. As newly arrived immigrants creating a new life, finding means to support themselves and their families was the top priority. One of the ways that Jewish European immigrants supported themselves was by selling food on city streets.

FROM STREET TO SHOP (5 minutes)



Like many immigrants today, new arrivals from Europe often supported themselves and their families by selling food on city streets. On New York City's Lower East Side, crowds of vendors with wooden pushcarts and barrels jostled for space and competed for customers. These carts sold specialty foods

that reminded customers of their home countries, such as rye bread, smoked herring, bagels, knishes, and pickles.

Some successful vendors expanded into storefront grocery delicatessens. Often tiny and cramped, these stores stocked some of the expanding range of kosher packaged and canned goods in addition to kosher cured meats.

[There are 2 silent films playing in this section.]

Pushcarts—East Side
c. 1900
Edison Studios
Run time: 2:18
Library of Congress, Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division

Move On
1903
Edison Studios
Run time: 2:16
Library of Congress, Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division

These films, taken by an early motion picture camera mounted to the top of a moving vehicle, capture a busy street on New York City's Lower East Side, lined with pushcart vendors who have gathered to sell their goods. In one scene, a policeman intimidates a vendor to get him to move his cart.

Street vending has long been a source of public debate. In the late nineteenth century, New York City passed the Thirty Minute Law, which stipulated that vendors had to change locations every thirty minutes.

Transition: When you think about delis, what do you think of?

Next we are going to turn to briefly talk about the impact that the growth of the beef industry had on the development of the Jewish deli.

MEAT PRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Jewish delis relied on the agricultural abundance of the Americas. For example, the emerging cattle industry provided the ribbons of beef that are the hallmark of a classic deli sandwich.

The growth of the cattle industry in the United States coincided with a large influx of Jewish immigrants, who did not consume pork. Prior to the Civil War (1861–1865), many Americans of European descent consumed animals—primarily pigs—that were raised and slaughtered near their homes. Kosher slaughterhouses and meatpackers met the needs of Jewish consumers with beef that was produced on an industrial scale.








Photo 1: Livestock pens and workers herding sheep at the Union Stock Yards, Chicago, IL, c. 1910
Photo 2: The White City at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, IL, 1893
Photo 3: Vienna Sausages stall at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, IL, 1893
Photos 4-5: Initially, Vienna was kosher, as seen on the windows of the original factory and the incorporation of a Jewish star in its logo on the delivery vehicles, Chicago, IL, early 20th century

Union Stockyards – Chicago

From the Civil War until the 1920s Chicago was the country's largest meatpacking center and was considered the headquarters of the industry. Railroads and the Chicago River tied Chicago to the Midwest and the large urban markets on the East Coast. The leading meatpackers and the railroads incorporated the Union Stock Yard and Transit Company in 1865 and built an innovative facility south of the city limits. Accessible to all railroads serving Chicago, the huge stockyard received 3 million cattle and hogs in 1870 and 12 million just 20 years later.

World's Columbian Exposition – Chicago

Organized to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World, the exposition became a defining moment in Chicago's history and the history of the United States as a whole. This stall (pictured above in Photo 3) was the start of what would become the Vienna Sausage Manufacturing Company, today Vienna Beef. Initially, Vienna was kosher, as seen on the windows of the original factory and the incorporation of a Jewish star in its logo on the delivery vehicles.

Transition: With the help of the beef industry and as Jewish delis grew in popularity among both Jewish and non-Jewish customers, labor and business organizations connected to the industry began to develop as well.

MOGEN DOVID (5 minutes)

Throughout the early twentieth century, Jewish delis opened across the country, attracting both Jewish and non-Jewish customers. By the mid-1930s, there were approximately five thousand delis in New York City alone. As delis proliferated, labor and business organizations connected to the industry organized to advance economic and social goals.


THE FAIR PRICE LIST

"The Fair Price List," Mogen Dovid Delicatessen Magazine, 1936

Mogen Dovid Delicatessen Magazine (1930–1939) was published by the Mogen Dovid Delicatessen Owners' Association and distributed throughout New York during the height of the Great Depression. Printed in both English and Yiddish, the magazine covered local politics, racketeering issues, union matters, and community news.

Each issue of *Mogen Dovid Delicatessen Magazine* came with a "fair price list," which listed recommended prices for foods sold in delicatessens to help prevent price gouging of customers and undercutting of competitors.

Transition: The Jewish Deli industry would not have developed or been so popular if the food wasn't delicious and special. The next section of the exhibition pays tribute to the many wonderful deli foods.

THE FOOD (5 minutes)



People come to the deli to eat—whether it is for the sky-high sandwiches, piping-hot bowls of matzo ball soup, or rich chopped liver spread on rye. To some, deli represents a taste of home. For others, these temples to Ashkenazi cuisine provide a way to discover the many delicious foods Jewish American delicatessen has to offer.

- What foods here most stand out to you? Why? (People may want to share stories about special food associations.)

People come to the deli to eat—here visitors can learn about the many delicious foods Jewish American delicatessen has to offer. While this exhibition is a story about food, you can't take food into a museum gallery with historic artifacts. To overcome this challenge, these high-quality replicas and have been integrated in with artifacts.

Transition: Jewish deli food became more and more popular, and people have many memories associated with these special foods. The increase in popularity during the mid-twentieth century was where we saw tremendous growth and change in the American Jewish community, and as an extension, its delis.

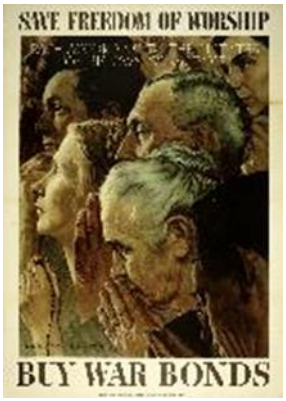
MIDCENTURY HEYDAY (5 minutes)

The mid-twentieth century was a period of unparalleled growth and change for the American Jewish community and, by extension, its delis. As Jews were increasingly able to afford single-family homes, many left city centers for areas where they were no longer subject to restrictive housing covenants.

Restrictive covenants were widespread tools of discrimination used to prevent specific racial and ethnic groups from migrating to white neighborhoods during the first half of the twentieth century. While most white Jews found access to housing outside of restrictive covenants during this period, many People of Color did not, and it was not until the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 that the practice of writing racial covenants into deeds was made illegal.

Some delis followed their customers to the rapidly expanding suburbs, while others remained in historically Jewish urban neighborhoods as new immigrants moved in, often from Latin America and the Caribbean. Although New York City remained the epicenter of Jewish deli culture, new delis opened across the United States in fast-growing cities in the American South and West.

As Nazi Germany grew in power, Americans learned about what was happening to Jews in Germany and later in German-occupied territories. After the U.S. entered World War II, many American Jews were heavily involved in raising funds for the war effort, and delis were a site for this to happen.



Norman Rockwell - "Save Freedom of Worship: Buy War Bonds", c. 1940s

- **Why do you think this poster might appeal to Americans in the 1940s?**
- **Why do you think the poster chose to focus on freedom of worship?**
- **What are war bonds? Why would someone want to buy them?**

War is expensive. World War II was very expensive. The United States spent more than $300 billion fighting the Axis Powers and supplying our Allies—that equals more than $4 trillion today! To help fund this effort, the government turned to ordinary Americans. The United States Treasury offered Americans a series of War Bonds they could purchase during the war. A War Bond was both an investment in one's country and an investment in one's own financial future. Here's how it worked: You could purchase a $25 War Bond for $18.75. The government would take that money to help pay for tanks, planes, ships, uniforms, weapons, medicine, food, and everything else the military needed to fight and win. That's the investment in your country. Ten years from the time you purchased your War Bond you could redeem it and get $25. That's the investment you made in your own financial future. [nationalww2museum.org]

In New York, Sixth Avenue Delicatessen waiter Louis Schwartz helped raise more than nine million dollars in war bonds over the course of World War II. The bonds Schwartz sold paid for 66 P-47 Thunderbolt fighter planes, each of which bore the moniker "Louie the Waiter." Schwartz developed a rhyme to solicit the purchase of war bonds from deli patrons: "You'll buy war bonds sooner or later, so get them from Louie the Waiter!"



"Senda Salami to Your Boy in the Army", sign from Katz's Delicatessen, New York, c. 1940s

- **Why do you think this sign might be an effective way to sell salami?**
- **Why would someone want to send salami to a servicemember?**
- **How would this help support people fighting in the U.S. Army?**

Founded in 1888, Katz's Delicatessen is likely the oldest continuously operating deli in the United States. The formerly kosher deli was started by two brothers with the last name Iceland. The Katz family first joined as business partners and by 1917 had bought out the brothers. At a time when most deli food was being sold from carts and barrels on the street, Katz's was an established brick-and-mortar delicatessen, one that has stood the test of time to stay in business for more than 130 years.

An estimated half-million American Jews served in the United States military during World War II. Military rations did not accommodate the dietary observances of religious service members. The phrase "Eating ham for Uncle Sam" was a playful acknowledgment of how difficult it was for service members to keep kosher while in the military. [Kashrut is the body of the Jewish dietary laws regarding permissible foods and how they are to be prepared and eaten. Kosher foods are those acceptable for consumption according to these laws. The basic provisions of kashrut are that milk and meat cannot be consumed, cooked, or stored together; and that pork and shellfish are not to be eaten.]

Delicatessens and kosher butcher shops heavily promoted the idea of sending kosher hard salami to Jewish service members during World War II. The slogan "Senda salami to your boy in the army" was originally developed by Sixth Avenue Delicatessen waiter Louis Schwartz but was used widely by other delis, including Katz's Delicatessen, which proudly displays the slogan to this day.

Transition: As we think about the importance delis have played in the United States, it is also important to look at their role in the conversation of who is truly welcome "at the table" in the United States.

WHO'S AT THE TABLE? (5 minutes)

Jewish delis have been part of the conversation about who is truly welcome "at the table" in the United States. They provided a way for Ashkenazi (Central and Eastern European) immigrants, who made up a large proportion of the original owners and employees at delis, to join urban American society as they shared food and ideas with customers and workers from a wide range of backgrounds.

Delis have also been profoundly shaped by the regions and times in which they existed. In some instances, like many other public establishments, they followed profoundly unjust practices, such as the enforcement of racial segregation in the Jim Crow South (early 1870s–1965).

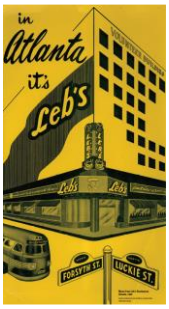




Photo 1: Menu from Leb's Restaurant, Atlanta 1949
Photo 2: People picketing outside an Atlanta restaurant which displays sign against integration, 1963

In 1949, Charlie Lebedin opened a New York–style delicatessen in downtown Atlanta, which, like all of the restaurants in the area at that time, was segregated by race. On July 18, 1962, a group of Black students working with the Committee on Appeal for Human Rights and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee protested Leb's Restaurant's deceptive "come one, come all" open-house slogan. Leb's finally integrated following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which required businesses to desegregate.

Transition: We've talked so far about many different elements of delis and what makes them a site for community building (or not), and one of the main ways this happens is through the comfortable feel of a deli. One of the ways this happens is the hardworking people that work at delis, some for decades.

NO SUBSTITUTIONS (5 minutes)

Delis are welcoming and comfortable places for people to gather and eat. The smells of hot food, the clatter of silverware and plates, and the glow of fluorescent lights create a warm and casual atmosphere. Workers and patrons come to know each other over years or even decades—unofficial families brought together by food.

Many Jews find that delis play a central role in how they express and connect with their identity, whether they are breaking a Yom Kippur fast, celebrating an important life event, or looking for a special kosher product.

Beyond the Jewish community, delis have also long appealed to people from many different backgrounds because of their late hours and wide range of satisfying dishes served in large portions.

[Not Pictured]

Arnold Dworkin's jacket from Kaufman's Bagel and Delicatessen, Skokie, IL, c. 1985

Holocaust survivor Maury Kaufman opened Kaufman's in the 1960s as a haven for the tens of thousands of other Jews and survivors that settled alongside him in Skokie. Survivors were not only clients, many were also employees. In 1984, Kaufman sold the deli to Judy and Arnold Dworkin, and today it's run by their daughter Bette Dworkin.

Bette has said of the business, "I have come to a better understanding that Kaufman's is about far more than the food–although that's a very big piece. But it's also about a sense of community, a place to meet, to see old friends, and feel comfort. Kaufman's, through the visions of both Maury Kaufman and Arnold Dworkin is about traditions."



Video: Original interviews with worker and owners

Like the people they serve, deli employees come from many different backgrounds. Watch this short video to learn more about some of their stories.

Transition: In addition to supporting the war effort and the soldiers fighting in the war, Jewish delis were also heavily connected to the Holocaust Survivor community. There are many stories behind the origins of deli owners – including those here in the Chicago area. We'll focus on a few of those next.

SUVIVOR COMMUNITIES (5 minutes)

Questions

- **What are some reasons you think Jewish Holocaust Survivors frequented Jewish delis as customers after immigrating to the U.S.?**
- **Why do you think some Survivors opened delis themselves, or sought employment at a deli?**

For many of the four hundred thousand Holocaust survivors and refugees who came to the United States, delis were a lifeline as they acclimated to a new country. The establishments provided a livelihood and purpose for the immigrants who became owners, waiters, cooks, and customers. In Jewish communities across the United States, the fellowship that delis offered helped survivors heal from the deep trauma of genocide.

[Listed below are 9 Chicago-area delis whose owners were Holocaust Survivors. Choose only a few of these stories to share. Alternatively, you can give them time to explore this section on their own and report back a Survivor story to the group.]

SELMA'S DELICATESSEN – Chicago





First photo: Ben Gerson, Lill (Gerson) Hirsch (in the middle), and Selma Gerson, Chicago, IL, 1939
Second photo: Ben Gerson serving in the U.S. Army, Germany, c. 1945
Third photo: Ben Gerson with grandson Ron Fierstein in Selma's, c. 1970

Four members of the Gerson family settled in Chicago in 1936, having fled Lutz, Germany, and the Nazi regime. Ben Gerson served with the 120th Engineer Combat Battalion of the U.S. 45th Infantry and received a Purple Heart during his service and participated in the liberation of Dachau in 1945. In the late 1950s, Ben and his sister Selma purchased a deli on Devon Avenue where Selma had been working and named it Selma's Delicatessen. The business supported the Gerson family for more than 25 years.

LEON'S DELICATESSEN – Skokie





Photo 1: Leon and Fela Lesorgen in Leon's Delicatessen, Skokie, IL, c. 1980
Photo 2: Leon's Delicatessen, Skokie, IL, c. 1980
Not pictured: Fela Lesorgen's meat grinder, early 20th century

Generations of kids growing up at East Prairie School in Skokie knew Leon's Delicatessen for its assortment of candy bought during lunchtime, while their parents stopped in for Fela Lesorgen's famous chopped liver and tuna salad. Both Fela and Leon had survived the ghettos and camps of Nazi controlled Europe. Born in Sosnoweic, Poland, the couple were strangers before they met in Chicago after the war and later married. Together, they opened Leon's Delicatessen in 1960 on Howard Street in Skokie. The deli closed in the late 1980s.

"My parents could never take a vacation together. Someone always had to be at the store. We all grew up working by their side." - Regina Corush, daughter

"JACK'S" / LUDINGTON COFFEE SHOP – Chicago





Photo 1: Jack Kamen in uniform, c. 1943
Photo 2: Sabina Kamen working at Jack's, Chicago, IL, c. 1960

Yakov Kamentska, fled Drohiczyn, Poland, to the U.S., changed his name to Jack Kamen and joined the army to fight the Nazis. After the war, Jack met Roy Warshawsky, another survivor from Drohiczyn who owned the Ludington Building at Wabash and State Streets in Chicago. There Jack and his wife Sabina opened the Ludington Coffee Shop, or "Jack's," on the 8th floor in 1958. Roy didn't allow vending machines in the building to direct business to Jack's. At Jack's, one could order Sabina's home cooked

dishes, Vienna Beef hot dogs, and Burney Brothers' baked goods, alongside 10-cent coffee. After Jack died in 1968, Sabina continued to run the shop for another decade.

HUNGARIAN KOSHER FOODS – Chicago





Photo 1: Wedding of Margit Weisz and Sandor Kirsche, Freising, Germany, October 21, 1947
Photo 2: Margit and Sandler Kirsche, c. 1990
Not pictured: Business card, shopping bags, and advertisement from Hungarian Kosher Foods, Skokie, IL

Margit Weisz and Sandor Kirsche both survived Nazi ghettos, Auschwitz, and numerous labor and concentration camps. They met after liberation in Freising, Germany in December 1945, married in October 1947, and arrived in Chicago in February 1948. After years of working in the food industry, the couple bought a meat market with the dream of expanding to an "all kosher, only kosher, one stop kosher shop" supermarket. In April 1986 Hungarian Kosher Foods opened - America's first all-kosher supermarket. Hungarian became a landmark in Chicago and was known around the world. Generations of the Kirsche family worked at Hungarian. It was much more than a supermarket, it was a meeting place and a "home" for customers with the goal to serve the Jewish community.

HELFELD'S DELICATESSEN – Chicago



Photo: Mark Helfeld at Helfeld's, Chicago, IL, 2022

Jakub Helfeld-Grutz was deported to the Stanisławów ghetto at 11 years old and then on to the Janowska concentration camp. In 1942, Jakub's non-Jewish brother-in-law helped Jakub escape and hid

him in Stryi, Poland until the area was liberated in July 1944. Jakub adopted the surname Grutz to prevent being identified as Jewish and did not practice Judaism again until years later when he moved his family to the U.S. In Chicago and Florida, Jakub and his son Mark opened several Jewish delis. In honor of the family name they lost because of the Holocaust, Mark and his daughter Emiliana have taken the last name Helfeld, and opened Helfeld's in 2022.

ROMANIAN KOSHER SAUSAGE CO. – Chicago





Photo 1: Romanian Kosher, Touhy Ave. and N. Clark St. in Rogers Park, Chicago, IL, 2022
Photo 2: A Romanian Kosher butcher prepares an order as beef salamis dangle above him, Chicago, IL, 2022

"The fact that they survived and thrived as immigrants lent a certain meaning to the business, and it also helped them get away with not-such-great customer service. It was seen as part of the charm." – Katherine Loeb

Romanian Kosher began in a small kitchen in Bucharest where Irene and Eugene Loeb developed recipes and made sausages themselves. After World War II, the couple fled communist Romania, first settling in the Dominican Republic, where they reestablished the business before moving to Chicago. The Loebs opened their third store, Romanian Kosher Sausage Co. in 1957. The store quickly became well-known for its kosher salami and other hard-to-find products like kishke and Romanian pastrami. Romanian is a family affair, today it is run by Irene and Eugene's granddaughters, Katharine Loeb and Karen Levin. Katherine said of her father when he was brought into the family business, "With Eastern European parents, it's much more hierarchical so I don't know if it was framed as an invitation."

KAUFMAN'S BAGEL AND DELICATESSEN – Skokie




Photo 1: Bette Dworkin, Kaufman's Bagel and Delicatessen, Skokie, IL, 2022
Photo 2: Kaufman's Bagel and Delicatessen, Skokie, IL, 2022

"Everyone could speak their own language. There was no judgment, no issue if you happened to have a number on your arm," – Bette Dworkin, Kaufman's owner

Holocaust survivor Maury Kaufman opened Kaufman's in the 1960s as a haven for the tens of thousands of other Jews and survivors that settled alongside him in Skokie. Survivors were not only clients, many were also employees. In 1984, Kaufman sold the deli to Judy and Arnold Dworkin, and today it's run by their daughter Bette Dworkin.

Bette has said of the business, "I have come to a better understanding that Kaufman's is about far more than the food–although that's a very big piece. But it's also about a sense of community, a place to meet, to see old friends, and feel comfort. Kaufman's, through the visions of both Maury Kaufman and Arnold Dworkin is about traditions."

THORNDALE DELI – Chicago



Photo: Don Shaw, Harry Kalish, and Abe Jakubowicz at Thorndale Deli, Chicago, IL, c. 1965
Not pictured: Box of matchbooks from Thorndale Deli, Chicago, IL, c. 1970

Childhood friends Harry Kalish and Abe Jakubowicz grew up together in Lodz, Poland before WWII. Both survived the Holocaust and immigrated to Chicago. Abe opened Thorndale Deli and Harry joined as his business partner in 1964. The deli was beloved in the Edgewater neighborhood. Long time employee, Don Shaw bought the business when Harry and Abe retired.

THE BAGEL RESTAURANT AND DELI – Chicago





Photo 1: Danny Wolf in The Bagel, Chicago, IL, 2022
Photo 2: Passover seder in the café of the Kammerspiele theater, Hamburg, Germany, c. 1946-1947
Not pictured: "Don't cry, little Dan!" Portrait of Danny Wolf by RMG, Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia, April 29, 1945; Portraits of Ruth and Ewald Wolf, by Bedřich Wachtel, Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia, 1944; Identification Cards issued by the Jewish Community of Hamburg for Dan, Ewald, and Ruth Wolf, 1945-1946

Danny Wolf, owner of The Bagel, was born in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, where he spent the first nine months of his life before his family was liberated in 1945. After the war, Danny's grandparents, Elsa and Herman Golenzer, operated a café in Kammerspiele theater in the Jewish district of Hamburg before immigrating to the U.S. Herman was one of the founders of the post-war Jewish community and synagogue in Hamburg. They moved to Chicago and opened The Bagel in 1950. The restaurant became an anchor for the city's survivor community.

Danny took over leadership of the family business in 1969. As a gay Jewish Holocaust survivor, Danny advocated for equality, empathy, and the vitality of his community. Under Danny's stewardship, The Bagel was an anchor of Chicago's Lakeview business community and a haven for LGBTQ+ groups. Danny and his life partner Mitchell Kaufman were together for over 60 years. Danny Wolf passed away in 2022.

Today, The Bagel is owned by local restaurateur Marvin Barsky, who said recently, "I'm grateful, Danny. It's still The Bagel. It's still the tradition. It's still the food. It's still the real Jewish deli."

Transition: Throughout the exhibition we have seen the different ways that Jewish delis have developed and become a part of modern American life. Next we're going to look at how the popularity of delis and deli culture can be seen in American popular culture as well.

POPULAR CULTURE ON RYE (5 minutes)

There is no definitive answer as to why the deli has inspired generations of Jewish filmmakers, comedians, musicians, and writers. Perhaps it is because so many Jewish creatives got their start in New York City, where they frequented Jewish delis and later infused these experiences into their work. Or maybe it is because the Jewish deli is one of the most public secular environments in Jewish American life. It is a place where characters can demonstrate or celebrate their Jewish identity outside of private or religious spheres. Whatever the reason, the deli continues to have a significant influence on Jewish artists.





Photo 1: Lyon's Delicatessen on Maxwell Street, Chicago, IL, 1930
Photo 2: Jake and Elwood Blues (John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd) in front of the "Soul Food Café", Chicago, IL, 1979
Not pictured: "Hot" Corned Beef Sinai 48 sign from Nate's Delicatessen, Chicago, IL, c. 1980

Lyon’s and Nate’s Delicatessens – Chicago

Nate Duncan learned his trade from the Lyon's family who originally owned the building and deli at 807 W. Maxwell Street as "Lyon's Delicatessen". When Nate took over and renamed the deli in 1972, he continued to prepare and sell the Jewish deli foods he had learned from the Lyons family. Nate also spoke perfect Yiddish due to his years working at a Jewish deli on Maxwell Street. Nate’s Deli was featured in the 1980 film Blues Brothers, as "Soul Food Café", in front of which John Lee Hooker performs and inside Aretha Franklin sings “Think.” The deli was demolished in 1995 following the 1994 closure of the Maxwell Street Market at its historic site by the University of Illinois at Chicago campus expansion.

Transition: We see how Jewish delis have influenced life in the United States for over 100 years and have become a part of culture for so many, whether Jewish or not. As with most things that are 100 years old, new generations are reimagining and adapting these traditions.

SHIFTING LANDSCAPES (5 minutes)

Interest in Jewish delicatessen had waned by the late twentieth century. But at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Jewish deli experienced a revival. As older landmark delis closed, new delis opened across North America and in other parts of the world. These new artisanal delis reimagined classic menu items and brought back preindustrial techniques while also incorporating influences from Sephardic and Israeli cuisines.

More recently, delis faced new challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some added additional delivery options, and others reconfigured their physical spaces to include outdoor dining—a first for many delis.

American Jewish delis will continue to change and to reflect the people, flavors, trends, and even the difficulties of the world to come. By providing a source of comfort and community to a diverse customer base, they embody a spirit of resilience and celebration.



Jake Schneider, Chicago, IL, 2023

Schneider Deli is the culmination of chef/owner Jake Schneider’s culinary dreams. Fueled by a love of Jewish foods and a longing for the delis of the past, Jake drew inspiration from the strong Jewish women in his life who have always cooked with passion and joy. The menu features recipes passed down through

generations with a contemporary spin. Jake often partners with local Chicago favorites including Metropolis Coffee, Once Upon a Bagel, and Pretty Cool Ice Cream.





Sam & Gertie's Vegan Jewish Deli, Chicago, IL, 2023

Sam & Gertie's Vegan Jewish Deli

The world's first vegan Jewish deli opened in December 2019 by Gina and Andy Kalish and is named after Andy's grandparents. Having long wanted to open a deli reminiscent of his childhood favorites in Detroit, Andy proposed the idea to his wife Gina. The pareve menu features animal-free versions of knishes, chopped liver, smoked white fish salad, babka, and more.

"Opening Sam & Gertie's wasn't just about the food. It is about my love of Judaism, tradition, and posterity. Every weekend people come from near and far…other states and countries and end up at my little deli. And so often I get to speak with people who never had a chance to eat at a traditional Jewish deli or it had just been decades since. The stories of family and food and tradition often leave me emotional, mostly with joy and memories. That's why Sam & Gertie's exists." – Andrew Kalish, owner

CONCLUSION (3 minutes)

Questions

- **What culture/community (or cultures/communities) do you belong to? Does food bring the community together? In what way?**
- **Have you had an experience in which you've learned about a culture/community other than your own through their food? What did you learn?**