

# Shabbat for Families

## How to make Shabbat your family's favorite day of the week.

Preparing for and celebrating Shabbat can be a daunting proposition.

There are so many things to do even just to prepare, and if you have children, the prospect of celebrating Shabbat (meant to be joyous and relaxing) for even one hour, let alone 25, can seem preposterous.

Don't give up. This day-long marathon can be packed with marvelous family traditions and special opportunities for fun. Instead of making a radical change in the way your family observes Shabbat, make it gradual. Try some of these tips below and make Shabbat a truly special day for your family.

### Make It Easy

Cooking has been at the center of preparation for Shabbat for generations. For traditional Jews, who do not prepare food during the Sabbath, all meals must be prepared before candle lighting. Sometimes cooking for Shabbat seems totally overwhelming--even for those who are only preparing one meal.

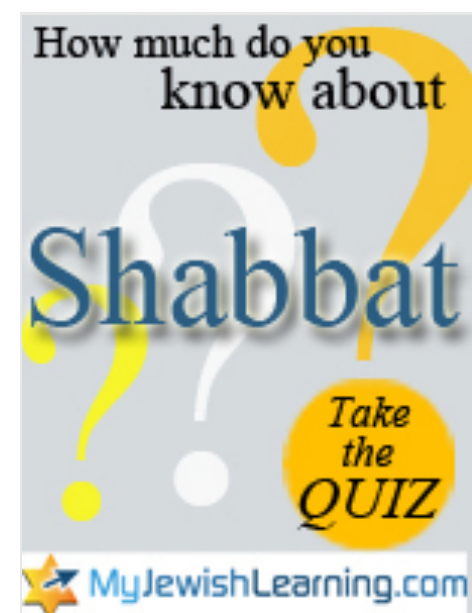
Relax! Shabbat meals are family meals where something is different and special. But this doesn't mean that they have to be fancy. Instead of laboring, pick up a barbequed chicken and a few side-dishes from your local kosher market, or make something simple. If there's time, encourage your children to help choose the menu or prepare the meal by making salads, chopping vegetables or helping to make dessert.

### At Home

Shabbat is a unique time of the week. For many families, it's the time when the white table cloth comes out, when Great-Grandma's silver candlesticks are polished and used for lighting candles, and when the entire family drinks out of goblets instead of glasses. Add to the atmosphere by using your finest china, silver and crystal (those lovely things that never seem to get used), and a lovely tablecloth. Pick up flowers on the way home. Open a bottle of wine to have with dinner, not just for *kiddush*. Set the table in advance so that everyone gets to enjoy the anticipation of the family meal. Invite another family over to join you, or other members of your family. Make sure that the kids participate by setting the table and making table decorations or place cards. The weekly ritual of a "fancy" dinner, even if the food is less than fancy, will make for great memories. The ambiance will make the entire experience worthwhile.

### Giving Tzedakah

In some homes, families have established a custom of emptying their pockets and putting a few coins



in a jar before the beginning of Shabbat. This helps individuals to remember that Shabbat is a taste of the world to come, in which there will be no poverty or illness, and that we must help achieve this in our world by giving tzedakah. Some families like to put a small jar or tzedakah box near their Shabbat candles and give a little bit each week before they light candles.

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*Sara Shapiro-Plevan serves as the Coordinator of Congregational Education for New York City for the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York.*

**Side 1**

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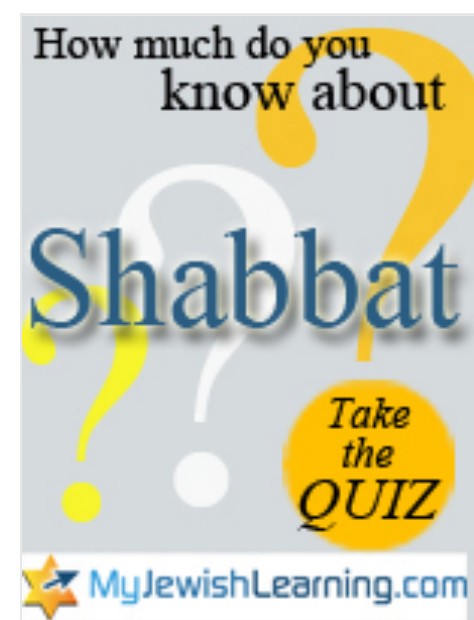
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