

Berta Grunstein's Table Set For Seder



The photo shows a Pesach table set. On the back side it is written: 'On Pesach, April 11th 1984'. That's how a festive table looked. How beautiful it was. We even bought flowers, and I did the arrangements. A Jewish woman helped me, her husband worked at the community, but later she left for Israel. I had other aids too, who were Christians.

I started to work at the Jewish community a very long time ago; I worked for thirty-one years. Without anyone sending me, unasked I started to visit elder people, I wrote reports, I was some kind of social worker. I visited elder people; there were many old persons, so I brought them challah made by me. Poor people, they always used to tell me I should not bring them anything, just go and visit them. Whether they got any support from the Jewish community of Bucharest, I don't know that, it was a long time ago.

On high days it was me who organized the festive dinner. On Yom Kippur, when fasting was over, they made grilled meat for dinner, and I baked the cake, three or four hundred hamantashen, which is the specialty of Purim. I baked them at home, for the most part alone; I baked a few days earlier, because it had crumbly dough, so it got soften. It has to be cut out in circle, then folded in triangle.

For Seder night I prepared dinner from thirty or thirty-five kilograms of meat, sixty kilos of potatoes and thirty kilos of beet. I presented the list of what I needed at the community, and they bought the things. They gave eggs, oil and meat as well. I had to buy the rest, but it was well organized. There was a Hungarian family, who for each Pesach brought us thirty kilos of beet for pickles, but I had bought the horse-radish in advance. The entire preparations started one week before the high day, because the horse-radish and the beet had to mix well. I put on the flowers and the decoration on the last day to make it fresh. We were cooking khremzlakh for two hours, but it was the last thing to prepare, because it had to be fresh.

While my husband was alive, I prepared dinner for each Seder night. I organized the last dinner in 2001 - I was doing this for thirty years. There were a hundred and thirty persons at the last dinner I organized. They always used to say there wouldn't be many people. 'Don't spend much money,

don't buy much stuff.' Nevertheless I always bought the quantity that was needed, because I already knew; luckily I did it well, because at the end there was nothing left for the staff. I had assistance, but not much; I did by myself what was the most important part of it, because I wanted it to be as it had to be. We worked a few days in advance, then on the last day I was up and working for sixteen hours. When Seder was over, men made order in the room, women did the dishes, made order in the kitchen, and we came home at midnight. During the night I always had cramp in my legs. My poor husband, when I had cramp, I cried, so he brought spirit and did a massage for me.