



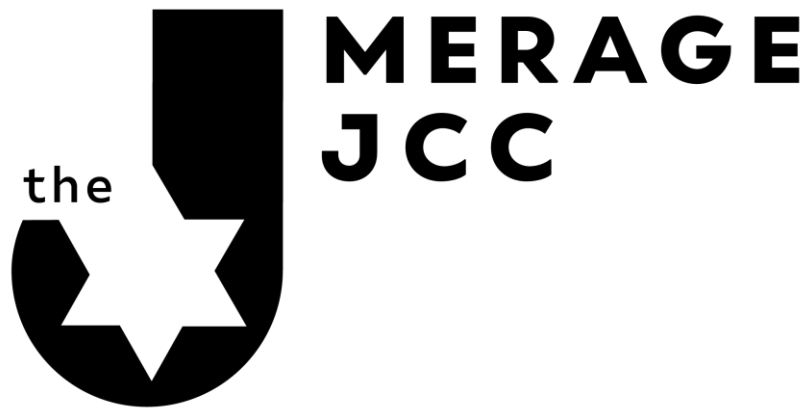
JCC Association
Center for Israel Engagement

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Draft (December 14, 2025)

Merage JCC of Orange County
Israel Through the Culinary Lens

OCTOBER 6-14, 2026



Tour Leader: Liron Regev, Culinary Arts Director
Tour chairs: Dana Hollander, Julie Sherman and Dana Susson
Culinary Advisor: Adeena Sussman
Tour Educator: Maya Yehezkel

Shalom!

Welcome on this special journey with your friends from the Merage JCC. We will discover Israel through the lens of the culinary arts. We will cook together, eat together and learn about how the culinary arts can be a window into understanding Israeli society. Our journey to Israel will also recognize the changes of the last three years since the tragedy of October 7 and the ensuing war. And importantly, we will get to know new friends and colleagues.

Please note: Some meals or items indicated in the program. are at the participant's expense. The program. is subject to change.

Participants may request hotel accommodation prior to the beginning of the trip (at additional cost)
Participants can leave their luggage at the hotel to check in on OCTOBER 6 in the afternoon/evening.

DAY 1: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2026

Israel's Culinary Scene

Today we will begin our journey and look at what is Israeli cuisine and how it has evolved over the 78 years of the State of Israel

MORNING

9 a.m. Meet up in Tel Aviv at Mayer hotel and meet with the tour educator, Hadara Arbel, for an orientation to our journey together and a blessing of gratitude for being together (Shehecheyanu)

10 a.m. Depart for meeting with [Adeena Sussman](#), chef, food writer, author and culinary consultant for a guided walk and food tasting in the Carmel market (one of the stops will be at the Ethiopian Balinjera restaurant and meeting with owner, Fanta Prada)

Free time to enjoy and shop at Nachalat Binyamin arts and crafts market

AFTERNOON

2:30 p.m. Aftermath of October 7 – new options
Meeting with Danielle Abraham, CEO of REGROW – a venture of the Volcani Institute that has worked since October 7, 2023 to support farmers in recovering and improving their agriculture

EVENING

7 p.m. Dinner at Lookout restaurant

Overnight Mayer House Hotel, Tel Aviv (or similar)

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 7, 2026

Today we will participate in a hands-on cooking workshop and explore what is “Jewish Food”

MORNING

9:30 a.m. Depart for cooking workshop with Chef Adeena Sussman (at Bishulim or Danon Cooking School) and then enjoy the fruits of your labor and sit and relish your meal!

AFTERNOON

2 p.m. “The Art of Food Photography,”
Meet with food photographer Dan Peretz and food stylist Nurit Kariv (at Dan’s studio in Tel Aviv)

Free time

EVENING

5 p.m. Depart for Kfar Yona to meet with members of the community
Dinner in Kfar Yona followed by October 7 memorial service (TBD)

Return to Tel Aviv

Overnight Mayer House Hotel, Tel Aviv (or similar)

DAY 3: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2026

Mosaic of the North

A first look at the mosaic and diversity of the country with a window into people of the Galilee, the Druze community

MORNING

Check out (for one night – we recommend you pack a small overnight bag)

9 a.m. Depart for the north, learn about the “masik” – olive harvest and the process of oil making at [Rish Lakish](#) in Tsippori

AFTERNOON

1 p.m. Lunch and home hospitality at Druze family – and understand the tremendous contribution of the Druze community to the safety of Israel through their service in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)

3 p.m. Depart for hotel
Check into Edmond Luxury Hotel and Spa

Time to enjoy the hotel facilities

Optional guided walk in Rosh Pina

Dinner at hotel

Overnight Edmond Luxury Hotel and Spa, Rosh Pina

DAY 3: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2026

Preparing for Shabbat

MORNING

Check out

Depart for Mitzpe Matat in the Upper Galilee

“From Farm to Table,” visit the home and vegetable gardens of Chef Erez

Komarovsky chef and baker considered the godfather of Israeli baking and one of Israel's most prominent culinary figures to learn about the local produce and partake in his workshop

AFTERNOON

2 p.m.

Depart for Tel Aviv

Kabbalat Shabbat at local synagogue (optional); candle lighting

EVENING

Friday night dinner (at Tel Aviv restaurant or hotel)

Overnight

Mayer House Hotel, Tel Aviv (or similar)

DAY 4: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2026

Shabbat in Tel-Aviv: Shabbat to Relax

Today will be a more leisurely day to enjoy Tel Aviv and the spirit of Shabbat, relax, meet up with friends and family,

MORNING

Participants will choose from among two concurrent activity tracks:

Track 1: morning at leisure to enjoy the hotel, meet family and friends

Track 2: "Beyond Beaches and Bauhaus," a guided walk with Hadara through historic Bialik Street and the Yemenite Quarter, uncovering the stories of influential figures and cultural movements that defined the "New Jew." Discover the soul of the first Hebrew city, from literary giants to vibrant musical traditions.

AFTERNOON

1 p.m.

Lunch in Tel Aviv

Depart for a short, guided visit to the Foodies exhibition at Anu – Museum of the Jewish People, which tells the story of Jewish food traditions from around the world

5 p.m.

Meet up for Havdalah followed by free time

EVENING

Dinner on own and free evening

Overnight

Mayer House Hotel, Tel Aviv (or similar)

DAY 5: SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2026
Remembering October 7

Today we will travel south to visit the site of the Nova massacre, we will hear how the communities coped with the invasion of the terrorists and how they are rebuilding their communities today and of course the role of food in healing process

MORNING

9 a.m. Current Events in Israel and Reflections on October 7, with journalist or Miri Eisen, retired colonel in the IDF and expert on geo-politics

Depart for the south, stopping en route at the tatzpitaniot monument to the IDF observation soldiers for an overview of the region

Visit to the Tekuma car graveyard to hear the stories of some of those whose cars torched by Hamas terrorists as they fled from the Nova music festival and other sites of terror

Continue south to visit the site of the Nova music festival that has become a memorial to over 360 people who were murdered, others taken hostage and survivors who have since taken their own life

AFTERNOON

Resilience and Rebuilding

Culinary tasting tour in Sderot, appreciating the resilience of the residents who have reopened their businesses, and at the same time enjoying the different ethnic foods -or-

Resilience and Rebuilding

Continue to Kibbutz Be'eri to meet with Yaki Sagi, founder of the Beeri bakery. The bakery was temporarily relocated to Tel Aviv following October 7 (in the hope that the bakery will be back in action in Kibbutz Beeri)

Visit to Yekev Oren (winery) in Netiv Haasara established by Eyal and Mali Stern in memory of Eyal's brother, Oren who fell on October 7 while fighting as part of the civil guard of the moshav

Drive to Jerusalem

Check into hotel

EVENING

Dinner at Satya restaurant in Jerusalem

Overnight Mamilla Hotel Jerusalem (or similar)

DAY 6: MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2026

Flavors of Jerusalem

Today we will explore the flavors of Jerusalem in the old and new city

MORNING

9 a.m. Jerusalem's Old-City merchants
Depart for the heart of Jerusalem's Old City and discover its hidden stories. Meet the artisans and merchants who carry on generations of tradition, from master ceramicists to spice experts and a fabric specialist. Capture the essence of this ancient city through unique lens and immersive cultural experiences.

Our lunch will be the tastings and flavors of the Old City: techina, spices, hummus, falafel, breads, halva and knafeh

AFTERNOON

3 p.m. Depart for a tour of the art and architecture and special treasures of the newly opened [National Library of Israel](#)

5 p.m. Wine and cheese at Notre Dam rooftop restaurant with the stunning views over the Old City

EVENING

Dinner on own and free evening

Optional evening walk into Mea Shearim or Geulah for a glimpse into the Hareidi (ultra-orthodox) world – stopping for local eats of shwarma, falafel or Jerusalem Kugel (advance sign up required)

Overnight Mamilla hotel, Jerusalem (or similar)

DAY 7: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2026

Modern Day Israel: Challenges and Achievements

Food is central for survival and for the soul – today we will look at food poverty and attempts to curb hunger for some Jerusalem residents.

MORNING

8 a.m. Depart for Mezilat Mazon, the [Jerusalem Food Rescuers](#) at the Jerusalem wholesale fruit and vegetable market in Givat Shaul. This non-profit organization aims to create a more just and sustainable urban food system with less waste, diverting surplus produce that would have otherwise gone to waste and support communities that don't have equitable access to food. Following a short tour of the market, there will be an opportunity to volunteer and participate in a food workshop

10:30 a.m. Depart for VIP guided tour behind the scenes at Yad Vashem

AFTERNOON

1 p.m. Depart for Machane Yehuda fruit and vegetable market
Lunch at Azura, Middle Eastern restaurant offering Iraqi and Kurdish dishes that have made it one of the most famous restaurants in Jerusalem, offering soul food with the flavors of the Middle East

2:30 p.m. Enjoy some free time
-or-
"It's Five O'clock Somewhere" a dram of gin at [Thinkers Distillery](#) in the market, enjoy a short tour and cocktail tastings

4 p.m. Return to the hotel

EVENING

Depart for the Judean desert for music and food under the stars at Canaanite restaurant

Overnight Mamilla Hotel, Jerusalem (or similar)

DAY 8: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2026

Touching the Land Before We Leave

MORNING

9 a.m. Depart for Moshav Mata in the Jerusalem hills to meet with [Nurit Hertz](#), chef and guide who will take us on a foraging tour in the Judean Hills a landscape in which the Jewish rural culture was formed. We will become familiar with the local plants that grow in the Judean Hills since Biblical times and their use for nourishment and medicine, with lunch

AFTERNOON

Exploring how the ancient art of winemaking has become a modern industry where Israel competes on the international stage

We will continue to [Underdog](#), one of the new boutique wineries in the Elah valley (known as the Wine Route), meet with owner Dror Engelstein to hear his story behind establishing the yekev (winery) and maintaining its despite months of reserve duty over the past two years

Return to Jerusalem; time to freshen up

4:30 p.m. Late checkout of rooms

EVENING

Wrap up discussion, dinner at Chakra

Depart on late night flight for North America or extension of vacation