

## Charoset - A Trip Around the World

*Charoset* is a dialectical symbol, representing opposite ideas. On the one hand, *Charoset* [probably derived from the word "heres" meaning "clay"] is a reminder of the mortar with which the Israelite slaves made bricks during the days of bondage - a symbol of slavery. On the other hand, *Charoset* itself is made of sweet foods - wine, fruits, nuts, honey and spices - and its purpose at the Seder table is to somewhat blunt the effect of the *maror*, the bitter herbs. Its sweetness is a symbol of God's kindness which made the bitterness of slavery easier to bear. We dip *maror* into the *Charoset*, both symbols of bondage, yet the sweetness of the *Charoset* takes the edge off the bitterness.

Although most Americans are familiar with the mixture of apples, walnuts, cinnamon, and wine, this is by no means the only combination possible. Walnuts, almonds, pine nuts, peanuts, or chestnuts can be mixed with apricots, coconuts, raisins, dates, figs and even bananas. Here are some recipes for Charoset from around the world:

### ASHKENAZIC CHAROSET

½ apple, coarsely chopped      ¼ cup chopped nuts  
1 Tbs. Red wine                    ¼ tsp. Cinnamon  
½ tsp. Sugar

Mix all ingredients together. Chop until flavors are blended.

### SEPHARDIC CHAROSET

1 lb. Pitted dates                    ½ lb. Shelled walnuts  
½ lb shelled almonds            ½ lb. Hazelnuts  
½ cup white raisins                1 apple

Chop nuts until fine in food processor. Save nuts in bowl. Chop dates and raisins, a few at a time. Add nuts and continue chopping. Add slices of apple. Continue chopping until consistency of paste.

### THE JEWS OF GREECE

1 cup black currants                1 cup raisins  
1 cup chopped almonds            ½ cup chopped walnuts  
½ cup pine nuts                      Sweet red wine  
Cinnamon and ground cloves to taste

Combine the currants, raisins, almonds and walnuts in the bowl of a food processor. Process until ingredients are finely chopped and well blended. Add wine and spices and process to make a thick paste (it will be quite stick). Remove mixture from processor bowl. Mine in the whole pine nuts. Makes 3 cups.

### YEMENITE CHAROSET

1 cup sesame seeds, toasted      2 lbs. dates, pitted  
1 lb. raisins                            4 tsp. cinnamon  
1 cup chopped almonds            ½ tsp. ground cloves  
1 cup chopped walnuts              ½ tsp. ground ginger

½ tsp. ground cardamom          ½ tsp. salt

Toast sesame seeds by stirring frequently in pan over medium flame till evenly browned. Combine all ingredients in a pot over a low flame, adding water to achieve desired consistency. Mixture should resemble preserves. Continue cooking, approximately 15 minutes, to allow flavors to penetrate, adding water as necessary to maintain desired consistency.

### PERSIAN CHAROSET

½ cup unsalted pistachios        1 cup dark raisins  
½ cup bleached almonds         1 cup yellow raisins  
½ cup unsalted walnuts            1 cup pitted dates  
½ cup unsalted hazelnuts        1 large apple  
¼ cup vinegar                        1 large pear  
½ tsp. cinnamon                    1 cup apple juice  
1 glass sweet red wine

Soak the nuts in water 2 days and keep them in the refrigerator. When ready, peel off the skins. Soak the raisins and dates for two days. Mix all ingredients in the food processor. It should not be too soft or too hard. If you like it spicier, substitute more cinnamon and wine in place of apple juice.

### ISRAELI CHAROSET

1 apple                                 ½ cup ground peanuts  
2 bananas                              ½ cup dry red wine  
juice/rind of ½ orange              2 tsp. cinnamon  
1 tbs. lemon juice                    10 dates  
rind of one lemon  
Matzah meal and sugar as needed

Chop fruit together. Mix with seasonings and wine. Add just enough Matzah meal to bind.