

Dina Roginsky and Rina Cohen

**Trading Jerusalem: Jewish–Arab Encounters in a
Middle Eastern Restaurant in Toronto**

This ethnographic study explores everyday encounters between Jewish Israeli immigrants, Palestinian Arab immigrants, and Canadian Jews in Jerusalem Restaurant, a Middle Eastern dining establishment in Toronto. The article reveals the ways in which these three subgroups relate to each other economically and culturally in the context of a diasporic food business that bases its appeal on the symbolism of Jerusalem. Through the practices and relationships observed in this restaurant, we suggest that these subgroups create a practical foodway community, while each subgroup associates with the notion of Jerusalem in its own distinctive way.

Cette étude ethnographique analyse les interactions quotidiennes entre immigrants israéliens juifs, immigrants palestiniens arabes et Juifs canadiens dans le Jerusalem Restaurant, un restaurant de cuisine moyen-orientale de Toronto. L'article met au jour comment ces trois sous-groupes interagissent économiquement et culturellement dans le contexte d'un commerce alimentaire diasporique qui se construit autour du symbolisme de Jérusalem. Les pratiques et les relations observées dans ce restaurant nous permettent d'avancer que ces différents sous-groupes forment une communauté de pratiques alimentaires tout en ayant, chacun, des liens spécifiques et distinctifs avec la notion de Jérusalem.

Outside Israel and the Palestinian Territories, Jews and Arabs rarely share physical spaces. In North America, Jews and Arabs live primarily in separate residential areas and, for the most part, rarely do these discrete social communities cross paths. Despite this common pattern of relative social isolation, the two groups often encounter one another in the specific socio-economic and cultural environment of a Middle Eastern dining establishment in Toronto, *Jerusalem Restaurant*. The restaurant has two locations in the city. It has a newer branch in the North York area in a predominantly mixed neighbourhood of Asians, South Asians, Canadian Ashkenazi Jews and Arab immigrants from across the Middle East, while its older location is in the almost entirely Ashkenazi Jewish neighbourhood straddling Bathurst and Eglinton streets. Jerusalem Restaurant in Toronto serves as a site of consumption and a meeting point between otherwise disparate communities, physically and conceptually. Yet, do Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs in the largest Canadian city interact peacefully within this singular context?¹ Or does their century-old conflict in the Middle East replicate itself between the restaurant tables? Furthermore, how do Canadian Ashkenazi Jews fit into this complicated relationship?²

This study focuses on Jerusalem Restaurant because it represents a lively site of encounter for otherwise segregated communities. Moreover, we argue that while the current discourse on the conflict – either in the news media or in scholarly output, especially in macro-sociological analyses – commonly separates these communities into two opposing camps, ‘Jews’ and ‘Arabs,’ our research uncovers a more nuanced

set of relationships. First, in this study we break down the simplistic binary of 'Jews and Arabs' into three sub-groupings in order to interrogate both the social bonds and differences between Israeli Jews, Canadian Jews, and Palestinian Arabs. Secondly, this study investigates everyday encounters to reveal the mutual interests, sentiments, cultural preferences, and economic transactions shared by Israeli Jews, Palestinian Arabs, and Canadian Jews.

The cultural characteristics of the three subgroups serve as a basis for this conceptual reorganization. While Israeli Jews and Canadian Jews share a common religion, which differentiates them from the Muslim and Christian Arab communities, Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs often share a common language (Hebrew) and life experiences in Israel. Yet, all three subgroups are fond of Middle Eastern food, and many find themselves interacting in Toronto's Jerusalem Restaurant. In this study, we focus on the different strategies used by the Palestinian owner and the managers of the restaurant to attract Israeli Jewish and Canadian Jewish clientele.

Jews and Arabs in North America

In general, Jewish Israeli immigrants tend to reside in urban neighborhoods populated by North American Jews. This is particularly evident in cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto. Similarly, Palestinian Arabs tend to settle in areas populated by other Arabs such as Midwestern cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Toledo, as well as in the San Francisco Bay Area and Toronto.³ While many social scientists have examined the Jewish-American diaspora, the Palestinian diaspora, and the Jewish-Israeli diaspora, not much research investigates *encounters* between these communities in any of these diasporic settings.⁴

Only a small number of studies even compare Arab and Jewish communities in diasporic contexts.⁵ For example, Kenneth Waled offers a comparative analysis of the politicized ethnic identities among three Semitic-heritage groups in the United States: Muslim Arabs (not only Palestinians), Christian Arabs, and (primarily non-Israeli) Jews.⁶ Additionally, Yinon Cohen's macro-sociological analysis examines the socio-economic characteristics of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs in the United States, including their respective patterns of assimilation.⁷ These important comparative studies, however, do not explore the micro-sociological environment of day-to-day interactions between Jews and Arabs.⁸ This is mainly because such contacts rarely occur, and because scholars have yet to turn to foodway practices as a means for cultural crossover and social interaction among otherwise disparate or politically contentious groups.⁹

It is important to note that while literature on interactions between Arabs and Jews outside of Israel is scarce, some studies highlight the influence of both Middle East-

ern and European cultures in constructing Israeli cuisine.¹⁰ For example, Gvion identifies the importance of Jewish and Arab cultures in creating Israeli national modes of cooking, while Tene and Rozin analyze culinary relationships between European and Oriental Jews in Israel.¹¹

Beyond the local Israeli or Palestinian setting, research on immigrant societies such as the United States, England, and Canada sheds light on the ways in which ethnic groups perform and negotiate their cultural identities through foodways.¹² By focusing on Toronto, one of the most diverse cities in the world, and using Jerusalem Restaurant as a case study, this project builds upon these approaches to suggest that foodways serve as a nearly singular means for cultural and social interaction between diasporic Arabs and Jews.

Immigrants and the Food Business

Literature on food and ethnicity suggests that the flourishing of the ethnic food market is rooted in both immigrants' demand for foods from their home country as well as in difficulties in finding suitable employment in the wider labour market. Studies on immigrant enterprises in the food sector in Britain demonstrate that immigrants display a higher tendency to enter the retail food and restaurant sector within the specific field of "ethnic food," and that immigrant entrepreneurship may be best explained in terms of a combination of socioeconomic and cultural factors. For example, the existence of social networks within ethnic communities provides access to ethnic markets, information, and labour, while allowing immigrants to employ family members or co-ethnics in the food business.¹³

Canadian research on foodways reveals comparable tendencies in other immigrant communities. Many studies corroborate the notion that first-generation immigrants are more likely than Canadian-born citizens to be self-employed, and that they are overrepresented in the restaurant industry. However, the tendency for self-employment, especially in the restaurant business, is not necessarily an intrinsic characteristic of migrants but rather a phenomenon determined by the structure of the labour market.¹⁴ While poor language skills and limited education are often identified as explanatory variables, other studies argue that higher rates of immigrants in the restaurant business are propelled by racialized practices in the labour market, first toward non-Anglo-Saxon European immigrants and, in the past forty years, toward Asian and African migrants. For example, a study by Carlos Teixeira *et al.* demonstrates that, despite policies which encourage multiculturalism, self-employed immigrants in Toronto confront language barriers as well as discrimination and overt racism.¹⁵ Many of Teixeira's interviewees, European as well as non-European immigrants, reported difficulties in finding suitable jobs in the larger labour market prior to becoming self-employed. In other words, retreating

to self-employment in an “ethnic niche” is a result of failed efforts to integrate in the general economy.

A macro-sociological study by Daniel Hiebert and Ravi Pendakur based on Canadian census data collected between 1971 and 1996 found that the restaurant industry is one of the most economically significant sectors for immigrants in Canada.¹⁶ For example, one out of every ten immigrants who landed in Canada between 1991 and 1996, and who was economically active from 1995 to 1996, was engaged in restaurant work. Restaurants have become the quintessential employment sector for newcomers in Canada, particularly in the niche sector of “ethnic food.” Ley calls this phenomenon the “flood of ethnic food businesses” in Canada.¹⁷ Yet, from a cultural perspective it is important to note that these ethnic food businesses serve not only employment demands, but also attract immigrant customers as they become common centers for various immigrant communities, hubs of cultural practices, and a means to display ethnic identities.¹⁸

Like other ethnic groups in North America, many Israeli and Arab immigrants face difficulties in securing well-paying employment in the general labour market and are, therefore, attracted to their respective ethnic small-business sectors, including food retail establishments and restaurants. In fact, Arab immigrants tend to own small businesses, mainly grocery stores and convenience stores, more so than any other immigrant group in the United States.¹⁹ Research in Canada similarly reveals a high proportion of various self-employed businesses among Israeli Jews.²⁰

The Setting and Data Collection

Among the various ethnic or immigrant groups in Toronto are Jewish and Arab communities. Coming from a wide range of countries of origin, neither of these communities are homogeneous and each includes a variety of subgroups. One of the sub-groups within the larger Jewish community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is the Jewish Israeli immigrant community. This population tends to live along Bathurst Street in the North York area, and in the suburb of Thornhill, while Arab immigrants are concentrated in the western part of Toronto and in the nearby city of Mississauga.

The Jewish community in the GTA numbers approximately 200 000 people, a figure that includes about a quarter of Jewish Israeli immigrants.²¹ The 227 000 members of the Arab community in the GTA are composed of 49 percent Muslims and 41 percent Christians, including around 11 000 self-identified Palestinians.²²

This research is based on the case study of a successful Palestinian-owned Middle

Eastern restaurant, Jerusalem Restaurant.²³ It operates two branches in the GTA. The original branch is situated in mid-town Toronto on Eglinton Street near Bathurst Street, in the heart of a middle and upper-middle class Ashkenazi Jewish community which comprises its customer base. The second branch is situated on Leslie Street between Sheppard and Finch Avenues in North York, one of Toronto's suburbs. This latter branch attracts a mixture of ethnic groups, a third of which are Canadian Jews and Israeli Jewish immigrants (a more detailed composition of the clientele is discussed below).

Research Methods

This study is based on qualitative research methods backed up with primary statistical sources and secondary literature. The authors conducted fieldwork in Toronto over a period of eight months in the academic year 2005–2006. The data for this study drew upon participant observation, in-depth interviews, and a content analysis of menus and marketing materials.

We observed frequent customers in the two branches of Jerusalem Restaurant on both weekends and weekdays. We also observed activities on special occasions such as the New Year Eve party, Christmas Eve, and Friday nights which included special performances of music and belly dancing. We continued to dine in these restaurants beyond the time period dedicated for research purposes, which enabled us to keep tracking the patterns we identified during the research period.

Our second primary method involved an analysis of marketing flyers and advertisements published in the weekly *Shalom Toronto* Hebrew newspaper, throughout the eight-month period of the study. We used coding categories for both the main texts and visuals of the advertisements, while coding cultural, religious, linguistic, food and pricing elements. We found no evidence of directly political themes that we had expected to find in the advertisements. By using weekly sequential analysis we were able to track changes made in the advertisements, as the restaurant marketed itself differently on various occasions.

We also conducted a content analysis of the menu with the help of a professional chef, in order to identify the various cultural sources incorporated into the restaurant's Middle-Eastern offerings and to notice any specific religious dietary restrictions in the meals offered.

Finally, we conducted ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews with various workers in the two restaurants. The interviews included the owner of the two branches, managers, one cook, and six wait-staff from both locations. Most of the interviews

were held in the restaurants during break time. The interviewees also served as key informants and provided us with interpretations of the social meanings of some of our observations. The interviews varied in length (30–90 minutes) and in the main language that was used in the interview (either Hebrew or English, and sometimes a mixture of both, with occasional Arabic words). All the data collected was carefully recorded and transcribed immediately following the interviews and/or the particular observation periods.

The interviews included biographical details related to the Israeli / Palestinian / Jewish background of the interviewees and their perceptions about life in Canada compared to their country of origin. They also included open-ended conversations about the restaurant, its clients, labour relations, publicity, and marketing strategies. The interviews concluded with the interviewees' opinion on various aspects of the Jewish – Arab relationship: social, cultural, religious, and political.

Additionally, we had informal talks with diners in the restaurants, but these were random conversations in order to get the 'vibe' of the place from the diners' perspective. We did not analyze these responses systematically, as our major focus in this study was to understand the restaurants' business operation strategies. We were especially attentive to the strategies of the Arab–Palestinian owner and managers in attracting Jewish–Canadian clientele to the mid-town location and Jewish–Israeli clientele to the northern location.

To reflect on our positions in the field, it is important to note that both authors of this study are Jewish Israeli–Canadians who, during the research period, lived in Toronto. Our study took place during a relatively calm period in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, perhaps positively skewing our results. We are aware of the fact that our data collection and analysis might have been affected by our identity as Hebrew-speaking Israeli Jewish women.

Background of the Restaurant

Jerusalem Restaurant was established in Toronto on Eglinton Street in 1971 and, according to the owner, George, it was the first Middle Eastern restaurant in Toronto. It caters to many pan-Middle Eastern groups and its name reflects the city shared by many of them.²⁴ According to the owner, Jerusalem Restaurant has always been a 'Middle Eastern' restaurant, broadly conceived – that is, a restaurant that does not cater exclusively to customers of any single country, culture, or religious background, but rather to the fusion or meeting of several Middle Eastern identities. The Eglinton branch of the restaurant is still at its original location, in the Bathurst and Eglinton Streets area, at the heart of a middle and upper-middle class Ashkenazi Jewish community associated with the Forest Hill neighbourhood.

According to Elias, the manager and chef at the Eglinton branch, 80 percent of his clients are regular customers consisting mostly of Jews who live in the neighbourhood and who frequent his restaurant 2–3 times a week. While Jerusalem Restaurant does not market itself as a Jewish institution (its food is neither kosher nor Eastern European), its style and wide selection of Middle Eastern dishes makes it very popular among Jewish clientele.²⁵

Elias refers to his regular patrons as “like family.” The regular customers are such a strong component of his business that the restaurant does not accommodate private events. The spoken language in the dining area and in the kitchen is mostly English. The manager speaks English with everybody except the Palestinian cook, with whom he speaks Arabic.

Twenty-one years after opening on Eglinton Street, the family opened a second, northern branch of Jerusalem Restaurant, in the suburb known as North York, first located on Finch Street, and soon after moved south of Finch to Leslie Street. These North York locations were and continue to be in areas with a sizeable number of Canadian Ashkenazi Jews and recent Jewish–Israeli immigrants. While the Eglinton Street branch caters to a relatively homogeneous crowd drawn from the upper–middle class Jewish neighborhood in which it is located, the much larger buffet–style at the current Leslie Street branch markets a celebratory Middle Eastern atmosphere to a more diverse group of clients. According to Samir, the manager of the Leslie Street branch, his clientele is heterogeneous, including, in his estimation, about 20 percent Israeli Jews, 10 percent Canadian Jews, 20 percent Arabic–speaking people from various countries (which he did not specify),²⁶ 20 percent Canadians of European descent, 15 percent Armenians,²⁷ and the remainder composed of other groups such as Chinese and South Asians. To illustrate the diverse nature of the clientele, the owner, explains: “if you come here on the weekend, of the more than 200 people who come to our restaurant, they are from 50 different ethnic backgrounds”

The owner, George, is a Christian Arab born in Ramla, in 1944, now in Central Israel, who identifies as a Palestinian.²⁸ Explaining his political background, George clarifies: “when I was born, I was born in Palestine, when I left [to immigrate to Canada, at age 19] it was Israel.” Now, he says, “I am Canadian and I am Palestinian. Canada is my home.” He does not self–identify as an “Israeli Arab,” yet he is a fluent and native Hebrew speaker, so much so that our interviews were conducted in Hebrew with only some English sentences or Arabic words:

I’m here 41 years, so I don’t really use my mother tongue, Arabic. Here we speak English. I would like to use Hebrew as well but I have forgotten some of it [he says in Hebrew]. I came alone to Canada, not because of economics;

you want to live in peace. If people think that they live only once, they will change their mind regarding life. Here it is a good life; everybody is free to do whatever they want. Everybody minds his own business. That's what we are looking for.

While George describes himself as a Canadian and a Palestinian, his nephew, Samir, manager of the restaurant's satellite location on Leslie Street, claims a different identity. Samir was born in 1971 in Jaffa to a Christian family and came to Canada at the age of 16. He considers himself an Israeli Arab, but adds, "I am Canadian as well." Interestingly, George refers to the state of Israel by its formal name, "Israel," whereas Samir uses the common Hebrew Israeli phrase, *ha-aretz* ("The Land"), suggesting the two men's differing relationships to their native land. When asked if he thinks of going back to Israel, Samir replies: "I have close family in *ha-aretz*. I go there twice a year. If it will be good there and I'll have job, I will go back." Samir met his Canadian-born wife in Toronto through her parents who also immigrated from Ramla. Samir's sister, Jasmine, who emigrated from Jaffa to Toronto in her twenties, also works in the restaurant as a cashier along with her husband. Their eldest daughter is also a waitress at Jerusalem Restaurant. Jasmine says: "I miss *ha-aretz* and I'm thinking of going back sometime, but my kids are not interested at all. They don't want to go there even for a visit."²⁹

Whereas the interviews with George, Samir, Jasmine, and some of the waitresses and waiters in both branches of Jerusalem Restaurant were held in Hebrew, Elias, the manager of the branch on Eglinton Street, speaks no Hebrew. Elias has been managing the Eglinton Street location of Jerusalem Restaurant since 1980. He is George's brother-in-law and a non-practicing Greek Orthodox Arab from Bethlehem who moved with his family to Toronto the same year he started working at the restaurant. Elias is currently the manager as well as the chef of this location. He says:

I didn't like the situation in Israel and wanted some change [...] I was born in Bethlehem but my life is here, my kids are here, I'm a Canadian citizen [...] I love this country; this is the best place on earth. My dad is Greek and my mother is Palestinian. We are Canadian citizens, but I don't forget where I came from.

The two branches of Jerusalem Restaurant differ in size, atmosphere, and in serving style. The original Eglinton Street branch is much smaller than the Leslie Street branch. The former location accommodates 70 diners *à la carte* and is divided into two dining spaces. Instrumental Middle Eastern music plays nightly and the walls are covered with paintings depicting hilly nature scenes. Copper vases dot the room, mobiles hang on the walls, breezy curtains dangle from the ceiling, and the windows are stained-glass. These elements, together with the indoor Arabesque architecture,

all create a soothing Old Jerusalem ambiance.

The atmosphere at the Leslie Street branch is different. It is much larger, with seating for approximately 250 diners. It accommodates private events and celebrations and operates as an all-you-can-eat buffet. The two branches share the same menu but the newer, northern location also has a rich display of seafood on offer. Every weekend at the Leslie Street location, on Friday and Saturday nights, the restaurant features both live Middle Eastern music and belly dancers, creating a party-like atmosphere. Ali, an Arab musician who was born in Bethlehem, plays the organ for three to four hours and sings popular songs in Arabic, Hebrew, and English. He alternates between classical Arabic and Hebrew melodies, folk songs, and contemporary hits. In addition to the musician, the restaurant also provides a belly dancing performance which attracts many customers. Some dance along and take pictures, others clap their hands or place paper money bills in the dancers' bras.

The Menu

We conducted a menu analysis to help understand the cultural origins of the food served at Jerusalem Restaurant.³⁰

Source / influence	Dishes
Mixed Middle-Eastern	hummus, hummus with meat, hummus with foule, falafel, fried eggplant, sambousek, lamb chops maza plate, tartor salad sautéed tomatoes with hot pepper
Turkey	Shawrema, shish kabab, kabab – kafta
Lebanese and Syrian origin	lentil soup, tabbouleh, baba ghanouje, kubbeh, labaneh, laban, taheena, taheena salad
Egypt	Foule
Not traditional middle-eastern	Jerusalem burger in pita, shish tawoo, grilled chicken breast in pita, seafood
American influence (and fast food)	French fries, chicken fingers (kids' menu), Jerusalem steak (filet mignon), New York cut steak (sirloin)
Desserts	Baklawa
Drinks	Alcohol: various anise drinks: perno, arak, ouzo, Turkish coffee

Analysis of the menu of the Jerusalem Restaurant

To describe its offerings, Jerusalem Restaurant uses the term “Mid-Eastern Cuisine” on Eglinton Street, and “Mediterranean Buffet” on Leslie Street. The difference in the two locations’ names reflects the difference in size of the locations and the style of restaurant: the former is a smaller full-service restaurant catering to a smaller mid-town neighbourhood whereas the latter is a larger buffet style dining hall which caters to a suburban crowd.

Our menu analysis suggests that without revealing the owner’s specific ethno-religious background, Jerusalem Restaurant offers a Middle-Eastern vibe, broadly conceived, complemented by the restaurant’s title, décor, and entertainment. Much of the menu is comprised of Lebanese, Syrian, Turkish, and fusion Middle Eastern dishes, which may attract customers from broader ethnic and religious groups. Any explicitly non-Middle Eastern or generally North American food is found only in the kids’ menu (e.g., hamburgers) and in the selection of steaks much like those served at typical North-American steakhouses. Besides standard North-American alcoholic beverages, the menu also features anise drinks, which are popular across the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Moreover, no pork products, which are forbidden by both Judaism and Islam, appear on the menu at Jerusalem Restaurant. As Samir explains: “[excluding pork] makes it more comfortable for our Jewish and Muslim clients.” However, the menu at the Leslie branch, which tends to attract a lot of non-observant Jews, does include seafood, which is prohibited under kosher dietary laws.

It is well known that Israeli cuisine adopted some basic ingredients and dishes from Arabic foodways. For example, *hummus*, *foule*, *falafel*, *tahini* and *labaneh* all originate in Arab culinary cultures and have become trademarks of Israeli folk food, albeit in a changed context adjusted to the customary habits of Jews.³¹ For these reasons the food at Jerusalem Restaurant, while a mixture of Arab-fused foodways, clearly appeals to Israeli diners looking for a taste of ‘home.’ This tendency to reinterpret traditional Arab food as an authentic Israeli cuisine was also observed by Gvion.³² She argues that Israeli diners are acquainted with Arab popular dishes, such as *hummus* and *falafel*, appropriating and incorporating them into what is generally considered to be Israeli-Mizrahi cuisine.

Who Owns Jerusalem: Religion, Culture, and Business

Jerusalem Restaurant on Leslie Street advertises itself regularly in the Hebrew newspaper, *Shalom Toronto* the only weekly serving the Israeli community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) at the time of the research. Our analysis of the advertisements reveals a relatively unchanged approach to marketing – in size, format, menu, language and frequency of appearance. Throughout the period of the study, Jerusalem Restaurant used two types of advertisements: Until December 2005 the same adver-

tisement was used weekly: a 25 x 17 cm size print in a mixture of English and Hebrew with a photograph of the interior of the restaurant. The English text reads: “Jerusalem Restaurant – Dine & Dance: Entertainment & Belly Dancing Every Saturday night”; and the address also appears. The Hebrew text reads (in English): “A level above the rest”; “Mizrahi evening each Saturday including meal,” and it includes a description of the menu: “meat, fish, ethnic food, homemade salads, seafood and fish display to choose from”; “events up to 250 people”.

However, in December 2005, the restaurant made one significant change in its marketing strategy by altering the design and, most notably, adding an image of the golden Dome of the Rock in a brightened yellow color.³³ Photographs of some of the typical dishes of the restaurant and of the belly dancer were also added, and another text in Hebrew was introduced, indicating that the restaurant offers ‘open buffet – seven days a week, Friday and Saturday – music and belly dancer.’ From March 2006 the advertisement included another sentence in Hebrew stating that Jerusalem Restaurant is “the leading restaurant for Middle Eastern delights [in the GTA].” Of all the changes, however, the insertion of the politically-contested Dome of the Rock picture appears most striking, especially when advertised in a Hebrew newspaper.

Over the course of our research we discovered that this change was the result of a practical, business consideration relating to a competing restaurant, rather than a political or religious statement. Interestingly, during the year 2005–6 another Middle Eastern restaurant opened in Toronto with almost the same name, *Jerusalem II*, and it also advertised in the same local Hebrew newspaper. However, *Jerusalem II* was a kosher restaurant owned by an Israeli Jewish religious immigrant and he used the Jewish symbols of the Tower of David and the Western Wall as the restaurant’s logo. Apparently, the Leslie Street location inserted the Dome of the Rock symbol in its logo and advertising in order to differentiate itself from the newly established Jewish restaurant with the similar name. As George explains:

The confusion [with the other Jerusalem Restaurant] was disturbing. I don’t want to have any troubles. People know that we have our standards in food preparation, and if they have problems with food there, it will affect us, because someone might think that it is the same Jerusalem. They are open less than a year, surprisingly. People thought that we opened a new branch and then saw that it is a different place. Since they knew I’m working well, they took my name. Someone opens and tries to imitate you – that’s not good! A name is a name. I registered that!

The use of the Dome of the Rock in the *Shalom Toronto* Israeli newspaper served the business needs of the original Jerusalem Restaurant by setting itself aesthetically and culturally in opposition to the newly established Jewish-owned kosher com-

petitor. By using the Dome of the Rock as its logo, it seems that the “Arab Jerusalem” restaurant was able to differentiate itself from the “Jewish Jerusalem” restaurant, particularly as both restaurants were competing for a similar Jewish–Canadian and Jewish–Israeli clientele.³⁴

The owner and managers insist that despite the fact that their logo is a picture of a well-known Muslim shrine, they believe the symbol does not carry any Muslim religious meaning, especially since they themselves are Christians. The symbol, they explained, was chosen as a well-known aesthetic reference to Jerusalem. In George’s words:

When you visit Jerusalem, you see the Dome from various angles. It is the most salient [structure] in Jerusalem. Everybody knows it, wherever you go in Jerusalem, you see that. It is part of Jerusalem as a whole that belongs to everybody. This is the place that Abraham wanted to sacrifice his son, isn’t it? This is a holy place for all religions. Abraham is the first person to believe in God. Abraham belongs to everybody. Muslims pray to Abraham as well. To me it doesn’t mean anything [religious]. I didn’t put it on for religious reasons and have no intentions to do so for religious meaning. Religion is between God and me only. I left the symbol as a symbol for all Jerusalem.

Samir adds:

You look at this symbol and it reminds you of Jerusalem, it is used in TV and everywhere. It is not a religious symbol, it is a trademark, and it doesn’t bother anyone [of the customers]. We didn’t think of it as something that will bother anyone, but as a part of the view of Jerusalem. If we put the Christian church or the Jewish Western Wall it won’t be so visible.

It seems that the reluctance of the Arab–Christian owner and managers to associate their Dome of the Rock logo with any clear Islamic meaning echoes in the way Jewish diners interpret this symbol. For example, Ralph, a Canadian–Jewish sociologist in his thirties says:

The Israeli/Middle East decor of the restaurant and the Israeli food make me feel at home and comfortable in what I suppose I am appropriating as a Jewish environment. The symbol of the Dome of the Rock is taken by many Jews, I would argue, as a generic symbol of Israel, which Jews sub-consciously appropriate to mean Jewish Israel. The fact that the Dome of the Rock is a mosque is not the issue. It is part of the vision of the Old City that many of us have etched in our minds through photographs: the walled city, the *Kotel*, temple mount, dome of the rock – it is a familiar “Jewish” symbol.

These statements reveal the different associations and imaginaries attached to the city of Jerusalem and the different ways in which this symbol is interpreted. While Jews and Arabs gather in Jerusalem Restaurant to share their delight for Middle Eastern cuisine, strong differences remain concerning the meaning of the apparently shared symbol of Jerusalem. Although the managers would like to portray the Dome of the Rock as a “generic” symbol of the city and of its landscape, Jewish patrons seem to re-imagine it as a familiar “Jewish” symbol on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem.³⁵

The Christian-Arab owner and the managers of Jerusalem Restaurant have consistently attempted to avoid religious connotations in order to appeal to a diverse pool of clients.³⁶ This effort is also exhibited in the fact that the restaurant offers alcohol, normally forbidden for Muslim practitioners, as well as belly dancing performances (at the Leslie Street branch) which together emphasize the secular nature of the place.

Another example of the secular character of Jerusalem Restaurant is the Sylvester celebration. The Civic New Year, Sylvester, is celebrated in the restaurant with a special holiday party. This holiday became trendy in Israel among secular Jews over the last three decades. Jerusalem Restaurant advertised the holiday in *Shalom Toronto* for Israeli clientele as “Mizrahi *Hafla* (party, in Arabic and in Hebrew slang) until the crack of dawn,” accompanied by “a special singer who came straight from Israel... and Champagne.” The term ‘Hafla’ bears the same meaning to both Jewish Israelis and Arabs. Despite the proximity to Christmas and the use of a Christmas tree as a decoration, for the secular Jewish-Israeli clientele, this holiday does not carry any religious meaning and is perceived as a cultural, civic holiday. Elias, the manager of the Eglinton Street branch, explains:

Religion doesn’t matter, what matters is the person. We have people from all religions; I look at them as Canadians: Arabic, Hebrew, English, Chinese – all together. It doesn’t matter who is coming, what language they speak. It doesn’t matter. It is a business.

However, it is interesting and important to note that although Elias emphasizes the restaurant’s lack of religious or even specific ethnic affiliation, the Eglinton Street branch under his management, which relies heavily on Jewish clientele, provides *matzah* to its patrons during Passover, an unusual fit for non-kosher restaurants in North America. And so, despite his insistence that “it doesn’t matter who is coming, what language they are speaking,” in practice the restaurant celebrates Sylvester and Passover. This reflects the owners’ background and their attempt to make both branches of the restaurant welcoming places for non-observant Canadian Ashkenazi Jews, Israeli Jews, Arabs, and others.

Political or Apolitical Space?

The Jewish–Arab conflict, which is embedded in the image of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, is obviously not only a religious conflict, but also a political one. When we asked George why he picked the name “Jerusalem,” he explained: “It is a beautiful name, so why not? Is there a more beautiful name than Jerusalem? Jerusalem is a very famous city, that’s why. Some of my family members were born in Jerusalem; we used to live in Jerusalem.” Samir, the restaurant’s manager, stresses that Jerusalem is a shared symbol rather than a disputed one: “Jerusalem is something that everybody can share: Muslims, Christians, and Jews. We wanted something that everybody can share: its food.”

The restaurant named after Jerusalem – among the most contested cities in the world – caters to mixed ethnic and religious groups who otherwise vie for land in the Middle East. It also uses the symbol of the Dome of the Rock, among the most fought-over symbols and sites in history, as its logo. Nonetheless, the managers of the two branches try to avoid contentious political questions, declaring that “politics is bad for business.” The firmness by which they express this motto indicates the potentially explosive nature of this topic. Elias, the manager of the Eglinton location that serves mostly Canadian Jewish clients, tries to avoid politics as much as possible:

I don’t feel any conflict at all. It is food. We are not politicians. It is a food business. Here I look at it differently, I am a friend of everybody, I don’t ask who you are. We become friends and close with our customers, doesn’t matter where from. We have no political problem. These kids [pointing to the young Israeli waitresses] work here, they can tell [...] I don’t like killing, we should live in peace no matter where, because God gives us life so we can’t take life. Look what happens all over the world, I don’t know why.

George, the owner, while aware of the political dimension of running a Middle Eastern restaurant, walks a fine line in that he views his enterprise as a departure from the divisive politics which characterize his native country:

We don’t look for confrontations [...] Politics don’t get you anywhere. I’m happy to see the people here. Why can’t they live in peace there [in Israel] too? I don’t allow politics here, it’s not a place for politics, it’s a place for eating and having fun [...] sometimes I tell them [his two sons and two daughters who were born in Canada] go visit your aunts [in Israel], but they are not interested.

In response to the question of whether the *al-Aqsa*³⁷ *Intifada*, the Palestinian uprising against Israel in 2000, affected his business, Elias told us: “It happened there, it didn’t

affect us here. Here we make a living. We work hard to make a good life. That's the most important thing. Politics is not for us. We are like family with our customers. People come here twice a week and we have become friends."

In a second interview with him, Elias repeatedly emphasized that politics represents a non-issue for the restaurant, declaring that "I feel like a human being and it doesn't matter where. Making a good life for my family is number one. I don't take any sides [...] no politics, zero politics, politics is not good for business!" The two Israeli waitresses working in the branch seemed to suggest that Elias's apolitical approach had proved effective. Keren says:

The Jewish community that comes here is interested only in food, not in politics. I haven't heard of someone who left the place finding out that the owner is an Arab [...] People watch [these events on] television but it doesn't affect their life here. People here live their own lives [...] The Jewish clients here love him, and everybody knows that he is an Arab. He is the kind of person that will do his best for his patrons, he won't lose a patron.

However, while Elias claims that avoiding the expression of political views is the best way to keep sensitive and contentious issues from arising,³⁸ tangible objects in the restaurant cater to the overwhelmingly Jewish clientele: a poster-size ad for an upcoming theatrical production about the late Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, is taped to the window, facing the street, and numerous copies of the Hebrew newspaper *Shalom Toronto* are placed on a counter in the lobby, right by the restaurant's entrance. In publicizing specifically Jewish communal and Israeli events and advertising in the local Hebrew press, Jerusalem Restaurant's owner and managers indicate that their focus lies with the cultural life of their Jewish clients. Although Jerusalem Restaurant makes no qualms about being an Arab-run restaurant, it clearly caters to its Jewish clientele. There is no analogous Arab or Muslim material in or advertisements for the restaurant.

Palestinian Arabs, Israeli Jews and Canadian Jews in Jerusalem Restaurant

Based on our observations and the estimation of the managers of the two branches, Jewish patrons comprise the primary customer-base for the Palestinian-owned Jerusalem Restaurant. While Canadian Jews represent the principal customers of the Eglinton Street branch, Israeli Jewish immigrants frequent the northern Leslie Street branch.

Jewish Israeli immigrants are attracted to the Leslie Street branch for several reasons: Middle-Eastern food, the proximity to their area of residence, the buffet-style

service, the modest prices, the dynamic spirit of live music and belly dancing on weekends, and the general atmosphere of a Middle-Eastern eatery which reminds them of similar eateries in Israel. As immigrants, they are also happy to be able to speak Hebrew with each other and with the Israeli Jewish and Arab waiters in their adopted home country. Jerusalem Restaurant feeds the nostalgia of Israeli immigrants by providing a familiar cultural environment in food, music, and language.

An Israeli waitress, Sigal, observes: “There is not a big difference in mentality between Israelis and Arabs regarding food, entertainment and spending time, not a big difference at all.” Similarly, Yael adds: “The clients love to come here because it has good food and high standards. Moreover, it is genuine – they [the Palestinians] came from The Land [*ha-aretz*] and brought the real things.”

The reputation of Jerusalem Restaurant in Toronto attracts not only returning Israeli diners but also Israeli newcomers looking for jobs. Fluent in Hebrew but lacking Canadian experience, some young Israeli newcomers find Middle-Eastern restaurants a convenient entry point into the labour market. At the same time, the Palestinian owner of Jerusalem Restaurant is interested in hiring ‘front-stage’ Israeli wait-staff because they are preferred by the Jewish clientele who feel that they are helping to support Jewish newcomers and Israeli culture.

This employment interdependence in Toronto stands in sharp contradiction to employment segregation in Israel. Gvion claims that Arabs in Israel have not been given sufficient opportunities to create an ethnic food-based economy, resulting in a dependency within the Arab minority on the Jewish labour market.³⁹ This may be clearly observed in Middle-Eastern restaurants in Israel, where Arabs are generally employed as ‘backstage’ kitchen workers with very little contact with Jewish diners. In Toronto, however, Jewish Israelis work ‘the front line’ as waiters and waitresses, alongside Arab waiters, in order to attract and better serve Jewish and Israeli Hebrew-speaking customers.

Another example illustrates this interaction between Israeli-Arab waiters and the Jewish-Israeli clientele. Jamal, an Israeli-Arab waiter at the Leslie Street branch, heard us speaking Hebrew and approached us in the language. At the end of the meal, he wrote on the bill in Hebrew “*toda raba*” (i.e. ‘thank you very much’). In doing so, he tried to underscore the cultural commonalities between us and thereby also encourage us to leave a nice tip (a strategy which turned out to be successful).

The Eglinton Street location attracts primarily middle and upper-middle class Jews who are fond of the food, the calming music, the nice decor, and its status as a neighbourhood restaurant with a welcoming ‘homey’ feeling provided by the manager. In addition, the Middle Eastern cuisine is perceived as nutritious and healthier than

some other ethnic cuisines. As Jane, a Jewish middle-class professor who together with her family eat at the restaurant frequently, noted: “the food is delicious and healthier than pizzas and pastas served in other restaurants in the neighbourhood.” George believes that local Jews are attracted to the somewhat exotic food: “Our food was not known here, not in the Jewish community. The Jews here came from different countries, from Europe. It is a different food for them here.” It seems that the owners deliberately cater to this Jewish desire for Middle Eastern food, which is identified as integral part of Israeli cuisine. By way of association, Jewish customers may perceive this food as ‘theirs’ by linking Middle Eastern food with the Jewish homeland.

By exploring the triangular relationship between Palestinian Arabs, Israeli Jews and Canadian Jews, we identified various alliances. Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews communicate in Hebrew, enjoy similar food and entertainment, and long for the same landscapes. Moreover, we discovered that new economic relationships have been created between Israeli immigrants – Jews and Arabs – outside of Israel. In Toronto, Israeli Jews are more willing to dine in Arab restaurants and work for an Arab employer as a temporary solution to economic difficulties.

Canadian Jews and Israeli Jews share the same religion but speak different languages, and have different ways of being.⁴⁰ Canadian Ashkenazi Jews and Palestinian Arabs are the most culturally remote pair within these three sub-groups. However, Jerusalem Restaurant offers Canadian Jews a glance at something that may be conceptualized as an original, authentic and even romantic representation of the Holy Land, characterized by popular Middle-Eastern images and tastes.⁴¹ Whether we would like to analyze this as an orientalist depiction provided by the owners for the sake of maximization of profit or would like to see it as a way of creating a shared imagined community remains open for interpretation.⁴² In our conclusion though, we offer a more pragmatic formulation of this social relationship.

A Foodway Community in Jerusalem Restaurant

In conclusion, our research corroborates the findings of previous studies on ethnic restaurants in that Jerusalem Restaurant attributes its success to catering to an ethnic clientele, relying on workers of a background similar to its clientele, employing newcomers in working-class jobs, operating a business as a self-employment solution for immigrants, employing close and reliable family members in the business, and exploiting ethnic identity and ethnic food knowledge as a resource.⁴³ However, Jerusalem Restaurant also deviates from these typical characteristics of an ethnic restaurant: it caters to its own co-ethnic group yet it also, or even more so, caters to other groups that may share some ethnic features, but who are also quite distinct from, or even in conflict with, each other. It employs Arabs as front-line workers, but

also employs Jewish-Israeli immigrants as wait-staff, as it relies heavily on a Jewish clientele.

In order to suggest an explanation for this strategy, we would like to use Brown and Mussell's conceptual framework regarding 'communities within food systems.'⁴⁴ They argue that regardless of factors such as age, socio-economic status, and occupation, communities may be analyzed by their shared food consumption. In the case of Jerusalem Restaurant in Toronto, we argue that in this diasporic context, the three ethnic groups – Palestinian Arabs, Israeli Jews and Canadian Jews – function as components of a foodway community despite national and political boundaries.

Using this model, we argue that outside of the Middle-East these three sub-groups may be understood as co-ethnics who share similar cultural resources and needs rather than as clashing ethnic groups engaged in a never-ending conflict. In the context of Jerusalem Restaurant in Toronto, the social, cultural and economic transactions between these groups result in the creation of a foodway community: cooking, eating, selling, buying, trading, and working for each other.

Further, if we view this foodway community as symbolizing a set of social interactions, we see that the three sub-groups negotiate, trade, and consume 'their' notions of Jerusalem when they encounter each other in the restaurant. Scholars such as Susan Kalcik explore the link between food and self-perception and suggest that individuals or groups use food, consciously or unconsciously, as a symbolic tool of manipulation to make statements about identity: "People tend to eat as they would like to be perceived, so that it is as much a matter of 'you eat what you wish to be.'⁴⁵ By adopting this interpretation we suggest that each group creates a *distinctive* cultural identification with Jerusalem (the city) while sharing and enjoying the food, music and aesthetics at Jerusalem Restaurant. Much like the city of its namesake, Jerusalem Restaurant has many meanings and it serves different purposes for the different sub-groups who encounter each other within it. These include business interests, culinary preferences, entertainment, nostalgia, home imagery, and identity construction.

This interpretation therefore raises the question of whether Jerusalem Restaurant is a "real" or "imagined" community, to borrow Benedict Anderson's concept. Anderson's analysis explores the ways in which the modern nation-state became the major focus of collective identification by using imagination, sentiments and new technologies in order to spread the notion of national affinity transcending pre-modern, face-to-face interactions between members of traditional communities.

Our case study, which is situated in a postmodern, globalised era, characterised by mass immigration and new technological and economical opportunities, demon-

strates the creation of new face-to-face interactions which transcend religious and national borders. These interactions serve a role in cross-group relations and create new sites of contact between neighbours who are affiliated with different, sometimes rival, communities.

In Toronto, Palestinian Arabs, Israeli Jews, and Canadian Ashkenazi Jews have different ideas about the city of Jerusalem as a geographical location and symbolic marker. Yet, they all yearn for a similar cultural space that, much like the city of Jerusalem, will engage their senses and enable them to imagine their homeland. Food, the main reason for their encounter, acts as a unifying social praxis, creating what seems to be a working network of food-based communal relations. Simultaneously, this shared experience might provoke different and occasionally conflicting imaginaries which undermine the development of social relations, resulting in only ad hoc, temporary transactions of business interests and sentiments. In any case, whether Jerusalem Restaurant in Toronto creates a “real” community or an “imagined” one, this case study contributes to a more refined understanding of the social dynamics between Jews and Arabs in the diasporic context, and between Israelis and Palestinians outside their homeland.

1

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The Israeli Jews in this study are, for the most part, Jews who were born and raised in Israel with Hebrew being their first language. They primarily identify with Israeli modern secular culture (in which Middle-Eastern food and “Mizrahi-oriental music” became a mainstream), while their families are either from Ashkenazi-European or Mizrahi-Middle Eastern decent. The Palestinians or Israeli Arabs in this study are born either in Mandate Palestine, the state of Israel, or in the West Bank and identify as either Palestinians or Israeli-Arabs. They speak Arabic as a first language and Hebrew or English as their second languages. Therefore the terms “Palestinians” and “Israeli Arabs” will be used in reference to different sectors of this community. See Sami Smooha, “Arab-Jewish relations in Israel: A deeply divided society” in *Israeli Identity in Transition*, edited by A. Shapira, 31-68. (London: Praeger, 2004). On self-identification of Palestinians see Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Palestinian diaspora: Formation of identities and politics of homeland*, 74-80 (London: Routledge, 2003):74-80. Demographic information about the Arab community in the Greater Toronto Area will follow.

2

In this study Canadian Jews are for the most part Jews from Ashkenazi-European descent, born in Canada who speak English as a first language and primarily identify with Judaism or Jewish culture. Demographic information about the Jewish community in the Greater Toronto Area will follow.

3

Yinon Cohen and Andrea Tyree, “Palestinians and Jewish Israeli-born in the United States”, *The International Migration Review* 28, no. 2 (1994): 243-55.

4

For work on the Israeli diaspora, see Erez Cohen, “We are staying in our country - here’: Israeli mediascapes in Melbourne”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, no. 6 (2008): 1003-19; Rina Cohen, “The Israeli diaspora”, in *Encyclopedia of diasporas, immigrant and refugee cultures around the world*, edited by I. Skoggard (New Haven: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2005); Rina Cohen and Gerald Gold ‘Israelis in Toronto: The myth of return and the development of a distinct ethnic community’, *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 38, no. 1 (1996): 17-26; Yinon Cohen, Economic assimilation in the US of Arab and Jewish immigrants from Israel and the Territories’

Israel Studies 1, no. 2 (1996): 75-97; Gerald Gold, 'Israeli immigrants and "Canadian Jews" in Toronto' in *Essays in the social scientific study of Judaism and Jewish society, vol. II.*, edited by S. Fishbane, S. Schoenfeld and A. Goldschlager (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1992); Dina Roginsky (2007), "Israelis in Toronto: from Stigmatization to Self-Organization". Paper presented in the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) Toronto. For work on the Palestinian diaspora see Mohamed Kamel Dorai', 'The meaning of homeland for the Palestinian diaspora: Revival and transformation' In *New approaches to migration? Transnational communities and the transformation of home*, edited by N. Al Ali and K. Koser, 87-95 (London: Routledge, 2002); Elizabeth Mavroudi, 'Learning to be Palestinian in Athens: Constructing national identities in diaspora.' *Global Networks* 7, no. 4 (2007): 392-411; Mustafa Mohammad, *The Palestinian diaspora*. Ramallah: Arab Economist Association, 1997).

5

The analysis of Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1997) suggests that both, the 2000 year-old Jewish diasporic trauma as well as the mid-20th century Palestinian diasporic trauma, should be defined as Victim Diasporas, a result of forced expulsion, while modern-day labor migrants, who move willingly, should be defined differently. In our case study there is a mixture of these various diasporic elements, incorporated in life biographies and historic experiences of the participants.

6

Kenneth Waled, 'Homeland interests, hostland politics: Politicized Ethnic identity among Middle Eastern heritage groups in the United States.' *The International Migration Review* 42, no. 2 (2008): 273-301.

7

See Cohen (1996, n 4) and Cohen and Tyree (1994, n 3)

8

A scant number of studies mention such encounters but do not provide any scholarly research on them. Steven Gold, *The Israeli diaspora*, 91 (London: Routledge, 2002) in his analysis of the Israeli diaspora suggests that in metropolitan cities such as New York, Toronto, Los Angeles, and London both Jewish and Arab Israelis occasionally shop at the same food stores and sometimes hire

each other, but he provides no ethnographic evidence for these observations. In her analysis of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens, Elizabeth Mavroudi (2007, n 4), , focuses on the ways in which parents teach their children to identify as Palestinian. However, her discussion regarding the challenging encounter with their children's Israeli Jewish friends at school includes no analysis or ethnographic description. The scarce research which is available focuses mostly on interfaith interactions between Jewish and Muslims communities addressing their commonalities and contentions. In the edited volume by Reza Aslan and Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, *Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, contentions and complexities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) one ethnographic study by Saba Soomekh (2011) stands out, focusing on the relationship between Iranian Jewish and Iranian Muslim immigrants in Los Angeles, and concluding that although there is interaction between the communities, there is also lack of closeness.

9

Interestingly, in the spring of 2006 the Berkeley Street Theatre in Toronto hosted "The Arab-Israeli Cookbook," a play by Robin Soans that unusually confronts the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by using monologues about life in Israel and the West Bank presented through stories about food. The actors cook throughout the play, activating not only the visual and audio senses of the audience but also its sense of smell.

10

Aviad Kleinberg, ed., *A full belly: Rethinking food and society in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press and Keter Press, 2005 [in Hebrew]).

11

Liora Gvion, "Hummus – Kuskus – Sushi: food and ethnicity in the Israeli society", in *A full belly: Rethinking food and society in Israel*, edited by A. Kleinberg, 32-78 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press and Keter Press, 2005 [in Hebrew]); Ofra Tene, 'That's how we cook home in Israel' in *A full belly: Rethinking food and society in Israel*, edited by A. Kleinberg, 92-130, (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press and Keter Press, 2005 [in Hebrew]); Orit Rozin, "Food, identity, nationalism and nation building in Israeli formation years" *Israel Studies Forum* 21, no 1 (2006): 52-80.

12

Linda Brown and Kay Mussell, *Ethnic and regional foodways in the United States: The performance of group identity*, 3-15 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984); Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italians, Irish, and Jewish foodways in the age of migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Anne Kershner, Introduction: Food in the migrant experience. In *Food in Migrant experience*, edited by A. Kershner, 1-13 (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2002); Dorothy Duncan, *Canadians at table: Food, fellowship, and folklore: A culinary history of Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006).

13

Anuradha Basu, 'Immigrant entrepreneurs in the food sector: Breaking the Mould' In *Food in the migrant experience*, edited by A. Kershner, 149-171, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2002); Ram Monder et al., 'Ethnic minority business in comparative perspective: The case of the independent restaurant sector', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26, no. 3 (2000): 495-416.

14

Prescott Ensign and Nicholas Robinson, "Entrepreneurs because they are immigrants or immigrants because they are entrepreneurs? A critical examination of the relationship between the newcomers and the establishment", *The Journal of Entrepreneurship* 20, no. 1 (2011): 33-53; Carlos Teixeira, Lucia Lo, and Marie Truelove, Immigrant entrepreneurship, institutional discrimination, and implications for public policy: a case study in Toronto. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 25, no. 2 (2007): 176-193.

15

Ibid.

16

Daniel Hiebert and Ravi Pendakur, Who's cooking? The changing ethnic division of labour in Canada 1971-1996 (Vancouver: RIIM working paper, 2003)

17

David Ley, Explaining variations in business performance among immigrant entrepreneurs in Canada, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32, no. 5 (2006): 743-64.

18

See Andrea D'Sylva and Brenda Beagan, 'Food is culture, but it's also power': The role of food in ethnic and gender identity construction among Goan Canadian women, *Journal of Gender Studies* 20, no. 3 (2011): 279-289; Mohammad Qadeer, Sandeep K. Agrawal, and Alexander Lovell, 'Evolution of ethnic enclaves in the Toronto Metropolitan Area, 2001-2006', *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 11, no. 3 (2010): 315-339; Shaun Tanaka, 'Consuming the "oriental other", constructing the cosmopolitan Canadian: Reinterpreting Japanese culinary culture in Toronto's Japanese restaurants', paper presented at the *Canadian Association for Food Studies* annual conference (2006), York University, Toronto.

19

Cohen and Tyree (n 3, 1994).

20

Cohen and Gold (n 4, 1996); Gold (n 4, 1992).

21

This estimation was supported by information provided to the authors in 2005 by the "Israeli House," an organization affiliated with the Israeli consulate in Toronto. See also Weinfeld et al., "Overview of Canadian Jewry" in Arnold Dashkevsky and Ira Sheskin (eds.) *American Jewish Year Book* (Springer, Dordrecht, 2013): 55-90, who indicate that according to the census analysis of 2001 13,545 Jews in Toronto were born in Israel (p. 67). However, since many Israelis were not actually born in Israel (especially considering Hebrew speakers from the former Soviet Union who had moved first to Israel and then to Canada) this percentage seems to be a significant underestimation of the Israeli-Hebrew speaking population in the GTA. A further classification, of how many of the Israeli immigrants are from either Ashkenazi or Mizrahi descent, is even more difficult to obtain. For the Jewish-Sephardic population in the GTA see Kelly Train "Carving out a space of one's own: The Sephardic Kehila Centre and the Toronto Jewish Community" in Teelucksingh, Cheryl (ed). *Claiming space: Racialization in Canadian cities*, (Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2006): 41-64.

22

The information about the Canadian Arab Community in the GTA derives from the website of the Canadian Arab Institute, relying on the 2011 census data released by Statistics Canada, see <<http://www.canadianarabinsti->

tute.org/publications/reports/canadian-arab-community-gta/>

23

See the restaurant website <<http://www.jerusalemrestaurant.ca>>

24

We have created pseudonyms for all informants. Information from George was also corroborated through the restaurant's website at <www.dine.to> Interestingly, on this website, the Jerusalem restaurant on Eglinton street is classified as: "Jewish, Mediterranean".

25

Similar to the United States, where the majority of the Jewish population originates in Eastern European countries, Canadian Jews are also descendants of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, a phenomenon reflected in their traditional Jewish Eastern European cooking. Diner discusses some of the dishes popular in this cuisine, such as: *gefillte fish*, *kreplach*, *kugel*, *latkes*, *farfl*, *lekakh*, *tzimmes*, *tcholent* and so on (Diner, n 12, 2001). See also Train (n 21) on the GTA Sephardi-Jewish community, which composes about 20% of the overall Jewish community in the GTA (p. 51) and is poorly integrated into the hegemonic Jewish-Ashkenazi core. For more on Canadian Jews, see Gerald Tulchinsky's *Canada's Jews: A people's journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

26

Since both locations of Jerusalem Restaurant do not offer pork products, meat that is forbidden by both Jewish and Muslim religions, the restaurant caters to clientele from different religions, including secular patrons.

27

About a third of the frequenters to the restaurant is composed of Armenians and Euro-Canadians (mainly Greeks and Italians). These groups are attracted to Middle Eastern food because of its similarity to their foodways. Armenian and Greek cuisines both include, for example, grilled meats, lentils and lemon juice.

28

Up until the 1948 war, Ramla was a city with an Arab majority. Following the war and the establishment of the State of Israel, Ramla became an Israeli city and was populated by Jewish immigrants. Today it is a mixed

Jewish-Arab city within Israel. (It should not be confused with Ramallah, which is a city located in the West Bank under the control of the Palestinian Authority).

29

According to Yinon Cohen (1996, n 4) Israeli policy up to 1985 provided economic benefits to its Jewish citizens returning from a prolonged stay abroad yet denied its Arab citizens the same benefits.

30

We would like to thank Avinadav Levy, a Mediterranean caterer and chef, for his help in categorizing the various types of food.

31

Liora Gvion, *Culinary bridges versus culinary barriers: Social and political aspects of Palestinian cooking in Israel* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2006 [in Hebrew]); Yael Raviv, *Falafel Nation: Cuisine and the making of national identity in Israel* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

32

Ibid.

33

The Dome of the Rock is a Muslim shrine located on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem.

34

The kosher Jerusalem Restaurant was not able to replicate the success of the long-established Jerusalem Restaurant and, due to instability and management difficulties, closed during its first year of operation. We have discussed elsewhere the relationship between these two restaurants in a conference paper titled: "Two 'Jeruselems' in Toronto: one is Kosher, the other is not" presented at the annual meetings of the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies (Dina Roginsky and Rina Cohen, Toronto, 2006).

35

A special issue of *Jewish Art* (1997/98) discusses the real and ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic art by exploring the use and abuse of Jerusalem and by revealing the layers of significance the city has to the three world religions. Shalom Sabar's article in particular focuses on the artistic ways in which the Dome of the Rock was "converted" and presented as the temple in Hebrew books in

Venice during the Renaissance, and this image reached other Jewish Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities. Recently, the Israeli Culture and Sports Minister, Miri Regev, showed up at the 2017 Cannes film festival wearing a dress bearing the skyline of Jerusalem's Old City, portraying both the Tower of David and the Dome of the Rock as an indication to the fact that East Jerusalem is under Israeli rule.

36

See a comparative work on a Yemenite restaurant in New York where the Muslim owner and staff avoided any publicity surrounding the Ramadan fast and even kept the restaurant open during that holiday while they fasted: Shalom Staub, "The Near East Restaurant: A study of the spatial manifestation of the folklore of ethnicity", *New York Folklore* 7, no. 1-2 (1981):113-27.

37

The Al-Aqsa Mosque, not to be confused with the Dome of the Rock, is also located on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem.

38

This finding of a collective Christian Arab avoidance of public political discourse is congruent with Kenneth Waled's findings (2008, n 6) in which he discovered that Arab-American Christians are appreciably less likely than either Arab-American Muslims or American Jews to assign political priority to the conflict in the Middle East.

39

Gvion (n 11, 2005), p. 60

40

The interrelations between the local Jewish community and Israeli-Jewish immigrants deserve a separate and serious consideration which is beyond the scope of this article. Yet some works indicate a pattern of mutual ambivalence with limited areas of cooperation (See n 4 Cohen and Gold 1996; Gold 1992; Linn and Barkan-Ascher 1994; Roginsky 2007; Shokeid 1991).

41

See Habib, Jasmin. *Israel, diaspora, and the routes of national belonging*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). In this work, Habib describes how people who have no direct family relations or personal experiences in Israel develop a relationship to the state. On the emotional attachment of American Jews

to Israel see also Leonard Saxe and Matthew Boxer "Loyalty and love of Israel by diasporan Jews", *Israel Studies* 17 no 2 (2012): 92-101. For the constructions of diasporic national identity among Palestinians who live in Athens and have never been to Palestine, see Elizabeth Mavroudi (2007, n4).

42

Compare Edward Said's thoughts on this subject in *Orientalism: Western representations of the Orient* (New York: Pantheon, 1979) with Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" in *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

43

See Basu (n 13) and D'Sylva et al (n 18), as well as Harry Herman, 'Dishwashers and proprietors: Macedonians in Toronto's restaurant trade' in *Ethnicity at Work*, edited by S. Wallman, 71-90 (London: Macmillan press, 1979); and Shalom Staub (n 36, 1981).

44

Brown and Mussell (n 12, 1984).

45

Quote from p. 54 of Susan Kalcik, 'Ethnic foodways in America: symbol and performance of identity', in *Ethnic and Regional foodways in the United States: The Performance of group Identity*, edited by L. Brown and K. Mussell, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 37-65. This quote elaborates on the common phrase 'you are what you eat'.