International Study in Food, Culture, and Nutrition in Israel

**Director:**
Lisa Sasson  
lisa.sasson@nyu.edu

**Course Description and Objectives:**
This multidisciplinary course will explore the complexity of a wide range of issues related to food, nutrition, culture, health and agriculture in Israel. The course draws on the knowledge of academic and professional experts, food producers, and locals to investigate these interrelationships through field trips, site visits, interviews and lectures. The rich history of this region, cradle of the three monotheistic religions, was a host to every major civilization from time of antiquity to modernity. This history partially explains the remarkably diverse environmental, social, political and economic conditions. We’ll try to understand how Israel’s agriculture, cuisine, and health system has been shaped. Students will be staying in Tel Aviv- a vibrant, cook city that combines beautiful Mediterranean beaches, exciting cultural scene, historical sites and incredible food.

Class participation, readings, and a final project will be required. Group field trips and some meals are included. For optional meals and other optional experiences in the syllabus you are on your own.

**Required Book (to read before you go):**
*Falafel Nation, (Cuisine and the Making of National Identity in Israel)* by Yael Raviv  
University of Nebraska Press

**Assignment- due first day of class**
After reading *Falafel Nation*, briefly answer the question below and be prepared to discuss your response during our class meetings. Your response should be no more than a page and should be posted to our NYU Classes site under assignments.

**Question**
In the book, *Falafel Nation*, the author illustrates how the historical, cultural, political social, and economic role of food has shape the modern portrait of Israel. Using three examples that draw from the reading, explain how food and food production has influenced Israeli identity?

**Required Fun Reading:**

**Recommended Books/Articles/Films**
**Books:** (beautiful cookbook with historic and cultural information)
General Histories of Israel

Special Topics in Israeli History, Politics and Society

The Israeli-Arab Conflict

Films
In Search of the Israeli Cuisine- Roger Sherman- Documentary 2 hrs -Netflix
The Eichmann Show • 2015 • Drama • 1h 30m
Ajami • 2009 • Drama/Crime film • 2h 4m
Dancing Arabs (A Borrowed Identity) • 2014 • Drama • 1h 45m
Waltz with Bashir • 2008 • Drama/Biography • 1h 30m
The Gatekeepers • 2012 • Documentary • 1h 41m
Paradise Now • 2005 • Drama/Crime film • 1h 30m
Dimona Twist • 2016 • History/Documentary • 1h 11m
Yossi & Jagger • 2002 • Drama/Romance • 1h 7m
Walk on Water • 2004 • Drama/Mystery • 1h 45m

Additional Readings:
Most of the class readings are available on NYU Classes- under Resources folder. These readings were selected to coordinate with the lectures and field trips. You will have a much better understanding and appreciation of the lectures if you do the readings beforehand. It will also help you with ideas for your research project in Israel.

**SAMPLE CLASS SCHEDULE**

**DAY 1**  
Arrival Day  
6:00  Meet outside dorm in garden. Walk together to restaurant for the welcome dinner  
Streets Café: Ibn Gvirol 114

**DAY 2**  
9:00 a.m.  Mandatory Orientation for all students- Eran Rothshenkar  
Meet in Bnei Dan lobby  
Neighborhood tour and mandatory orientation for all students- Eran Rothshenkar  

10:30  Shuttle to Jaffa (Yafo) - walking tour of Jaffa and Flea Market (Shuk Ha Pishpishim)  
Lunch on your own – suggestions will be given by tour guide

2:30- 3:45  Meet back at NYU Tel Aviv, Brandeis Street, 17  
Introduction to Israel History and Linguistic Landscape-Benjamin Hary, Director of NYU/TA  

3:45  Break  
4:00-5:00  Orientation about the course and the program: grading, schedule, discussion of projects, history of the Mediterranean Diet - Lisa Sasson  
5:00- 5:45  Olive Oil- History in Mediterranean diet, production, quality, health benefits and Tastings, led by Karin Pantzer, public health nutritionist, Italy  
6:00-6:30  Kitchen orientation  
7:00  Meet for Happy Hour- location TBA

**DAY 3**  
8:30-11 a.m.  Visit to Dizengoff Center- Rooftop Urban Farm on top shopping center!  
1:00  Israel Political Culture – lecture and tour led by, Edan Raviv at Yitzhak Rabin Center
Take bus #24 from King George street (or Yehuda HaMaccabi) to Eretz Yisrael Museum; walk to Yitzhak Rabin Center
It is the first and only museum in Israel to explore the development of the State of Israel as a young democracy.

4:30 Iconic Foods of Israel -Ronit Vered, journalist on food and culture, Ha aretz newspaper (similar to The New York Times)
Lecture will be held at Tel Aviv University (short walk from museum)

5:30 Visit- Table Manners Art, Theater and Food Exhibition –Tel Aviv University, led by Ronit Vered, curator of culinary events of exhibition
Table Manners is a unique project on art, theater and food. The exhibition engages with food and its place in culture and presents works of art that reflect social behavior through one of the most basic human activities. It features dozens of works by Israeli and international artists.
Discussion with Tel Aviv University students and artists about meaning of food, and reflection of the exhibition- led by Ronit Vered and Alon Shepon

**DAY 4**
9:00-10 a.m. Janna Gur. A cook books author, food writer and editor. History of Israeli Cuisine. For your reference: [http://www.jannagur.com](http://www.jannagur.com)
Influence of Jewish Food on the Israeli Cuisine; what is kosher food?

10:30 Shuttle to “Shuk” (Open air fruit and vegetable market) Ha Tikva
Guided Tour and tastings of Shuk Ha Tikva led by Hagit Ulanovsky

Lunch Picnic lunch with “surprise products” student bought in the market.
After lunch, shuttle back to academic center

2:00 Snapshot of Current Israelis’ Health and Health System -Dorit Adler- Nutritionist

4:00 Alon Shepon, Environmental Scientist - The Effect of Livestock Production on the Environment
**DAY 5**
Journey down south to desert- Negev
Pick up at 7:30 a.m.
Visit at Research and Development agricultural center in Ashelim
http://negev.org/
Learn and explore desert agriculture

Shivta –Ancient Nabatean City-declared a world heritage site by UNESCO
An ancient agricultural and archaeological site- tour led by Prof Tali Erickson-Gini

Ezuz – Small community settlement in Negev desert- visit an orchard that practices ancient agriculture cultivation hosted by Erzoni family

Overnight: Bedouin Village, (sleeping in Bedouin tent) discussion and tasting traditional Bedouin cuisine. Bedouin are traditionally nomadic Arab tribes living in the Negev region of Israel, and adhere to Islam (sleeping bags will be provided).

**DAY 6**
Nir Avieli, Prof of Food and Culture from Ben Gurion University (BGU) will lecture on: Israeli Food and Culture in the village, Qaser al Sir, Dimona

Visit to Black Hebrew village in Dimona
Cooking workshop of their “vegan soul food” by Black Hebrew community
Return to Tel Aviv

**DAY 7**
*Free day*

**DAY 8**
8:00 a.m. Drive to the Judean Hills for a visit to Shai Seltzer – Cheese & Goats Farm - Artisan Cheese making and tasting

Picnic lunch on the way to the artisanal winery

1:30 p.m. Sea Horse Boutique Winery in the Jerusalem Mountains - tour and tasting

3:00 p.m. Neot Kedumim, Biblical Landscape Reserve – Prof. Tova Dickstein – Biblical Food and Biblical Cooking Workshop "an enchanting journey to the ancient Land of Israel, experiencing the foods and traditions from that era. We will collect edible plants and spices, while listening to stories, tales and legends. Along the way, we will get to know the medical and nutritious values of different plants, while comparing treatments in the past with modern medical knowledge." At the end of the tour, we will prepare a Biblical meal using ancient recipes.

**DAY 9**
9 a.m. Observational and Hands on cooking class- Danon Culinary School – 3 Hataarucha Street Building 10- North Port, Tel Aviv, led by head chef, Hagai Lerner - Classic Israeli dips ( hummus, tehini, eggplant on the fire) , falafel, vegetables, salads and pita bread

*Must wear long pants and closed shoes (no sandals)*

www.yarid-hamizrach.co.il/English/business/?itemid=%7B7458A074-25CE-4B86-9ADA-A44FE9DC5C77%7D

2 PM Kitchen Hub- Innovators/ Start Up in Food, Agriculture- talk led by David Nini, Chief Technology Officer

www.thekitchenhub.com/leadership

See “Portfolio folder” for the kitchen hub projects

6:30 p.m. NYU Alumni Reception at Steinhardt Museum of Natural History- TAU

You can take a bus, share a taxi or a 30 minute walk from campus


**DAY 10**
8:00 a.m. Tour led by Ronit Vered, pick-up and drive to Nazareth to explore local Palestinian cuisine.
Visit includes: tehini factory run by 2 Arab women, ancient flour mill that locals still bring their harvest to be milled, spice shop and meeting locals.

Lunch at restaurant, Diana

**DAY 11**

8:00 a.m. Pick-up for a drive to Jerusalem. Tour of the old city sacred sites to the 3 monotheistic religions; Western Wall, Temple Mount (if open), Church of the Holy Sepulcher.
Enjoy culinary Old City market and visit a traditional sesame producer
Food tastings and meeting food vendors in the Old City

~12:30 p.m. The Scrolls of Fire in the mountains outside Jerusalem. It is a monument which tells the story of The Holocaust
The Governor House Hill, an observation point and beautiful promenade in south Jerusalem.
The Abu Tor, a neighborhood that was divided 51 years ago. Arabs and Israeli Jews live on the same street. A great view to Mount Zion

3:00 p.m. Guided tour and tastings – Meheve Yehuda market

5:30 p.m. Drinks and appetizers at Dorit Adler’s home – Beit Zeit- overlooking Judean Mountains

**DAY 12**

Food Waste, Sustainability and Research in Nutrition and Agriculture

8:00 a.m. Hebrew University- Rehovot, Faculty of Agriculture Food and Environment, meet leading researchers in food, nutrition and agriculture, tour

11:00 a.m. Visit Weizman Institute of Science (www.weizmann.ac.il) is one of the world’s leading multidisciplinary basic research institutions
The Personalized Nutrition Project - www.personalnutrition.org/Home.aspx - Private meeting with one of the researchers

1:30 p.m. Heriya Recycling Park
A former garbage dump that is now a flourishing park and Center for Environmental Education.
Guided tour of The Center and lunch at The Heriya Café – a social and environmental project for disadvantaged youth (http://www.hiriya.co.il/eng/Caf%C3%A9_Hiriya)
Lunch on your own at the cafe

Evening Free
**DAY 13**

10:00 a.m. Visit to Lehamim (*Breads Bakery) with owner and founder Uri Scheft/ including workshop on preparation of Challah – need to confirm
*may be familiar with Uri Scheft’s “Breads” Bakery in Manhattan- voted best babka in NY!

Lunch Suggestions: have typical humus Friday lunch with locals, fun day strolling around Tel Aviv

Afternoon free
Suggestions: Nehalat Binyamin- art and jewelry crafts fair every Friday and Tuesday, walking around TA,

5:00 p.m. Bus pick up for kibbutz tour and dinner at Kibbutz Nachshonim – Shabbat dinner
Meeting with one of the founders of the kibbutz and kibbutzniks (members of a kibbutz)

**DAY 14**

*Free Day*

Possible trips options: Dead Sea, Masada?

**DAY 15**

9:30 a.m. Sustainable projects in the municipality (Tel Aviv): Food policy and The Green Label
Guy Deknuydt, Urban Food Policy for Tel Aviv – Yafo municipality, Adi Ashkenazi, The Green Label for Business Coordinator of the municipality

11:00 a.m. Debrief, student research projects presentation, reflections of program

7:30 p.m. Farewell dinner

**DAY 16 – Departure**

Check-out

**The Observation/Research Project**
The goal, while you are in Israel, is to expose you to as many different aspects of Israeli food and nutrition culture as 16 day program will allow. It is my hope that at the end, you will not only gain insight into Israeli culture, but that your experiences will also give you new insights into your culture back home. While the philosophy behind the syllabus is generalist in nature, I do want each of you to become a specialist in at least one aspect of food and/or nutrition culture. There isn’t much point to being in Israel and being stuck in front of a computer or with your head buried in a book. You have to get out there and experience and observe a different culture
in order to really understand anything about it. To this end I created a project that includes an observation/research component in Israel and paper back in the U.S (or you home country)

On the first day of classes (5/28) you will be asked to choose a food, food culture or nutrition-related topic that will draw on your personal and scholarly interests. The options for topics are unlimited, but they should adhere to the following parameters:

1. The topic you choose must be a bona fide topic of cultural interest that pertains to food, food culture or nutrition and that has been studied or written about to some extent.
2. The topic should be approachable both from an Israeli and an American perspective, i.e., you will have to find evidence/data and information you can interpret.
3. The topic should contain a historical or at least a temporal element, i.e., there should be some way to trace changes over time.
4. There should also be an experiential component, which will not only help keep your interests focused, but will also make you’re writing more engaging.
5. The topic should allow for some creative conceptualization and interpretation to give your finished project some color and interest.

You should have a good idea about what you want to study before you get to Israel. And you should do some preliminary research before you get there so you don’t have to waste any time floundering about. Here are some suggestions for topics:

- Humus culture
- Coffee shops
- Spices- history, use in foods, purported health benefits?
- Immigrant Food Patterns such as: pre independence, mainly Ashkenazi (central, eastern European, post-independence from Middle Eastern/Muslim countries, recent, Russian and Ethiopian
- Food Biotechnology
- Israeli Cookbook- historical and current
- Food Advertising to Children
- Historical, cultural context and use of iconic Foods (Food) of Israel
- Olive Oil
- What makes a meal in Israel?
- Mealtimes/meal patterns/snacking
- Restaurant decorum
- Vegetarianism/Veganism
- Functional foods in the marketplace
- Health claims and product labeling
- Vegetables, Israel-style
- Convenience foods
- Roadside/Street food
- The culture of professional cooking
- Food and Identity
Service and servitude
Role of Fats
Food as a metaphor for the Israeli lifestyle
Sustainable Eating, Food and the Environment
Food portrayal in pop culture
Israeli attitudes about food
Supplements
Sustainability in farming, food production
Obesity: Is it an issue?
Wine culture
Food as a political issue
Food and religion

**Journal: Due at the last day of the program for review 10%**
During the course you should observe and investigate various angles of your topic, keeping a notebook of observations and insights. (Taking photographs will also help.) Be creative. Hang out in coffee shops, flip through magazines, take photos of billboards, walk through grocery stores, watch t.v. with the sound off, look at paintings and look at people looking at paintings, talk to fellow students about their experiences, etc.
Take notes during and after lectures, field trips or when you do observational research (date and title the observations and notes) and take pictures to jog your memory when you go to write up your paper. You will have to turn in your journal along with your paper.

**Final Paper**
The best papers will weave description, history, and theory into a tight, creative, and informative representation of this important cultural aspect of food and/or nutrition. Remember that the goal here is to produce a paper that could only have been written after having done on-the-ground research in Israel, keeping in mind that the paper has to be clear enough so that someone who didn’t go to Israel will understand your main points. You need to use peer reviewed journals, books, to support your research. All your sources should be documented in the paper.
What the paper IS NOT: a summary of the study abroad program and your experiences!

**Research Project: Organization of the Final Project**
Clear organization will help you complete the assignment. To help you structure the paper, here are some guidelines: an estimate of length of paper is about 8-pages (not including photos, reference page etc.)

Title: Pick a good, strong title that conveys your topic and your perspective on it.

Introduction: Explain why you picked the topic and its significance for understanding Israel food and/or nutrition culture. (1-2 pages)

Methods: Here’s where you explain what you did to investigate the topic. Explain the places you went, the people you talked to, why you picked these places or people, etc. (1 pages)
Observations: Report on what you found in an interesting and organized way. Use subtitles and question to define specific areas of discussion, if necessary.

Discussion: Here’s where you discuss the published research: readings, peer reviewed journals books you read and compare the readings to your observations. What is their significance? Your research should help to understand and explain your observations.

Conclusion: Summarize the main point of your paper. You might want to talk about the limitations of your investigations or implications for future research.

References: List what seems relevant, and provide citations for any direct quotations from literature or research. Follow the university’s guidelines on plagiarism. Any evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course.
Include any books, and the peer reviewed journal sources used in your paper

Attachments: Use tables, figures, photos, pamphlets, or anything else that pertains. Journals, notes, and/or other raw data that relate to the project should also be included, but please do not send large binders, photo albums, or other heavy objects that will be difficult to return—they will not be returned!

Late Papers will have points deducted. Please discuss with Lisa Sasson if you have an emergency and must have an extension.
Please send a hard copy with all your supporting documents to the department or mailed to (Papers and supporting documents can be picked up from the department):
NYU
Department of Nutrition and Food Studies
411 Lafayette Street 5th floor
New York NY 10003
Attn: Lisa Sasson

Grading
Participation 30%
Journal 10%
Presentation of project 10%
Final written paper 50%

Course Grading and Student Responsibilities
Attendance and Punctuality: You are required to attend all scheduled lectures, cooking classes, and field trips as indicated on the syllabus. If you are ill or cannot make a scheduled event, you should notify us beforehand. We have scheduled many early morning trips and other meetings that require timely departure in order to make our appointments on time. As many people are granting us special access or custom tours, we don’t want to be late, and we won’t be able to hold up the group for stragglers. Please be ready to leave, with everything you need, by the departure time specified in the syllabus.

Participation and Preparedness: 30%
You are expected to read all the assigned readings before class and actively participate in lectures and discussions. This will be demonstrated by questions and responses during class discussion and with guest lecturers. The more prepared you are for the lectures and events the more you will get out of this experience. Many of the lecturers coming to speak to our group don’t regularly participate in these sorts of programs with foreign students. This is a rare opportunity to bring up topics related to your projects, ask questions, or otherwise plumb an impressive array of esteemed experts from different fields. It is not only good for your own edification to engage them directly; it demonstrates respect and appreciation for their time.

**Behavior**
Act responsibly and be respectful of your classmates, our lecturers, and invited guests. Although this is not part of your grade, it is expected that you behavior be professional and appropriate 100% of the time. As cliché as it sounds, we are not only representing ourselves, but also our department, our university, our city, and our country.

**Attire**
Dress in Israel is very casual but it is not appropriate to wear revealing tops, bare midriffs, very short shorts or skirts. Also note that in many churches your arms and legs must be covered.

**Project (described above in syllabus) 50%**
**Journal 10%**
**Presentation 10%**
On the last day of the program each student will have 6 minutes to share their project, observations with the class. This is a brief presentation- no more than 6 minutes per student. This should include: title of your project, why you chose this project, what you observed and what preliminary research supported. A power point presentation is required (some photos, bullet points of your research etc)

You should be prepared for your presentation and not read from notes. Please adhere to the time frame.