

# SHIFT CHANGE

January 25, 2022



ILLUSTRATION BY DEBORAH TINT

By Christopher Cox

In July, mandatory member labor returned to the Coop for the first time since the pandemic began. It was not, however, a return to the system that had kept the Coop running for decades. Gone were the giant ledgers filled with workslots; gone were the

squads with the same people bagging dried fruit or stocking inventory or cleaning the walk-in freezers together throughout the year; gone were recurring shifts altogether. Members, suddenly, were all placed on the Future Time Off Program (FTOP), responsible for scheduling their own shifts each cycle. (A new name for these work assignments is forthcoming; until then it's FTOP all the way down).

Mercifully, the Coop had developed a way to make the change easier on the members: a brand-new online shift-scheduling calendar that debuted during the pandemic. I spoke with Ann Herpel, a General Coordinator, and Matt Hoagland, a Membership Coordinator, about how the new system was developed. We spoke via video conference, with Herpel and Hoagland in separate offices in the Coop. Hoagland wore a hockey jersey and a high-quality respirator; Herpel's video signal wasn't working, but her voluble, upbeat voice came through loud and clear.

Herpel said that plans for putting shift scheduling under the Member Services tab on the Coop's website had been in the works for years, but it took the disruptions of the past two years to get it off the ground. "The pandemic makes you innovate right on the spot," she said. By fall 2020, the new calendar was ready for its first trial run, just as members were invited back to work in the Coop on a voluntary basis. (I signed up for several of those early shifts, most of them outdoors, and it was a dream: as many cart return shifts as you could schedule, week after week.) "It was like having a big test group to help us improve software and user interface and instructions and everything," Herpel said. "So probably the rollout was a little smoother than if had we just gone from zero to a hundred in one day."

"THE PANDEMIC MAKES YOU INNOVATE RIGHT ON THE SPOT."

**GENERAL COORDINATOR, ANN HERPEL**

By mid June 2021, the system was ready to handle the full return of member labor. In

contrast to the old system of four-week cycles, members were at first only required to work every seven weeks, then six, and now five. Today, if you sign up for a shift online, you'll have the chance to filter by committee and time of day. You can sign up for a shift the same day (up to a half hour before the shift) or 27 days in the future, and you can cancel up until 8 p.m. the night before. To incentivize people to sign up for less desirable workslots, like early-morning truck unloading, some are designated "carrot shifts"—complete enough of them, and you'll get an extra work credit.

← Previous Week

Thu 1/20/2022	Fri 1/21/2022	Sat 1/22/2022	Sun 1/23/2022	Mon 1/24/2022	Tue 1/25/2022
5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚
5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚
5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Lifting 🚚
5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Stocking 📦
5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Stocking 📦	5:00am Stocking 📦
5:30am Stocking 📦	5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚
5:30am Stocking 📦	5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚
6:00am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚	6:00am Lifting 🚚	6:00am Lifting 🚚	6:00am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚
6:00am Lifting 🚚	6:00am Lifting 🚚	6:00am Lifting 🚚	6:00am Lifting 🚚	6:00am Lifting 🚚	5:30am Lifting 🚚
6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	5:30am Stocking 📦
6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	5:30am Stocking 📦
6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Health & Beauty 🧴
6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Stocking 📦	6:00am Lifting 🚚



ILLUSTRATION BY DEBORAH TINT

Hoagland said that they anticipated many members would need help navigating the web interface, but “the need did not materialize as much as we thought it would.” (There was, however, a spike in retirements when member labor returned.) Although there was “a level of initial resistance from some people,” Hoagland continued, most members seem happy with the change. One poll—a mandatory survey administered to anyone who used Member Services for a two-week period in November and December—found that 70% of the membership wanted to stick with the new system.

In addition to the ability to easily poll the membership, funneling everyone through Member Services has other benefits. The Coop finally has an accurate, up-to-date record of everyone’s email addresses. Members can easily see descriptions of any work-slot—a full rundown of each job pops up whenever you click on a shift. And, most important, say Hoagland and Herpel, it’s eliminated a persistent source of problems at the Coop: the make-up shift. Before the pandemic, if you missed a shift, you were supposed to work two make-ups: your original shift plus a penalty one. Some squad leaders, however, would allow members to avoid the penalty make-up if they canceled early enough—or if they simply wanted to be nice. That led to uneven enforcement of the rules. “It was so arbitrary,” said Herpel. “It was inconsistent.” Getting rid of that, she said, “removes the culture around bias, favoritism, whatever.”

Now members sign up only for shifts they know they can work, and they can cancel up to the night before without penalty. There is no room for discretion—the computer runs the show. Hoagland said that the make-up shifts themselves caused problems: dozens of people would show up when they weren’t needed, while other workslots went unfilled. “Now,” he said, “we’re directing people exactly where we need them, and we can grow and decrease the size of these shifts immediately.” The number of no-shows has become “negligible.”

**“[THE CURRENT SYSTEM] IS BUILT ON A PIECE OF SOFTWARE THAT IS INCREDIBLY OUTDATED AND VERY RIGID.”**

One final benefit: fewer people are working while ill. “I think the habit was for a lot of people, myself included, that if you’re kind of under the weather, but you’re okay enough to go, you’re gonna push through it. We would bring a lot more sickness into the building as a result,” said Hoagland. Easy cancellations and the end of recurring shifts make it simple to isolate for several days and return to the Coop when you’re healthy.

Up next, Herpel said, is a more complete overhaul of the Coop’s member database, to allow Member Services to work even more efficiently, though that process has been slow. “It’s built on a piece of software that is incredibly outdated and very rigid,” she said. There will also be a return to a recurring workslot option for those members who want it, most likely in April. They’re sticking with the five-week schedule, though. It works, and who doesn’t want a little extra time between shifts?

*Christopher Cox is an editor and writer. His book, ‘The Deadline Effect,’ was published in July.*

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## THE VACCINE MANDATE AND THE PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP

January 25, 2022



ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

## *A Discussion with Joe Holtz*

*By Frank Haberle*

On December 6, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced major expansions to the “Key to NYC” program, the first-in-nation vaccination mandate for workers and customers at indoor dining, fitness, entertainment and performance venues. In addition, the mayor also announced a first-in-the-nation vaccine mandate for private-sector workers. The

mandate, which was to take effect on December 27, would apply to roughly 184,000 businesses—a list which includes all businesses, nonprofit entities and the Park Slope Food Coop. At the time, December 6, the Mayor’s office announced that guidelines would be released December 15—when released, the further guidelines specified that interns and volunteers were included in the mandate.

**New York City requires:**  
**ALL MEMBER-WORKERS**  
**must be vaccinated**  
**against COVID-19 to**  
**work a shift.**

**REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR**  
**VACCINE RECORD TO SHOW AT**  
**CHECK-IN FOR EACH**  
**SCHEDULED SHIFT.**

To find out where to get a free COVID-19 vaccine,  
visit [nyc.gov/vaccinefinder](https://nyc.gov/vaccinefinder) or  
call **877-VAX-4NYC** (877-829-4692).

NYC may change recommendations  
as the situation evolves. 12.14.21

**NYC VACCINE FOR ALL:**  
**SAFE, FREE, EASY**

**NYC**

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN DIAZ

For the PSFC, this has required a fast and major overhaul of our own guidelines and

practices to ensure that we are in compliance with the new mandate. From the December 6 announcement, the PSFC's 92 paid staff (71 full-time permanent staff, 8 permanent part-time, and 13 pandemic support staff) had to either vaccinate or apply for an accommodation by December 27 (more than 90% were already compliant). However, under the December 15 announcement, the mandate's extension also would include working members (who are, under the City's definition, 'volunteers').

“OUR MEMBER WORKERS ARE NOT REALLY EMPLOYEES AND THEY ARE NOT VOLUNTEERS—THEY SIGN UP FOR WORK SHIFTS VOLUNTARILY AND THEY SCHEDULE THEMSELVES.”

*GENERAL COORDINATOR JOE HOLTZ*

The new mandates put the PSFC into a short turnaround window over the holidays to work with staff and on-site working members to communicate and clarify the new requirements and put systems in place to ensure that working members kept proof of vaccination or had applied for an exemption. The *Linewaiters' Gazette* spoke to General Coordinator Joe Holtz to learn more about the PSFC's experience with the mandates, how the PSFC responded and what this means to our workforce.

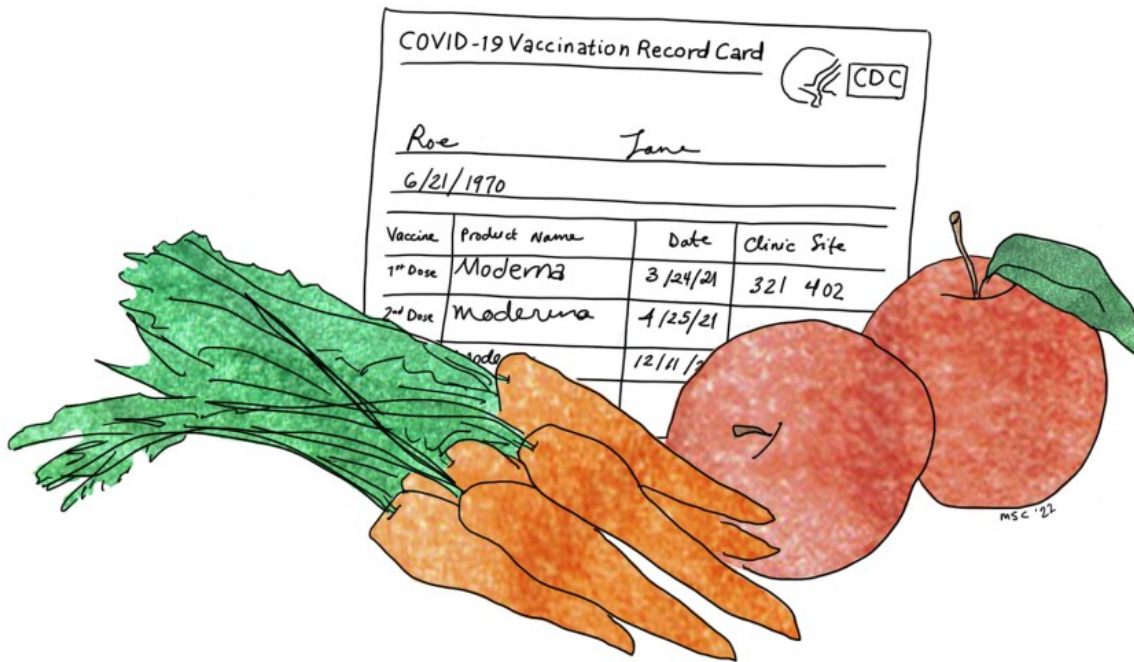


ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

## A Fast Turnaround

“As it was originally announced on December 6, the vaccine mandate was extended to all private employers in New York City—even those with under 100 employees,” Holtz recalled. “Because we currently have 92 employees, down from 200 in July, we were not required by the Federal mandate [since overturned by the Supreme Court] to have workers either get a vaccination or get tested weekly. The new NYC mandate announced by de Blasio required that all workers get vaccinated or get a formal accommodation for not being vaccinated. This announcement gave us three weeks to meet with our staff and ensure that they understood and met the requirements. As this only affected a small percentage of our staff, this did not pose a serious problem, and all of our staff complied.

“The follow-up announcement on December 15, which defined what they meant by ‘workers,’ posed a much bigger problem for the PSFC,” Holtz continued. “By definition, a ‘worker’ under the mandate would include employees, interns, or volunteers. Under their definition, our working members are essentially ‘volunteers.’ So, suddenly, the PSFC was grappling with a serious challenge: how do we communicate to our

10,000 working members that they need to be vaccinated or apply for accommodation in two weeks, in order to work their shifts and stay active at the Coop?”

WELCOME

### PROTECT EACH OTHER

At the Coop we take everyone's safety seriously. We require all adults and children age 2 and up to wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth **AT ALL TIMES** when inside the building.



*Never pull down your mask. Members that fail to cooperate with our mask protocols may be asked to leave the store. If you have any questions, please visit the Membership Office.*

### IMPORTANT! VALVE MASKS

Masks with valves do not protect those around you and are therefore prohibited inside The Coop.



**NO!**

This is based on guidance from the NYC Health Dept.

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN DIAZ

Holtz pointed out that, unlike the pre-COVID days of two years ago, “the PSFC has worked to build out our member service, and we encouraged members to update their email addresses and register with Member Services. So reaching out to members to alert them was not as great a problem.” The Coop was able to email all members and communicate in various ways. Announcements were made on the PSFC website. But because of the holiday break and the rapid rise of Omicron, there was no definite way to reach every Coop member. By December 27, a system was in place: at the start of every work shift, working members must demonstrate that they have proof on hand or have applied for an accommodation. This is the only way, should a health inspector make an unannounced visit, that we can ensure that the PSFC is protected. At the same time, the mandate supports that more working members interacting with each other, with staff and with shopping members on the Coop shopping floors are vaccinated and that we are keeping our members safer from the spread of COVID-19.

“PSFC IS FORMALLY A BUSINESS ENTITY IN NEW YORK CITY, AND WE HAVE TO OBEY NEW YORK CITY MANDATES.”

*GENERAL COORDINATOR JOE HOLTZ*

“You could make the case that this was not a reasonable thing to ask,” Holtz said. “Our member workers are not really employees and they are not volunteers—they sign up for work shifts voluntarily and they schedule themselves. We don’t recognize or refer to our member workers as ‘volunteers’—we see them as workers. But under the City’s definition, they are ‘volunteers,’ even if we don’t like the word. When you come to do a work shift, you are a ‘working member,’ not a volunteer. When you come to shop, you are a ‘shopping member,’ not a ‘customer.’ And when you come to the General Meeting and have your voice heard and vote on important topics, you are an ‘owner member.’”

## Member Response

Holtz was asked if there has been member pushback on the vaccine mandate. “Some members have definitely pushed back on this,” Holtz replied. “We’ve received some phone calls and emails. One member said that it’s not officially law until the New York City Council votes on it, that the Mayor does not have authority, and that we should ignore the mandate until the City Council votes. But we’re not willing to take the risk of having the PSFC closed down. Another member argued that they don’t believe this is what the Coop stands for. I agree with them, but PSFC is formally a business entity in New York City, and we have to obey New York City mandates. As an administrator of the PSFC, my intent is not to put the PSFC at risk by not obeying this. Another member is asking me to not comply, to make a stand. But that member can write an agenda item, and we can vote on it as a cooperative. In the meantime, the PSFC has to obey rules and regulations in New York City, and we try to follow public health mandates and requirements.

“The most common refrain is to say, ‘I have a problem with these rules at the PSFC.’ But in this case, these are not the rules of the PSFC. These are the rules of New York City.” Holtz recommends that PSFC members who have issues with this come together and communicate with one another. “We are truly a unique organization. But when the Mayor included ‘volunteers’ in his mandate, he was probably thinking of nonprofit groups that have 100 or 200 volunteers. But under the City of New York’s definition, we have 10,000 volunteers. Does any other business or nonprofit entity in NYC have this many?

“We tried to pound the message home to our members,” Holtz concluded. “Some people are still deeply committed to not getting vaccinated. But the PSFC needs to follow the public health guidelines. We want the PSFC to be a good public health citizen. We want everyone here to be a part of preventing the spread of the disease.”



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# TASTING THE WORLD WITH AUTHOR LEAH KOENIG

January 25, 2022

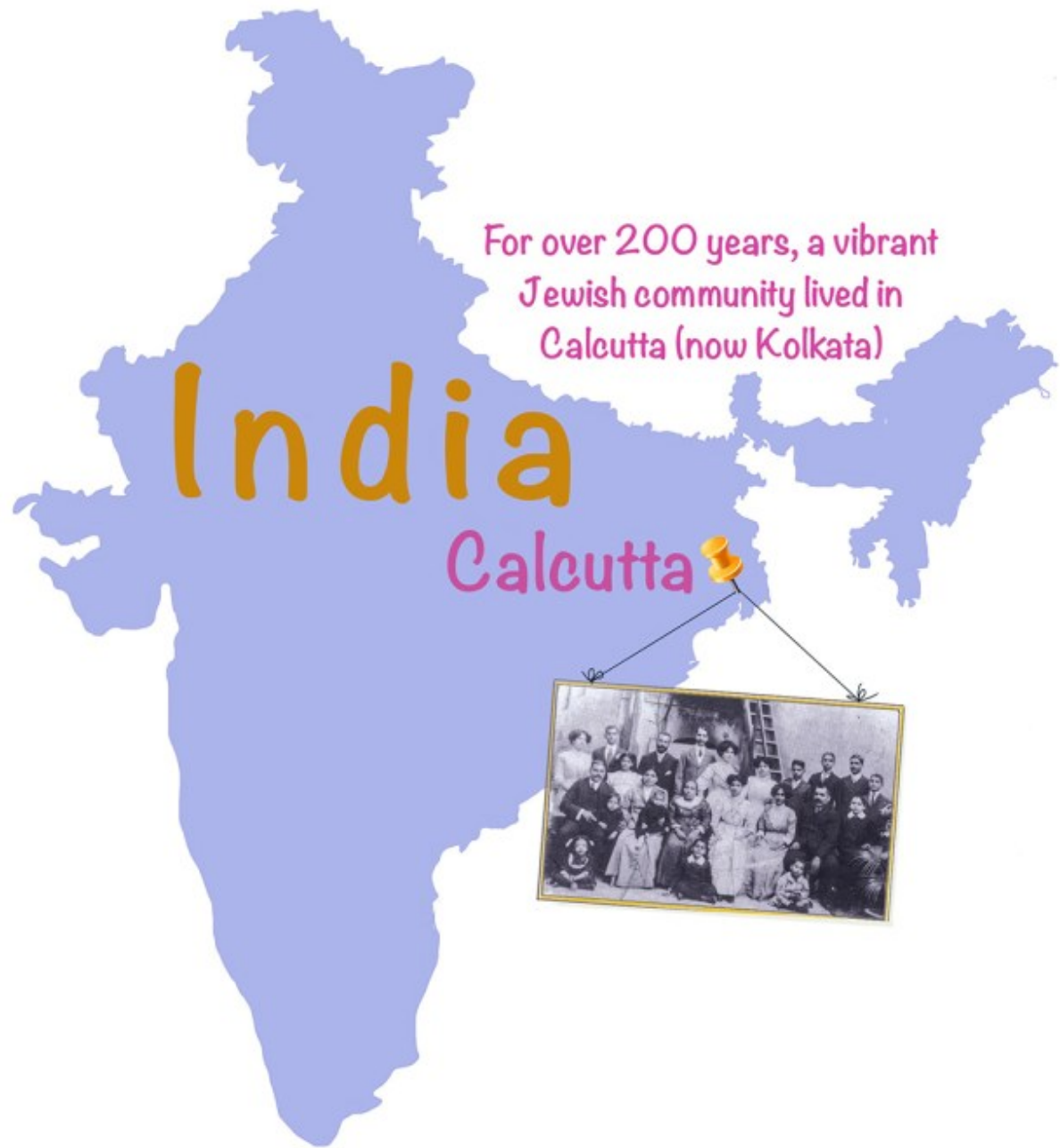


ILLUSTRATION BY ROD MORRISON

*By Zoe Singer*

Joining the Coop was one of the first things cookbook author Leah Koenig did when she got to Brooklyn in 2004. These days, you'll find her strolling the aisles picking up ingredients for her seventh cookbook about global Jewish food. "My philosophy about Jewish food is that it's a chance to see the world: Jews have lived and cooked almost everywhere. Especially right now, while we're still in this pandemic, there's this desire

to travel for a lot of us, and for me cookbooks have been a way to tap into the world when I can't visit in person."

Through more than 400 home-cooking recipes in her most recently published book, *The Jewish Cookbook*, Leah celebrates the diversity and breadth of the Jewish culinary tradition, with flavors from the Middle East to the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa. To give us a taste, she shared a stunningly delicious recipe for chicken (or fish) fritters flecked with scallion, jalapeño, and fresh ginger.

# THE JEWISH



# COOKBOOK

PHAIDON

LEAH KOENIG

The fritter recipe is from Kolkata (formerly “Calcutta”), where a vibrant community of Jews from Iraq and Syria settled and thrived for more than 200 years before eventually dwindling almost to extinction during mass migrations to Israel in the 20th century. “This one recipe shows how Jewish food is constantly evolving and is so much broader and deeper than what people think of, far beyond Eastern European foods like brisket and latkes,” Leah said. As culinary traditions evolved over time and across distance, the originally Iraqi fritter dish acquired more typically Indian flavors. Simple enough to make on a weeknight, they’re a favorite in her house served over coconut rice (that recipe, also in *The Jewish Cookbook*, hails from Mumbai).

“MY PHILOSOPHY ABOUT JEWISH FOOD IS THAT IT’S A CHANCE TO SEE THE WORLD: JEWS HAVE LIVED AND COOKED ALMOST EVERYWHERE.”

For her next book, Leah is focusing on the cooking of Rome’s 2,000-year-old Jewish community. Leah reminisced about visiting the area in her twenties, attributing her decision to become a cookbook author to her love for Roman Jewish cooking. “It exploded my curiosity, and I fell in love with this ancient community,” she recalled. “The history of the cuisine predates what we think of as Jewish cooking. My hope is that these recipes are interesting to people whether or not they have Jewish backgrounds.”

Through the flavors and stories in her books, Leah aims to “widen the world and build conversations.” Especially now when getting a taste of far away places and times is particularly welcome. And it’s nice to know that we can find most of the ingredients in these recipes right here at the Coop.



Chicken or fish scallion, ginger fritters—ready to serve as a snack or pre-dinner appetizer.

### **Chicken, Scallion and Ginger Fritters**

*Recipe reprinted, with permission, from *The Jewish Cookbook* (Phaidon, 2019) by Leah Koenig*

Jews hailing from Calcutta serve these savory and gently spiced fritters, called *arook tahine*, as a snack or pre-dinner appetizer. This recipe uses chicken, but they are also commonly made with an equivalent weight of firm fish fillets. The fresh herbs and scallions give the fritters a gorgeous green color.



Serves 4-6

- 1 bunch scallions, white and green parts, roughly chopped
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and roughly chopped
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup roughly chopped fresh cilantro or flat-leaf parsley
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour (or gluten free all-purpose flour)
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- Vegetable oil (like sunflower), for frying



Scallions, jalapeño, ginger and cilantro ready for the food processor.



Transfer thick pancake-like batter to a bowl then refrigerate.

1. In a food processor, combine the scallions, jalapeño, ginger, and cilantro and pulse, scraping down the bowl as necessary, until very finely chopped.

2. Add the chicken, flour, eggs, and salt and pulse until a wet batter forms—it should be the consistency of thick pancake batter. Transfer to a bowl, cover, and refrigerate for 1 hour.

3. Line a large plate with paper towels and set aside. In a large frying pan, heat about 1/4 inch of oil over medium heat. Working in batches of 4-5, scoop out the batter by the 1/4 cup and add to the pan, gently flattening and nudging into rounds. Fry, flipping once, until golden brown on both sides and cooked through, about 8 minutes total. Add more oil in between batches, as necessary.

4. Transfer to the paper towel-lined plate to drain. Serve hot.



Fry batter until golden brown on both sides.



Transfer to the paper towel and serve hot.

*Coop member Leah Koenig is the author of six cookbooks including 'The Jewish Cookbook' (Phaidon, 2019) and 'Modern Jewish Cooking' (Chronicle Books). She is currently at work on her next book, which explores Rome's historic Jewish cuisine. Her writing and recipes can be found in The New York Times, New York Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, Food & Wine, Epicurious, Food52, and Tablet, among other publications. She also writes a weekly newsletter, The Jewish Table, which shares recipes and stories from the world of Jewish food. Leah also leads cooking demonstrations and workshops around the country and world.*



PHOTO BY SOPHIE BARBASCH

Leah Koenig

*Zoe Singer is a former food writer and recipe developer turned grant writer. She is a lifelong Brooklynite and longtime Coop member.*

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## VOTING RIGHTS

January 25, 2022

To the Editor

Not enough time at the November 30 General Meeting for a vote on restoring squads with member leaders.

My six months of work ended in frustration and disappointment. Now, I see the confusion as an opening, a chance for member-owners to get involved in the Coop's definitive decision after humanity was slammed so hard by Covid-19. The vote was postponed until March or April.

Member-owners can study, discuss, debate and may vote on how our required labor will be organized after the emergency measures end. We may maintain the identity built over 46 years, or move to a 21st-century management model, or maybe a hybrid, or maybe another option. We member-owners are responsible and authorized to decide. Though inefficient and vulnerable, voting can best maintain our social cohesion. When the majority participate and the majority decide, we support the collective. We maintain unity and solidarity.

Paid employees are also members with a vote. The debate will function when it is open, transparent and equitable. Employees have demanding jobs and regularly commit even more time and energy. Policy decisions and planning are assigned by Coop bylaws and by state laws, to Coop member-owners with the final authorization being

a public vote of five members elected to the Board of Directors. Board members are the only officials of the organization chosen regularly by us, responsible to us and replaceable by us.

The struggle continues. Long live the PSFCoop.

*Susan Metz*