

Symbolic meaning of pork crossing national borders in the migration process: From a national collective anti-key symbol to the manifestation of Russian Jewish identity in Israel

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ABSTRACT

The analysis of the meaning of pork for Russian Jews in Israel suggests that far from being a private matter (“You can’t argue about taste”), the aspiration to define, preserve and reinforce collective identities includes imposing a national cuisine. I show how pork consumption can serve a community of migrants as a marker of their home system or as an imagined status marker whose collective affiliation is perpetually negotiated, rebuilt and redefined.

Introduction

The analysis of pork as a powerful key symbol with rich and often controversial meanings reveals important questions about Jewish Israeli collective identities; a long, continuous struggle to gain recognition of pork consumption as a legitimate practice of the Jewish national collective; and how changes in political participation influence local power hierarchies in relation to food habits of resident populations. The article discusses rapid growth of a broad range of non-kosher food stores in terms of their contribution to the struggle of the ethnic Russian-speaking Jewish transnational enclave in Israel. The analysis demonstrates how different national narratives coexist within this framework and often struggle for their role, place and significance in regard to notions of the collective identities of migrants in Israel.

The link between food and nation (e.g., nationalizing food) has been broadly investigated over the last ten years (e.g., Allison, 1997; Appadurai, 1988; Golden, 2005; Kunow, 2003; Mintz, 2003; Möhring, 2007; Raviv 2001–2002; Wilk, 1999). “National foods” are usually taken for granted by members of dominant groups and contribute to socialization into a unidimensional concept of nation, or what Mintz

(2003) referred to as “artificial sticking together.” According to the “cultural logic of invented traditions” (Welz, 2000:178), a “national cuisine” (Mintz, 2003) or “national larder” (Hughes, 1995, cited in Bell and Valentine, 1997:178) seems to be very important politically and highly emotional on the iconic level (Mintz, 2003). Consequently, certain food products or meals symbolize the uniqueness of the nation and mark the frontiers of the imagined national collective. Purchasing food products, as well as preparing and imbibing dishes, define those who belong to it and those who do not or are “not quite” part of it. Therefore, food nationalism is the attempt to attach deep nationalist sentiments to certain products that signify “our” nation, as opposed to “filthy foreign food” (Attar, 1985, cited in Bell and Valentine, 1997:167).

Notwithstanding the wide scholarly interest in national foods, no studies have explicitly examined the coexistence and coalescence of multiple contradictory national narratives involving transnational food practices of migrants. In focusing on this, I address the following questions: What meanings and roles do such national food (anti-) symbols as pork receive in migrants’ practice? How are these used and how do they change? How do these processes influence the dominant collective images in the receiving society?

Grounded in the investigation of Russian food stores in Israel, this article presents an analysis of the meaning and roles of the key symbol of Russian (as well as Ukrainian) national food—pork—as transported and practiced by Jewish migrants in the Israeli context. I discuss how this symbol crossed national borders and was manifested in controversies that contributed to the transformation of collective identities.

The basic assumption of this investigation is that consumption and the migration process are acts of personal and collective agency. The view adopted here is shared by those who assume that people are knowledgeable, responsible, mature agents (Kivisto, 1990; see also Bodnar, 1985; Stonequist, 1935) and knowledgeable consumers (Jackson and Holbrook, 1995). Consequently, food practices and food images are assumed to be manifestations of collective identities that are reshaped and transformed by immigrants through everyday practices and interactions within the transnational framework. As I will show, the effect of personal and collective agency is especially apparent in the case of Israel, where the ethnic Jewish transnational enclave has broken a number of key national-cultural rules over the last 18 years, since the immigration of ex-Soviet Jews.

Food as a special symbol in the migration process

Various types of food consumption can be understood as codes for individual views and behavior. These codes can be deciphered in terms of defining group boundaries, social status, political position and economic class. In a migration process, people are also exposed to different cultural meanings associated with particular products.

We can trace interesting changes in typical but complex processes connected with food that Grasseni defined as “construction of food as heritage, of taste as a skill, of quality of life as quality of food” (2005:79). In immigrating to Israel, Russian-speaking Jews have had a particular desire to discover “the land of milk and honey,” not only in the common metaphoric sense of economic security and improved quality of life, but also in the literal, material sense—as reflected in the family’s refrigerator or displayed on the dining room table in a meal prepared in the new society. These material objects manifest the realization of what Appadurai (1988) referred to as dreams of “cultural tales,” “spread tablecloths” or a taste of life abroad. Moreover, complex commercial developments within the Russian food domain abroad point to creative combinations of multiple images of different collective identities, mobilization of well-known older, as well as different, cultural and national new symbols that led to “re-inventing traditions” (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Grasseni, 2005; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993; Welz, 2000) or “creative traditionalization” (Beck and Welz, 1997). Similar to clothing, migrants try on the different imaginary home images, suggested by products in Russian food stores. Some fit their self-identity and seem natural and/or have always been part of their lives, while others contradict their self-vision or spread narratives about “common collective Jewish identity.”

It is through the act of migration that “naturalization of the arbitrariness in the established given order” (Bourdieu, 1977:164) in the land of origin becomes visible and even questioned as the home system is questioned and relativized. Based on the assumption that “food has always operated to define homes as well as cultural otherness” (Döring, Heide and Mühleisen, 2003:4), we know that food products and cuisine traveled from the home to be “re-embedded in new lands and cultures” (Mintz, 2003:22) and “indigenized” (Mintz, 2003:21) or “naturalized” (Kaufmann, 2005:47). Still, I submit, the domestic images achieved in the migration process through food become particularly obvious and meaningful, and may appear as especially controversial or even painful, because people leave their homes in multiple senses and at multiple levels (micro, meso and macro).

Researchers have analyzed certain food products as significant symbols establishing collective identities, such as Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney’s (1993) *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time*; Marshall Sahlins’ (1996) study of the meaning of sugar in Western cosmology; and Gisela Welz’s (2000) research of halloumi cheese in Cyprus. Other researchers have described the meaning of certain food products as creation of the sense of home in the migration process, such as Ayse S. Caglar’s (1999) research of *döner kebab* among Turkish migrants in Germany; Purnima Mankekar’s (2005) investigation of “India shopping” among migrants in the US; and Tsili Dolve-Gandelman’s (1990) study of the meaning of *injera* among Ethiopian Jewish women in Israel.

In the current study, I show how certain food symbols recreate the sense of the home system, on the one hand, and symbolically struggle for the freedom of

collective self-definition and agency, on the other hand. This can be inferred from citations from my field notes:

Esti (veteran resident in Israel): What are these *blini* [crepes in Russian] filled with?

Ella (immigrated to Israel in 1992, answering with a big, proud smile and challenging tone): I don't know what filling you [veteran residents] put in them, but we [migrants] fill them with caviar.

Valentina (immigrated to Israel in 1992): Russian food stores are not only for the usual kinds of foods [regularly consumed items]. It used to be a cheap store; now it is more expensive than the regular supermarket—with caviar, bacon and [smiles] *ryl'ze v pushku* [literally, “pork's face in a trough”; she uses this Russian proverb to refer playfully to the idea that Jews are lured to eat pork because of its taste, and hints that such consumption is not viewed as appropriate by veteran residents].

These citations reveal a strong emotional attachment to certain food products that connect shared symbols and one's own personal biography and associations. In referring to certain products—caviar and pork—they erect a border between “we” and “them” and question what is appropriate and legitimate for “us” and “them.” Moreover, the quotes can be perceived as challenging collective positioning: Ella attempts to present migrants as opulent eaters, as a rich group who usually add caviar to the *blini*. Valentina deals with the oxymoron “Jewish pork” humorously, countering that ex-Soviet Jews in Israel are made to feel guilty for their consumption of pork.

Pork sausages and caviar have become central signifiers of Russian food stores in Israel. However, both are used in a particular way—as key symbols in advertisements for grocery stores where they can be purchased (e.g., the Russian store Teremok or the non-kosher meat factory Valdman; see Figures 1 and 2). I found the following signifiers on the wall by the entrance to one food store in Israel, where they seemed to serve as a manifestation of the store's identity: a framed picture of two pigs, a hanging mobile with silver pigs and a framed picture with the sentence “Life has been a success!” written in black caviar on a background of red caviar (Figure 3).

Symbolic meaning of pork



Figure 1: The Russian store, Teremok.

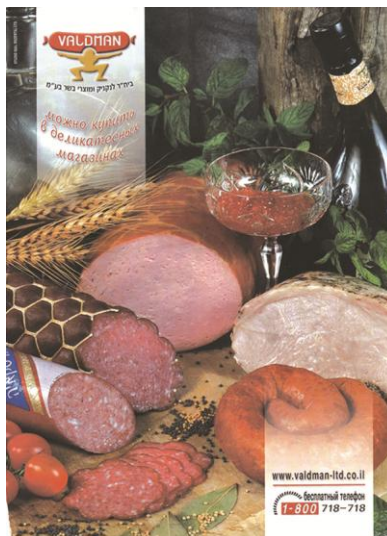


Figure 2: The non-kosher meat factory, Valdman.



Figure 3: “Life has been a success!” written in black caviar on a background of red caviar. Photo taken in a Russian food store.

The purchase and use of culturally and politically loaded food products that present different national tales involve an encounter between collective identities and symbolic social self-position in relation to the food products. Thus, consumption of special foods, such as pork or caviar, can serve a group of migrants as a marker of the imagined community (Anderson, 1991) or as imagined status markers whose collective affiliation is perpetually negotiated, rebuilt and redefined. During my fieldwork in Israel, both pork and caviar appeared as very powerful key symbols (following Ortner, 1973) with rich and often controversial meanings. These two products epitomize different stories about collective identities, but share one significant social characteristic: while migrants wish to continue to consume them, as normally was the case in the former Soviet Union (hereafter FSU), both caviar and pork are considered to be contradictory in the context of the receiving society. Concentrating on the especially controversial symbol of pork, I show how it played a central role in the concept of national identity in Russia and Ukraine, but has attained a different meaning when ex-Soviet Jews consume it in Israel, where its image does not fit dominant local dictates of what Jews should and should not eat.¹

Methodology

This study applies qualitative methods of polyfocal or mobile ethnographic research (Marcus, 1995). In doing so, I compare two domains: the physical places in which Russian speakers live and act in Haifa,² and imaginary transnational spaces as they are created, modified and performed in the migrants' everyday praxis—verbal and non-verbal (through material culture).

Owing to the complexity of the phenomena under study, the methodologies I deemed most appropriate for collecting materials were extended periods of participant observation and open narrative interviews. Accordingly, I conducted long-term participant observations in Russian food stores in Israel (1998–2000) that also included multiple open narrative interviews with clerks and owners of shops selling Russian food products. In addition, I visited the homes of participants over a two-year period (1998–2000). Short additional periods of fieldwork in 2003–2008 enriched and validated these materials and findings.

The research population selected consisted of 30 families, comprised of 55 persons (26 couples and three unmarried women), all of whom were 48–65 years old, though most were over 50.³ This allows us to associate them with one generation and to assume that they share common memories. Their children were 15–38 years old at the time of the study. For the most part, most of the research population knew one another in their locations of origin or became acquainted in Israel through participation in institutions such as the Ulpan (Hebrew language school).

All participants in this case study had received a higher education degree in the fields of technology or humanities and immigrated from the big cities of Russia and the Ukraine. Thus, I studied a relatively homogeneous group which does not reflect the cultural mix of all immigrant groups from the FSU, or of those who became religious or so-called traditionally oriented during the Perestroika or after arrival in Israel. Most interviewees were not employed in their original profession, made their living in jobs that did not require extensive education and, consequently, were overqualified. This population arrived in Israel between 1990 and 1995, when there was a disintegration of the larger states of the Soviet Union and a development of a new constituency, the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), which bears the entire economic, social and cultural burden of the FSU.

In addition to the observations and interviews, I collected, catalogued and categorized numerous artifacts of the packaging of food products sold in the Russian food stores over the last ten years in Israel. Indeed, many of these exemplars were actually given to me by participants who concluded that this was my own unusual hobby. The assembled collection consists of thousands of artifacts organized in four thick binders, representing a multitude of images and product affiliations. This collection proved to be very rich, interesting and useful in two ways. First, the artifacts provided relevant topics for discussion during the observations and interviews. In particular, connotations and cultural messages on the packaging were

discussed with participants. This enabled me to understand their perceptions of these products and especially the contradictory, often politically laden messages found on the packaging. Second, the collection was a rich resource for conducting content analyses.

While this extensive collection proved to be very useful and insightful, I concluded that it was necessary to go beyond a semiotic analysis that involves decoding these visual materials in order to discover their implied cultural meanings (Barthes, 1957, 1964). My rationale in extending the analysis was that it would help me understand the dynamics and multiple layers of meanings observable in the field. Indeed, the inclusion of extended periods of participant observation and interviews proved to be very important components of this study. Thus, collectively, these visual materials, together with the participant observations of food practices, developed into a rich resource that complemented the verbal articulations of participants.

While conducting my fieldwork, I took into account what Bertaux referred to as “the saturation process” (1981:186–189), wherein the content of stories, behaviors and activities repeat themselves to the point of researcher anticipation and repeated confirmation of responses. It was this saturation process that defined the temporal parameters of the research.

Cultural meaning of pork consumption in Israel

Field notes:

Waitress in a non-kosher restaurant: Would you like “white meat”?
[synonym for pork in Hebrew]

Alex: Yesterday I was sad, so I went to the Russian food store and bought sour cream and bacon.

Until recently, one of the abrasively unique characteristics of Russian food stores, as distinct from most other Israeli food stores, was the absence of any *kashrut* restrictions (religious laws that define the use of kosher/non-kosher foods). Since they do not observe Judaism’s restrictions regarding food, Russian food stores draw principally on a distinctive collective identity. Yet, at the same time, they are strongly influenced by food preferences of the secular, non-Russian speaking Jewish population in Israel, the majority of which is culturally of European origin (Ashkenazi). Thus, today, about 20 years since the first Russian food stores appeared, there is a sizeable economic market oriented to Russian food culture (Kimmerling, 2004) and tendencies toward secularization of Israeli food

consumption. Both of these phenomena can be seen in transformations of Tiv Ta'am ("Quality Taste"), a non-kosher supermarket chain with 24 branches, at last count.⁴ Tiv Ta'am was founded primarily to serve the Russian-speaking population, but its significant growth, expansion and transformation occurred when its reputation as a quality, non-kosher supermarket attracted growing numbers of secular Jewish Israeli customers.

Similarly, the last wave of Russian-speaking immigration in the 1990s contributed significantly to the legitimacy of new Israeli non-kosher eating preferences in the public sphere, which previously were the preserve of a small number of restaurants known to serve "white meat" (pork) and the private sphere. Ben Porat (n.d.) claims that the significance of success in the long struggle of the Zionist secular Israeli population against religious coercion—for example, in the law prohibiting the sale of pork—epitomizes the struggle for freedom and citizens' rights in Israel.

In the Israeli context, pork is perceived by at least half of the population, which consumes exclusively kosher foods, as neither Jewish nor eatable (Gutman, 2002, cited in Ben Porat, n.d.; Shimron, 2002; Wolffsohn and Bokovoy, 2003). Additionally, there are many other people in Israel who neither observe the laws of the kosher kitchen nor eat pork. Contextually, pork has a rich historical involvement in Jewish life in the Diaspora, as it is associated with the persecution of Jews over thousands of years when, despite the threat to their lives, many refused to surrender to pressure by dominant non-Jewish ruling groups to eat it (Ben Porat, n.d., citing research of Barak Erez, 2003).

Although approximately half of the total Jewish Israeli population today keeps kosher exclusively (observes kashrut laws; see Ben Porat, n.d.; Shimron, 2002),⁵ very few non-kosher food stores existed to serve the other half, the secular population, prior to the arrival of the last migration wave from the FSU. Thus, until recently, the kosher supermarket was supposed to (and symbolically did) represent the central element of Jewish Israeli culture. However, the last immigration wave from the FSU was involved in the broad and rapid development of non-kosher markets in Israel. Amidst various confrontations between inner Israeli groups, this innovation continues to have an impact on Israel's cultural character in significant ways. For example, just as *Döner* has come to be perceived in Germany as a synonym for *Ausländer* (foreigners, a negatively loaded word) in general, and for Turks in particular (Caglar, 1999), so the sale and significantly increased consumption of *basar hazir* (pork) in Israel has become metonymic for Russians/Russianness in Israel.

The significant changes caused by Russian speakers in Israel are welcomed by some, but reviled, argued against and denied by others. The religious and *masorati* (traditionalist) segments of the Jewish Israeli population perceive non-kosher food stores as anti-kosher and as a Russian intervention in the proper Jewish Israeli collective. This view is shared by some Israeli researchers. For example, the social scientist, Mordecai Friedman, warned the Jewish Israeli reader in his 1995 article,

“Cultural integration of the immigrants from the CIS,” about the potential influence of Russian migration on Israeli society in general, and its impact on the constellation of collective Jewish cultural identity in particular. Friedman includes the following observation about Russian food stores among his claims about the negative expression of undesirable influence:

Immigrants from the CIS have opened hundreds of shops that sell pork. State laws forbidding the sale of pork are insufficient to prevent the increasing number of factories and enterprises of this kind. ... Until now it was appropriate in Israel that 90% of the population did not consume pork and one could hardly find shops selling pork. Today, in contrast, every citizen can identify shops that declare in Russian and Hebrew that “the pork era has arrived in our land” (1995:65).⁶

Thus, both historically and in contemporary Jewish Israel, pork is regarded as an anti-key symbol of collective Jewish identity employed to establish the desired boundaries between the excluded—those (foreigners) who consume pork—and “proper” Jews who refrain from consuming it.

Representing a taboo symbol, pork was traditionally perceived by Jews as one of the most central images of impurity. As such, it functioned to draw clear boundaries around the Jewish collective. Further, following Mary Douglas (1966), pork can be seen to reflect a given social order and status claims. The negative connotation and impurity connected with this meat is mediated by means of the non-naming of the product. That is, it is usually identified in Hebrew on the packaging, wrapping papers, ads and in some menus in non-kosher restaurants discreetly and non-descriptively as “white meat,” “white steak,” “other meat,” or with the Russian word *salo* (bacon) written in Hebrew letters on the labels of products in non-kosher stores (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Russian word *salo* (bacon) written in Hebrew letters on the labels of products in non-kosher stores.

Advertisements for Russian food stores portray an abundance of different kinds of sausages, with very few references to or images of pigs. The presumption in advertisements by Tiv Ta'am and Ma'adanei Mizra seems to be that consumers know sausages are made from pork. Further, when reference is made to a pig, it is through allusion and very restrained, such as the advertisement for Ma'adanei Mizra's smoked bacon (Figure 4). This advertisement displays a package of *Kopchenoe Salo* (smoked speck/bacon in Russian). The product's name is written in Russian letters translated into Hebrew in a very interesting manner: the marketing designer translated only the word "smoked" into Hebrew (*meu'shenet*), using the Russian word *salu* written in Hebrew letters instead of bacon (*katlei hazir* in Hebrew)—hence, using a word not understandable to anyone who does not know Russian. On the right side of the package, three very inconspicuous images of pigs are drawn with fine black lines. Presumably, the package was designed to avoid irritating potential Israeli consumers with use of negatively loaded concepts in the Hebrew language.

The oxymoronic "Jewish pork" problem has been treated in a number of creative ways. Some restaurants employ shared knowledge and language about deviance from a norm. For example, Nest, a Russian-speaking restaurant in Tel Aviv, named a menu *Tainaya Vecherya* (literally, "secret supper" in Russian, referring to the Last Supper). Here spareribs, basted using a "secret" recipe, are assigned an interesting role, as the item diverts attention from a transformative process that the dominant Jewish Israeli culture expects of recent arrivals—the Russian-speaking Jews. This process involves avoidance of the ongoing confrontation between two contradictory concepts: the habitual consumption of pork, as accepted in non-Jewish European Diaspora culture, is to be abandoned in favor of "proper" Jewish Israeli behavior.

Other strategies have been employed to cope with contradictions between Jewish religious tradition and secular Jewish identity. For example, on Kibbutz Mizra,⁷ the main producer of pork meat, pigs for slaughter live on raised wooden planks so that this *ta'meh* (impure) animal does not touch the holy earth of Israel.

As the consumption of pork became more visible and grew in scale throughout the 1990s, so the ferocity and passion of statements made by members of Knesset (the unicameral legislature of Israel) from orthodox religious parties and by religious citizens intensified. In their view, the pork industry and pork consumption threatened their attempts to impose and preserve an illusionary image of a homogeneous country embracing Judaic tradition and culture. In ways similar to the language used by Professor Friedman, this rhetoric employed abusive images to refer to those who consume or produce pork meat. Members of Kibbutz Mizra were blamed by one Knesset member from a religious party for producing and acting like pigs (Macintyre, 2007). Religious citizens in Carmiel held up placards such as "Pigs, go back to Russia!" during a demonstration against non-kosher stores. Some Russian food stores have been set afire in Jerusalem, causing owners to block off the facade of their store with iron grating.

In this discourse, people who consume pork are reproached for transgressing laws that underpin the imagined community of Jewish Israelis. Furthermore, they are represented as having internalized into their personality, through eating, a number of harmful characteristics associated with pigs in popular Jewish culture. Such arguments seem to assume that consuming a polluted, forbidden substance, as defined by religious law, causes a symbolic transformation of a person's spirit and personality, and for this they should be socially and culturally ostracized. Thus, in common parlance, "Russians" often means persons with negative attributions of pigs. This rhetorical device of metonymy is employed and largely adopted in popular culture by non-Russian Jewish Israelis.

Clearly, food matters in Israel. Indeed, the evidence suggests that far from being a private matter of individual choice, as in the maxim "you can't argue with taste" (i.e., taste is a private matter), the aspiration to define, preserve and reinforce collective identities includes imposing a national cuisine. This affirms Mintz's (2003) claim that persons or a group who eat similar foods are also perceived to possess similar features. Hence, such persons assume that they are more like us in other respects and we will have more in common with them, in general, in contrast to those who eat in a manner different from us and who seem to be different (Mintz, 2003:28).

While one segment of the non-Russian speaking population enjoyed the secularization process of Israeli food practices and the possibilities afforded "to taste [foods] from all over the world" (as stated in the logo of the Tiv Ta'am supermarket chain), many individuals from different groups and Jewish religious parties criticized and issued new threats in their efforts to preserve what they perceived to be the traditional and moral image of what is "properly Jewish." For example, residents solicited signatures against an attempt to open a new branch of Tiv Ta'am in a Haifa neighborhood in 2006. They claimed this chain was a non-Jewish practice imposed on their lives. Similarly, in 2007, the media carried debates over plans of a Russian immigrant billionaire, Arkady Gaydamak, who disclosed in an interview that, following his recent purchase of 51% of the stock of Tiv Ta'am, he was going to purchase the remaining shares and make the entire chain abide by such Jewish laws as keeping kosher and Shabbat closure (Macintyre, 2007), as well as to open new branches in Jerusalem (Petersburg, 2007).⁸ After hot and often strident exchanges in the media, in which Gaydamak openly referred to Jews who ate pork as "pig-faced," he retreated from his plans and the transaction did not take place.

Different kinds of pork products and other non-kosher foods (non-kosher cheese, shrimp, mussels, ostrich eggs, lobster) appeared on the Israeli market, but still did not become a part of the normative Jewish Israeli cultural-symbolic landscape. For example, the Israeli journalist Orna Efet called her 2007 newspaper article *Lavan baEinaiim* (literally, "white in the eyes," this can be liberally translated as "everything went white"). The title plays on the expression "everything went black," which in Hebrew can also be used to express shock. The author replaces it with "everything went white" because in Israel pork is usually called "white meat."

In her article, she presents consumers of non-kosher products as “gluttons of shrimp and pork sausages” and describes the development of the Israeli non-kosher market 17 years after the massive migration of Russian-speaking Jews:

The non-kosher Israeli market has experienced a real boom over the past years. In Israel, pigs, rabbits and ostriches are grown; non-kosher fish is cultivated. In our state [*ba'arez*], *terefah* [non-kosher] sausages, salamis and meat products are produced; red and black caviar, expensive cheese, shrimp, mussels and lobsters are imported here.... “Today only 7% of Israeli people [referring to the resident population] consumes non-kosher food products,” says the director general of the Tiv Ta’am network, Dubi Shneidman. “According to statistics, 50% of our population leads a secular style of life. All of them are our potential clients” (Efet, 2007).

This citation illustrates a highly emotional and political topic: namely, who has the right to define what is “our state” and the right to change it. It seems that there are culturally sanctioned proclivities and, accordingly, attempts to attain strong political mandates in Israel to impose and regulate the food preferences of the Jewish collective. In doing so, attempts are being made to assert that the political mandates are not only connected to Jewish religious tradition, but also interpreted to be national signifiers. In this sense, the non-kosher character of Russian food stores continues to be seen by the dominant Jewish community in Israel not only as a challenge to the presumed religious consensus about the proper and desired homogeneous image of being Jewish, but also as a provocation by the Jewish Russian community and their representatives to express a non-Jewish identity and acceptance of not belonging to the Jewish collective.

Yet, for Jews from the FSU, Jewish affiliation has a completely different meaning, which has grown primarily through historical circumstances, as well as through the values and ideologies of their politically driven socialization. In their view, consuming pork does not contradict their Jewishness. For most, food consumption and habits in general, and kosher food regulations in particular, are associated with a concept of Judaism symbolized by their grandparents’ religiously centered, pre-Revolution life in shtetls. Given their negative, socialized view of religious-driven practices, they aspire to distance themselves from this world as much as possible. Hence, the taboo on the consumption of pork is viewed as obsolete or religious atavism that cannot be part of a new socialist life. Contrary to the absolute taboo of pork in traditional Jewish culture and the collective historical experience in which Jews were humiliated by being forced to consume or come in contact with this taboo product throughout the centuries in Europe,⁹ culturally assimilated and atheist Soviet Jews do not consider it taboo in any sense. Thus, the question, “Don’t you eat pork?”, is transformed and viewed humorously by Russian-speaking Jews, even though in the Soviet context it remained a rhetorical anti-Semitic question used by non-Jewish outsiders as an exclusion mechanism that had

little to do with actual everyday practice, but rather was a way to confirm generalized Otherness.

Thus, a kosher kitchen in general, and the symbol of pork in particular, were not a concern in the everyday lives of Soviet Jews. To be a *yevrei*, a Jew in the Soviet sense of nationality, was considered to be and remains a matter of birth. It does not have to be established through the daily performance of rituals or traditions. Shternshis (2006) concluded that, for Russian-speaking Jews, there is a significant dissociation between kosher food practices and their being Jewish. Accordingly, it is very interesting to note how pork developed a new meaning among Soviet Jews, quite distant from being a central key symbol of impurity used to draw the boundaries of the Jewish collective and to define the limits of those who belong and those who are different. In the interviews conducted in Israel with people who grew up in the big cities of Russia or the Ukraine, pork symbolized a “successful household,” “the warmth of home,” “the wealth and prosperity of family life” and thus was often considered desired normativity in everyday praxis. This recalls the meaning of *injera* for Ethiopian Jewish migrants in Israel (Dolve-Gandelman, 1990). For example, participants from the Ukraine frequently associated food with the family that eats borscht, the main soup in the Ukraine, made with pork, vegetables and beet root. Lard (juicy fat pork) was also considered a particularly tasty food that gives strength and is needed for children’s growth. The participants spoke repeatedly about pork as the “right,” “real,” “authentic” meat. Moreover, many kinds of sausage—especially smoked varieties—were desired, but often unavailable in the deficit Soviet economic context.

Accordingly, Russian food stores stock a variety of very popular pork sausages with interesting, even provocative names in a Jewish religious sense, for example: *Molochnaya* (“milky” in Russian) pork sausage; *Doktorskaya* (“doctoral”) ham; *Lubitelskaya* (“lovely”) mortadella salami. According to the dream of communist abundance, these were highly desired products during the Soviet period (but were generally inaccessible due to scarcity). This can be seen in *The Tasty and Healthy Food Book* (Sivolap, 1952), the well-known recipe book from the period of Stalin, or in images of capitalist abundance. Well-known products from the USSR period are available in Russian food stores in Israel, such as *Moskovskaya* (“Moscovite”), *Krakovskaya* (“Krakowian”) and *Cervelat* (special smoking process) *Poliskaya* (“Polish”). These stores also offer new and different types of pork sausages with product names such as Governor, Basturma, Smoked Bacon and Sausage of the First Class. All of these products are designed to epitomize Soviet dreams of abundance and to attract Russian-speaking consumers.¹⁰ In one case observed during my fieldwork, clerks in a Russian food store in Haifa noticed that consumers were asking for special types of sausage: “Do you have Finland salami?” or “I am looking for small Odessa sausages.” After a while, they decided to put Soviet names on similar Israeli sausages. If consumers, having tasted them, said that the sausage tasted different from the original, the clerk answered: “I am afraid that this sausage may be kosher; you know, after all it has been produced here in Israel.”

Symbolic meaning of pork

Interestingly, among the investigated group of Russian-speaking Jews, sausages were associated much more with a wealthy life than with unhealthy food or, even less frequently, with being a negative, anti-Jewish symbol.¹¹ Indeed, on the basis of my fieldwork, the opposite seems to have been the case. Pork was perceived as a healthy food, vital for a wealthy life. Indeed, one pork dish in the Nest restaurant is called “Viagra”—a humorous reference to the potency of this product.

Another example of the role of pork sausage in migrant perceptions appeared frequently in the Russian-speaking Israeli media in the form of self-abrogation through use of the approbation *kolbasnaya aliya* (“sausage immigration,” in Russian). This phrase is tightly linked with the popular disparaging Hebrew statement about Russian speakers *hem bau bishvil naknik* (“they came for sausage”).¹² Both phrases refer to those whose main motivation for immigration to Israel was to advance economic interests. Such denotations “work” because they refer to shared knowledge and judgment in Israel in which a clear distinction is made between legitimate (i.e., Zionist) and illegitimate reasons for immigration (i.e., personal economic reasons). Thus, a desire to escape humiliating food lines—where FSU residents spent most of their free time waiting in hopes of receiving a prestigious sausage—via migration is framed negatively for people who shunt ideological Zionist goals for the sake of sausage.

The dissociation between Jewishness and Judaism and positive pork connotations completely contradict the historic, traditional understanding of pork among Jews in Israel. Indeed, a popular joke in Israel describes a statement supposedly made by an orthodox Jew as he points to meat in the shop and says:

I would like this beautiful chicken.

The clerk replies: But it is pork.

The customer answers: I did not ask what it is called. I would like this beautiful chicken.

In the FSU, on the other hand, a popular joke describes a Ukrainian’s diet:

The Russian says: Morning—bacon, afternoon—bacon, evening—bacon.

The Ukrainian replies: It’s not true. I wake up at night, too!

Although Nikolai (an informant in Israel) sees himself as a Jew, pork is inseparable from his sense of personal identity. He articulates this perspective by contrasting it to the local Israeli Middle Eastern traditions that he disdains: “To finish it off [*lenagev*] with pita is to betray the pork.” Nikolai uses the Hebrew word *lenagev*, referring to the use of pita instead of a fork when eating hummus.

Interestingly, pork represents for Nikolai a symbol of Russian (European) cultural affiliation, rather than an indication of Jewish roots that one “betrays” through consumption of pita as the embodiment of Oriental food practices, which are in his view barbaric. Acting through the European-Oriental dichotomy, Nikolai’s statement is not the opinion of a lone bigot, but rather representative of a common judgment heard among research participants about the “civilized,” “cultural” and claimed-to-be “normal” European traditions of food consumption brought to the “wild” Oriental Israel, as personified by eating with one’s hands—“to finish it off with pita.” A similar logic is intended in the statement by Faina concerning food placed in pita: “I don’t eat these falafels” (referring to inappropriate Israeli-Oriental food habits). These examples demonstrate how internalized socialization to accusations related to food nationalism has been extended to those who “eat like pigs” (and are accused of being “pigs”), whereas others betray the nationalist (Soviet) practice by refraining from consuming pork (religious Jews) while eating foreign Oriental food with primitive manners. The large expanse of the Russian-speaking population in Israel enables many immigrants to feel that they are part of a big collective that positions itself—sometimes in quite an arrogant manner—as European cultural Others who are proud of their cultural Russian (Soviet) heritage and who aspire to change—that is, to Europeanize or civilize—the receiving society.

In purchasing non-kosher products in a Russian food store, many immigrants express longing for “proper” (i.e., original) ham/bacon. Indeed, one of the most appreciated of all gifts that a Russian-speaking guest from the CIS or from Germany can bring a Russian speaker in Israel is a “good” ham or package of bacon. Not only does such a present symbolize Russian and European culture, it arouses memories and emotions among Russian speakers. For example:

Felix: Now, I would really like to have a pork steak with bone. To eat something *normal*!

Karina: I still remember the way we went to school. Every day I had a sandwich with butter, cheese and bacon.

Interestingly, attachment to eating pork continued many years after migration, even when many of the Israeli participants became interested in traditional Jewish religious practices. Accordingly, while many started to light candles on the Sabbath, as a manifestation of symbolic Jewish ethnicity, most continued to consume pork.

Further evidence of attachment to eating pork is reflected in advertisements of Russian food stores, in which the availability of pork (missing, of course, from non-Russian, kosher food stores in Israel) is presented as one of the main reasons to visit. For example, the advertisement of Ma’adanei Manya (“Manya’s Delicatessen”; see Figure 5) includes a statement (in Russian) about the availability of an abundance of non-kosher meat:

Such renowned, refined a taste. Yes, yes, right here. We prepare and sell such sophisticated meat products, familiar since childhood. No doubt you will be astounded by the shining cleanliness, rich assortment and exciting smells. “Doctoral” sausage, cooked ham, drumsticks, raw smoked sausage, liver sausage, blood sausage, sturgeon, fat weeping rose salmon—all only the best freshness. ... Special prices in the meat department on Saturday [the Sabbath, when all other stores in the Jewish sector of Israel are closed].



Figure 5: Russian-language advertisement of Ma'adanei Manya.

Another advertisement in the Russian language invites patronage at a branch of Tiv Ta'am (Figure 6):

At last a branch of Tiv Ta'am has come to the north, close to your home. It will probably be the biggest of all. Just think about all kinds of meat that you can taste. About our gigantic meat department and high quality delicacies—frozen and fresh, low in fat, red and white, smoked and dried. ... Just imagine all this! And that's not all. There is a huge selection of fish, salads, sauces and breads. Everything tastes good. You can find everything you are looking for in the supermarket, we mean really EVERYTHING Open all day Saturday.



Figure 6: Advertisement at the opening of a branch of the non-kosher supermarket chain, Tiv Ta'am.

Of course, such memories stand in complete contradiction to traditional Jewish Israeli norms of Jewish identity. On the basis of the current research, it appears that pork can embody two diametrically opposed cultural key symbols, representing different collectives. These collectives represent two diametrically opposed cultural systems, making it difficult for them to coexist and to identify one another as being members of one Jewish collective.

Because of the strong distinction in the Russian language between *yevrei* (Jew) and *iudei* (religious Jew), Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union—most of whom were avowed atheists—could incorporate the key symbol of the dominant group in which they grew up (Russia, as well as the Ukraine) without it affecting their understanding or contradicting their sense of Jewishness. The legitimacy and normativity of consuming pork for the atheist Soviet Jews did not include the necessity for self-justification in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, given their context, Russian-speaking Jews can be differentiated from other Diaspora Jews, where the Jewish tradition carried on despite persecution and outside pressure and underwent its own ways of development and change (the major exception being the period of the Spanish Inquisition). For Jews in the European Diaspora, the emancipation process was not automatically accompanied by a decision to consume pork. Indeed, to this very day, it continues to be a delicate and problematic issue.

Soviet Jews, in contrast, were exposed to significantly different historical processes. Religious connotations and associations were suppressed in tandem with what seemed to be a promise of equality for all citizens of the Soviet Union. Thus, the consumption of pork by Soviet Jews had three additional aspects. First, it corresponded with the trend toward secularization of Jews who moved to the big cities after the Revolution. In the post-Revolution period in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev or Kharkov, for example, traditional rituals threatened to connect them to their Jewish religious families from the shtetl from whom they were trying to distance themselves (Slezkine, 2004). Second, the decision to consume pork cannot be considered to have been a matter of free choice, even for future generations of

participants (children of those who actively participated in the Revolution and building of the new Soviet state). These were the generations exposed to forced Soviet secularization and prohibitions placed on practice of the Jewish tradition in general, and restrictions on the consumption of pork in particular. Indeed, the consumption of pork by the participants' cohort generation cannot be considered an "advance," as in conscious emancipation or liberation from religious prejudices, but rather a matter of limitation and deprivation of Jewish cultural attributes and free choice. Third, questions such as "Do you eat pork?" or "Is it kosher?" had strong anti-Semitic connotations in the Soviet Union and, hence, can be considered stigmatizations. Such questions seem to be an attempt to stress the non-belonging of Jews to the Soviet collective, as well as to construct significant Otherness, even though everyone knew that Jewish rituals were forbidden. While such questions were consistent with the normative stress in Russian culture on belonging, they also reinforced many Jews' anti-Semitic experiences. Consequently, from their point of view, the consumption of pork has neither any connection to nor contradicts the Russian-speakers' perceptions of being Jewish.

The data collected in this study correspond with Shternshis' (2006) analyses of Russian-speaking Jews in Russia, Germany and the US. Among her many supportive citations, she cited an 82-year-old woman residing in Brooklyn: "This is how to cook kosher pork...because only a Jewish soul can make food kosher" (Shternshis, 2006:13). Here, a perception of being Jewish is evident that is very different from the religious worldview: she stresses essential Jewishness (given by birth, according to the Soviet understanding of nationality) as more significant than laws of the kosher kitchen that are foreign to Soviet Jews.

Such views were transported with the immigrants and caused conflicts soon after their arrival in Israel, when some recent arrivals gave their children sandwiches with pork/ham/bacon to eat in their midday meal at school, unaware they were breaking a strong norm—bring only kosher milk products to school (i.e., no meat and definitely no non-kosher meat). Acting through common practices in their home of origin, they could not foresee the potential conflict for their child with local pupils and the accompanying threat of exclusion.

Pork as Russian food? Contextualizing pork consumption in broad transnational praxis

Fundamentally, by satisfying the needs and habits of its population, the Russian-speaking enclave in general, and Russian food stores in particular, are a form of transnational self-positioning and means of coping with a number of challenges: the new socio-cultural environment, the new economic system with its various forms of abundance, and transformations in their society of origin. Accordingly, it would be a mistake to assume that Russian food stores only sell Russian food. Looking more

closely, one can see that within this framework consumers are exposed to a wide variety of symbols from different cultures and even nations.

Accordingly, the combination of different worlds within the food store presents what I have identified as seven possible worlds of meaning observed in these settings. First, the Jewish Diaspora meal, including ingredients as well as prepared dishes—for example, gefilte fish, *farshmak* herring salad, *pashtet* liver cream, *roglach* (sweet rolls with chocolate and raisins) and *kneidlach* (dumplings)—was present in Israeli Russian food stores. Second, Russian stores incorporated many different Israeli food articles—such as hummus, eggplant salad, *tehina* (sesame paste), *burekas* (puff pastry with cheese, potato or vegetable filling), couscous grains (rolled semolina) and *ikra* salad—that have come to symbolize a multicultural culinary integration which has been evolving over 60 years of immigration into an emerging national cuisine. Third, different products produced in Israel or imported from Russia that employ symbols of Zionism or the Jewish religion and that are oriented to Russian-speaking consumers were found, such as the Israeli flag on a package of coffee; a depiction of Jews praying at the Western Wall on a box of chocolates (Figure 7); a street scene from the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem on a bread label; and subtle references to the Zionist settlement in Israel through depictions of Jewish Israelis harvesting wheat on a bread package. Fourth, there were many products from different republics of the FSU. Fifth, there were products from different countries throughout the world. Sixth, these stores also sell products from contemporary, nationalized Russia, as well as products from the CIS, advertised in Russian-speaking programs broadcasted from these countries.



Figure 7: Chocolate box “Jerusalem” manufactured by Laima, a Lithuanian firm.

On key symbols

Sherry Ortner (1973) elaborated the concept of key symbols as key elements or symbolic units of cultures, based on Schneider's (1968) "core symbols," Turner's (1967) "dominant symbols" and Pepper's (1947) concept of "root metaphors." Ortner analyzes the system "for its underlying elements, i.e., cognitive distinctions, value orientations, etc.—then look[s] around in the culture for some figure or image which seems to formulate, in relatively pure form, the underlying orientations exposed in the analysis" (1973:1338). Four out of five reasons she gives for focusing on certain symbols in the analysis can be applied to pork:

1. Participants tell you that this symbol is culturally important (in the current case, it draws the distinction between Jewish religious and secular collective identities in the perspective of atheist socialized participants).
2. Participants seem positively or negatively aroused by this symbol, rather than indifferent (pork is a traditionally negative symbol for Jews).
3. The symbol comes up in many different contexts, kinds of action, conversations or symbolic domains (as, for example, in discussions of proper Jewishness or wealthy family life in the Ukraine).
4. There are greater cultural religious restrictions surrounding the symbol and rules or sanctions regarding its misuse (participants took critical reference to this, as the "secular kosher certificate" shows—see below).

Following Ortner, pork can be considered a "summarizing key symbol," as it is "summing up, expressing, representing for the participants in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way, what the system means to them" (Ortner, 1973:1339). However, rather than symbolizing cultural respect (as Ortner formulates the central characteristic of summarizing key symbols), pork symbolizes cultural disrespect. As an ideal type, the summarizing key symbol "stands for the system as a whole" (Ortner, 1973:1339)—in the current case, for the Jewish system as a whole and consequently excluding in a very generalized and stereotyped way those who do not share negative reference to the symbol of pork. At the same time, some aspects of the symbol of pork can be considered "elaborating key symbols" that provide "orientations" for its members and are "translatable into orderly action" (Ortner, 1973:1340), as pork is regarded in the current case as an inedible, impure and dangerous object (Douglas, 1966). Because all references to this symbol have a negative character and symbolize Others who do not belong to the Jewish identity, I call it an "anti-key symbol" and analyze the transformations of this symbol upon the arrival of Russian Jews to Israel from the 1990s onward.

Struggle for the right to be Jewish in their own way

Pork consumption demonstrates and reflects the collision of two national narratives. It could be claimed that pork has become a symbol of identity for the Russian enclave in Israel. Moreover, different field observations point to the involvement of Russian-speaking Jews in Israel in an active struggle for their right to be Jewish in ways they desire. Furthermore, there are interesting new combinations among what seems to be oxymoronic Jewish pork products. For example, a Jewish New Year Greeting, *Shana Tova* (Happy New Year), is written in Hebrew letters along with a picture of a holiday basket containing pork sausages (including one entitled “Soviet”), sheaves of wheat (Soviet symbols for bread, harvesting), apples and wine (traditional Jewish symbols eaten in the festive New Year) (Figure 8). Following thousands of years of festive celebrations, the addition of pork is an anathema to traditionalist Jews and would have been impossible in Israel prior to the Russian-speaking immigration.

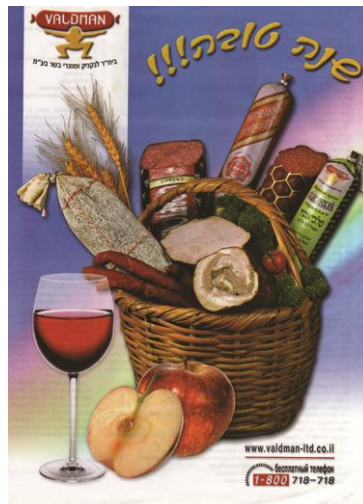


Figure 8: Basket with pork sausages (including one entitled “Soviet”), wheat sheaves (Soviet symbol for harvest and abundance), apples and wine (traditional Jewish symbols at New Year meals).

Another interesting example that demonstrates a struggle to eat non-kosher and still identify oneself as being Jewish was found tacked on the wall of a Russian food

Symbolic meaning of pork

store. This artifact consisted of a pseudo-oxymoronic “secular kosher certificate,” with the following text (in Hebrew):

The owner of this enterprise maintains high standards of sanitation and hygiene, takes great care in selecting a variety of products, and is proud of the quality of service provided to customers. This is done without any control by the rabbinate.

In contrast to his “kosher” colleagues, the owner promises not to pass along additional fees from the rabbinate so that customers do not have to support [religious] malingerers nor contribute to building religious colleges [yeshivas].

The owner of this enterprise does not need rabbinical certification to declare his right to be considered a Jew and an Israeli.

The owner claims that in a democratic state no one has a right to dictate what anyone may or may not be permitted to eat. Signed: *Shinui* [“change”].

This document states, directly and unequivocally, a position that is clearly unfriendly to Israeli religious institutions regarding the legitimacy for customers to identify themselves as Jewish and Israeli while still consuming pork; the right to make personal decisions regarding food preferences; and the right to oppose religious usurpation and control of the public sphere.

The struggle for the right to decide how to be Jewish is, of course, not the sole preserve of Russian speakers in Israel. However, Russian Jews in Israel have influenced the scale and pace of change in the nature of the standards, tastes and symbols used by dominant non-Russian-speaking local groups. Indeed, despite the controversy over food preferences and the non-kosher Russian-developed chain of supermarkets, Tiv Ta’am continues to be frequented by non-Russian speakers. While production and consumption of pork continue to be an openly debated issue in the public sphere, it has become part of the new Israeli multicultural national cuisine. Indeed, there is evidence of increasing numbers of secular Jewish Israelis whose everyday consumption incorporates foods perceived to be not only inappropriate, but taboo if not amoral, 20 years ago.¹³ In a real sense, the success of Tiv Ta’am stores, with their global, multicultural, open, transnational nature displayed on its shelves, was made possible by the last wave of Russian-speaking migration. The direct consequence has been a confrontation with basic key symbols of cultural identity.

Golden wrote that Israeli falafels and oranges “lost their innocence... and became saturated with national connotation” (2005:187). The growth vector of pork is headed in the opposite direction—from a national anti-key symbol of the Jewish

Israeli collective to regularly consumed food. By introducing a broad spectrum of non-kosher small stores, Russian-speaking Jewish entrepreneurs (together with the owners of Tiv Ta'am, who survived pressure on the market thanks primarily to Russian-speaking customers) realized the latent desire of many secular Israelis of different origins. Introducing numerous new non-kosher products (from rabbit and ostrich to shrimp and lobster) from different countries gave legitimization to evolving Israeli culinary habits. Russian stores and Tiv Ta'am brought to Israel the limitless abundance of which ex-Soviet citizens, as well as many secular resident Israelis, had dreamed and that had not been possible before in Israel and the FSU, albeit for very different reasons. Thus, while conflicts raged about different ways of being Jewish, which challenged a common national symbol, cultural heterogeneity grew in legitimacy and became more visible.

It is interesting to note that, in the immigration from the Soviet Union as a Diaspora context to Israel as "national homeland," the consumption of pork made a significant transformation from being a normative part of the local food tradition to a controversial one. In the Soviet Union, dominant atheist policy and norms did not approve of any expression of religious tradition and, consequently, any restrictions on food practices on the basis of religion. As a result, Jews were expected to consume pork in a manner similar to dominant Russian or Ukrainian groups, for example. In Israel, dominant policy and norms proved exactly the opposite. However, participants reacted differently to the given hegemonies and expectations to adjust to the given order. While in the Soviet Union they internalized anti-religious politics and forced cultural homogenization, in Israel they perceived themselves as part of an empowered majority which has the right to a voice and influence. Consequently, participants saw kosher laws in the public sphere as a significant restriction of their freedom and personal agency.

Despite the heterogeneous character of different migrant groups from the FSU, I claim that findings from fieldwork with participants from Russia and the Ukraine, together with the scale of the non-kosher industry in Israel, make some generalizations about transformations of pork meanings in Israel possible. It seems that pork consumption of Russian speakers in Israel turned out to be a key symbol of their resistance to religious indoctrination, as well as their desire for and involvement in developing an independent collective identity and self-sufficient community. There seems to be a certain status conflict of people as part of the Jewish majority (and empowered group), on the one hand, and their status of migrants (often deprived of social power and seen as a weak minority), on the other hand. While Jewish identity of veterans in Israel is usually taken for granted, newcomers are often expected to give explanations and to transform their identities. Thus, Israeli ideas about the immigrants' position in Israel, as people who have to be taught to become "properly Jewish" (Golden, 2002), has influenced the way in which not only religious, but also many secular Israeli residents speak with suspicion and doubt about the Jewish identity of Russian speakers. For example, Reuven, the observant Jewish Israeli-born spouse of the daughter of a participant,

formulated this situation as an indicator of power relationships and tensions in Israel: “If you dress in a short skirt and eat pork in Israel and you are an Israeli [meaning Jew born in Israel], it is normal [or you have right to]. But, if you are Russian, then you are a prostitute and are not Jewish.”

Thus, participants were exposed to pressure to explain and justify their non-kosher food habits as evidence of their suspect Jewishness. While consumption of pork in Israel was often seen by religious and observant groups as a disturbing form of Otherness, non-kosher habits of Russian-speaking Jews significantly influenced new consumption practices of other groups and contributed to legitimating plural food practices and hybrid identities in the public discourse.

The meaning of the food key symbol—pork—has been analyzed through its changing role in transnational praxis after crossing national borders through the act of immigration from the Soviet Union to Israel. Following the discussion of pork as an anti-key symbol of collective Jewish identity, certain important issues can be raised for further theoretical analysis. It is evident that such unidimensional thinking through one dominant category, as well as “cultural purity” or “ethnic absolutism” (Feischmidt, 2007; Hall, 1994), cannot be considered relevant analytic categories. The generalized nature of summarizing key symbols implies dichotomized, binary structured either-or terms of discussion (as Jew or as Russian), which become problematic when people pretend/aspire to treat and present several of their multiple collective affiliations and identities simultaneously. Heterogeneous and multiple identities usually possess different social statuses which can contradict each other (being part of the well-educated Soviet intelligentsia and at the same time being at the bottom of the social hierarchy in the new society). Thus, different identities are located in the hierarchy of dominant cultures or “cultural hegemony” (Gramsci, cited in Auernheimer, 2010). In this context, we can speak of “diversity in the context of dominant cultures,” when actors are exposed to the pressure of being normal (Munsch, 2010). As active transnational social agents, people aspire to have freedom in their self-presentation as belonging to more than one dimension, as for example Israelis, Jews, well-educated people and simultaneously cultivating elements of Russian culture. Combining multiple and sometimes contradictory cultural elements and national identities, they create their own niches of “doing being ordinary” (Sacks, 1984), and, as a minority group, they struggle for legitimacy of their own normative categories as a part of the Israeli pluralist cultural mosaic. In further research, it would be interesting to analyze the “melting” or transformation process of other key symbols in a multicultural society characterized by transnational practices.

NOTES

¹ Whether animal derivatives are considered to be kosher depends on their nature as an animal, slaughter procedures and manner of preparation. The pig is considered to be a non-kosher animal because it does not meet two biblical criteria for kosher food: the animal must have cloven hooves and chew its cud. Since fish require scales and fins to be considered kosher, black caviar is not kosher because it is issued by the sturgeon, a fish that lacks scales. In contrast, roe/caviar from salmon is considered kosher.

² Haifa has become the symbol of the latest wave of Russian immigration and is presented as a Russian city in the Russian language press.

³ One of the spouses was a little bit older or younger than this age in several cases.

⁴ Tiv Ta'am is the only supermarket in the Jewish sector of Israel that is open on Saturday, the traditional Jewish Sabbath.

⁵ Different studies claim that 50%–56% of the Jewish Israeli population eat kosher and 50%–54% do not eat *teref* products (defined by rabbinical law to be impure). The larger percentages (56% and 54%, respectively) were given by Gutman (2002), as cited in Ben Porat (n.d.). According to the Dahaf Survey of 2001, 50% of the Jewish Israeli population describes themselves as orthodox, religious or traditional (Wolffsohn and Bokovoy, 2003). Consequently, one can assume that at least 50% would not eat pork, as doing so is a violation of religious laws as well as of the Jewish traditional orientation. On the other hand, 50% reportedly do not keep kosher and eat all manner of food, usually when traveling abroad.

⁶ By "Israel," Friedman refers to Jewish Israelis. This is a gloss commonly made by Jewish Israelis who, in doing so, neglect to recognize that nearly 20% of the state's citizens are Arabs of Christian or Muslim faith. Christians eat pork and, consequently, grocery stores in their communities sell pork-related products. Until Tiv Ta'am and other Russian food stores made pork products available, these Christian stores were one of the main sources of the food for secular Jewish Israelis.

⁷ Mizra is a kibbutz in the Yezreel Valley (in the northern part of Israel) that has been producing pork since before the establishment of the state. It could neither sell its products in most Jewish Israeli shops nor advertise them publicly until the massive Russian-speaking Jewish immigration to Israel.

⁸ Gaydamak's actions coincided with the run-up of his campaign for mayor of Jerusalem, a city in which religious Jews are the majority.

⁹ Diemling (2005:86), for example, in her analysis of anti-Semitic descriptions of Frankfurt Jews in the eighteenth century, portrayed pranks by Christians, who forced Jews to drink from cans greased with lard or put bacon and pork sausages on the prayer bags of Jews in the synagogue.

¹⁰ For example, *Krakovskaya* sausage and *Cervelat* invoked dreams about communist abundance in Soviet times, while Governor sausage invoked later dreams about capitalist abundance. Also available were “proletarian” sausages (often referred to by Soviet citizens as “simple sausages”), such as *Doktorskaya* and *Lubitelskaya*.

¹¹ Certainly, some FSU immigrants of the last wave “returned” to the Jewish religion and/or ceased consuming pork. However, no such individuals were found among the investigated group.

¹² This humiliating sentence has an obvious association with a type of dog (dachshund) that can be easily attracted with a sausage and whose physical needs are dominant. Moreover, the Hebrew word for sausage, *naknik*, is associated with phallus, and the verb form, derived from the act of making sausage (*l'naknek*), means to deceive or trick somebody and is linguistically associated with the act of rape. Thus, the Hebrew sentence, “They came for a sausage,” can also be read as a double entendre, as “they came for a *naknik*/phallus,” or as “let’s deceive/*nenaknek* them” (i.e., put them in their place here in Israel).

¹³ Products include pork and various non-kosher products (e.g., seafood and semi-prepared dishes).

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Symbolic meaning of pork

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