



CHIK CHAK SHABBAT

Written by Mara Rockliff

Illustrated by Kyrsten Brooker

Everyone in Goldie Simcha's apartment building knows it's Friday night when they smell her delicious Shabbat cholent. But one Friday night, Goldie doesn't feel well enough to cook. Her neighbors step up to make an unusual cholent for Shabbat – and soon Goldie will feel much better.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Cholent, a slow-cooked stew, is a cornerstone of Jewish cuisine – and has long been a dinnertime mainstay on *Shabbat*, the Jewish Sabbath. Many observant Jewish families do not light a flame during Shabbat, which stretches from sundown on Friday until Saturday evening. A dish like cholent, which cooks for hours on a very low flame, allows these households to enjoy a hot meal on Shabbat. That's why this rich aroma of beans, barley, vegetables, spices, (and sometimes meat) makes a home “feel like Shabbat” for many Jews around the world.

The history of cholent stretches back centuries; some food historians believe the dish may have originated in the Middle East and then morphed as the Diaspora spread to Eastern Europe. Some experts theorize that the iconic French dish *cassoulet* and even Boston baked beans owe their beginnings to cholent. Wherever Jews have lived, they have had an impact on the culture around them – and been informed by that same culture, even while maintaining their own strong identity. Recipes for cholent have changed over time and across geography, but they've long been popular – and not just in Jewish households. In this story, Goldie Simcha's neighbors love her cholent – and when she doesn't feel well enough to make it, they make dinner for her. Their food tastes a little different, but in the most important ways, it's the same -- it's hot, it's delicious, and it's meant to be shared with loved ones.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

In this story, Goldie Simcha describes how her grandmother's family used to prepare for Shabbat when she was a little girl – “busy-busy, hurry-hurry, do it right away, *chik chak!*” The Jewish Sabbath is a time to put aside the pressures and errands of the work week; instead, families turn their attention to one another, sharing good food, singing songs, spending time in synagogue, taking leisurely walks, even napping. But for many households, getting ready for Shabbat involves a flurry of activity. As with any holiday, the anticipation is part of the fun, so let children take part in the preparations. Depending on their age and abilities, children can help pick up the house, get dressed in nice clothing, set the table, make place cards for guests, and even prepare some of the food, with supervision.

After reading this story, you and your child may be inspired to make cholent together. Look online for recipes – versions of this slow-cooked stew abound. If you make a large batch, perhaps you can share some with a sick or needy neighbor the way Goldie's neighbors did for her. Just remember, cholent can't be made quickly, *chik-chak!* Making cholent takes a little planning and a lot of time, but once it's done, it makes for a delicious Shabbat meal. *Shabbat Shalom!*