



FIVE LITTLE GEFILTES

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Mama Gefilte isn't thrilled when her curious little ones leave their jar and go out to explore the world, but she can certainly be proud of what they know about being a mensch.

YIDDISH

Yiddish began as a primarily spoken language around the 10th century C.E. and spread throughout Eastern and Central Europe. Yiddish was once the primary language of Ashkenazi Jews (those of Eastern and Central European descent) and is known as the *mameloschen* (mother tongue) as opposed to the “holy” language of Hebrew. At the height of its usage, prior to World War II, approximately 11 million of the world’s 18 million Jews understood Yiddish. Jews of the 19th and early 20th centuries developed an incredible fount of Yiddish literature, music and theater. While estimates are that fewer than 250,000 people in the United States speak the language today, Yiddish is experiencing a resurgence and is taught at an increasing number of colleges and universities.

Starting with the glossary at the conclusion of the book, create a Yiddish/English dictionary with your children. Use photographs from magazines and photocopy pictures from cookbooks. Some Yiddish words seem to defy translation, but the sounds are great fun to hear and try out. Oy vey!

YIDDISHKEIT

The Yiddish term *Yiddishkeit* refers to “Jewishness” or the “Jewish way of life.” While pertaining in general to Jewish people, *yiddishkeit* often refers specifically to the lives and practices of Yiddish-speaking Jews and encompasses such topics as cultural and religious traditions, Jewish humor and foods, *klezmer* music, Yiddish literature, and life in the *shtetl* (small Jewish settlement of Eastern Europe).

Explore your local market for examples of the uniquely Jewish foods mentioned in *Five Little Gefiltes*. Many grocery stores have sections dedicated to such foods, including knishes, gefilte fish, matzo balls, and many others. Expand your culinary repertoire by experimenting with your children to find new foods that your family might enjoy.

Are you interested in learning more about Yiddish culture? Go to www.yiddishbookcenter.org. This website will inform you about the National Yiddish Book Center. Founded in 1980, this non-profit organization, located in Amherst, Massachusetts, is dedicated to the rescue and preservation of Yiddish (and other) books and celebrates the language and culture they represent.