

In celebration of Jewish Book Month 2013
Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership presents

One Book | One Community

“a sharp-tongued, sweet-natured masterpiece of Jewish family life”

THE Middlesteins

JAMI ATTENBERG

A NOVEL



Readers' Guide



spertus

יהי אור

Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership

610 South Michigan Avenue | Chicago
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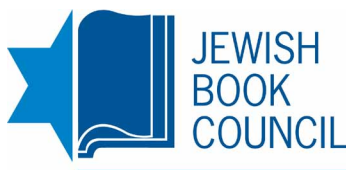


**Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation
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One Book | One Community

Spertus thanks the **Robert & Toni Bader Charitable Foundation** for its generous support of the **One Book | One Community** author events.

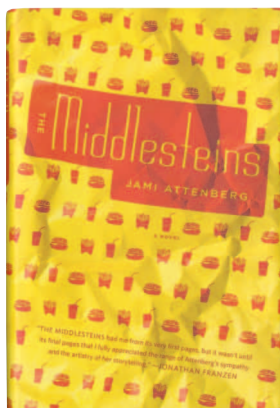
We are pleased to be working with synagogue partners **Congregation Etz Chaim** and **Congregation Beth Judea** as well as our colleagues at the **Skokie Public Library**.



The Spertus staff thanks our colleagues at the **Jewish Book Council** for helping to spread the word about **One Book | One Community**. The Jewish Book Council promotes the reading, writing, publication, distribution, and public awareness of books that reflect the breadth of the Jewish experience.

Book cover design by Catherine Casalino,
courtesy of Grand Central Publishing

*See page 16 for the story of the cover of **The Middlesteins***



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Jewish Book Month

Jewish Book Month is an American-Jewish celebration of Jewish books. It is observed each year during the month preceding Hanukkah. It began in 1925 as Jewish Book Week when Fanny Goldstein, a librarian at the West End Branch of the Boston Public Library, set up a display of Jewish-themed books.

In 1927, with the encouragement of Rabbi S. Felix Mendelsohn of Chicago, Jewish Book Week was adopted by communities across the country. At that time, it was scheduled to coincide with Lag B'Omer, a festival that traditionally honors scholars. In 1940, the timing was changed to precede Hanukkah to encourage the giving of Jewish-themed books as Hanukkah gifts. In 1943, Jewish Book Week was extended to the month-long celebration we mark today.

To learn more, visit jewishbookcouncil.org.



One Book | One Community Comes Home to Chicago

“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few are to be chewed and digested.” —Francis Bacon

Welcome to our **One Book | One Community 2013 Readers' Guide**, created in celebration of Jewish Book Month and Jewish books. This guide marks our third year spearheading **One Book | One Community**, an annual opportunity for our community to read, discuss, and learn from a single book. This year we do so with *The Middlesteins*, a story of marriage, family, and obsessions. Who doesn't want to read about that?

Furthermore, the book takes place in and around Chicago and is written by an author who grew up in the Chicago area, grounding this year's One Book right here in our hometown. *The Middlesteins* has been reviewed and praised by prestigious publications in print and online, including the *New York Times Sunday Book Review*. All very exciting for us!

We hope you will read *The Middlesteins* and take part in some or all of the upcoming **One Book** programs. This year's Kick-Off Event is titled *Jews and Chinese Food*. If you are at all familiar with *The Middlesteins*, you'll understand exactly why we've chosen this program to start our celebration. But have no fear; if you have not yet read the book, you'll still connect, just like connection between the Jewish community and dining in Chinatown on Christmas. Our very own Executive Chef Laura Frankel will talk about the long relationship between Jews and Chinese food while giving us some cooking lessons and tips along the way. Then we get a chance to enjoy her seriously good homemade kosher Chinese food. And if this puts you in the mood to read our book selection, you'll be happy to know we'll have copies of the book available for you to purchase at this and all **One Book | One Community** events.

We've put together this extensive Readers' Guide for you. I encourage you to print it out in full or focus on the sections of most interest to you. Be sure to check out the detailed list of programs and plan to join us for a book discussion and one of the author talks scheduled in and around the Chicago area.

I would be remiss if I didn't include a special thank you to Lisa Del Sesto, who put her heart and soul into compiling this guide. She did a fabulous job! We wish her well in her new role as a graduate student studying Jewish Cultural Arts.

Now please enjoy *The Middlesteins* and our Readers' Guide. I look forward to seeing you at the programs!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Schenker". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Beth Schenker

Spertus Institute Director of Programming



THE Middlesteins

“A sharp-tongued, sweet-natured masterpiece of Jewish family life.”

—Starred *Kirkus Review*

“A smart novel that tackles big issues.” —*Chicago Tribune*

“So readable, it’s practically edible.” —NPR’s *All Things Considered*

For more than thirty years, Edie and Richard Middlestein shared a solid family life together: two children, a nice house in the Chicago suburbs, ample employment, generous friends. But now things are splintering apart... and it is up to the next generation to take control. With pitch-perfect prose, huge compassion, and sly humor, Jami Attenberg has given us an epic story of marriage, family, and obsession. *The Middlesteins* explores the hopes and heartbreaks of new and old love, the yearnings of Midwestern America, and our society’s devastating, fascinating preoccupation with food.

“*The Middlesteins* had me from its very first pages, but it wasn’t until its final pages that I fully appreciated the range of Attenberg’s sympathy and the artistry of her storytelling.”

—Jonathan Franzen, author of *Freedom*

“Jami Attenberg’s comic-tragic portrait of The Middlesteins, a quirky Midwestern Jewish family collapsing under burdens of betrayal, desire, and obesity, is delish.”

—Elissa Schappell, *Vanity Fair*

“Expansive heart and sly wit... Throughout this poignant novel, the characters wrestle with two defining questions: What do we owe each other after a life together? What do we owe ourselves?”

—Abbe Wright, *O Magazine*

New York Times bestseller

Finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* book prize

The Middlesteins is on sale at the Spertus Shop in the Spertus Institute lobby and at shop.spertus.edu and will be for sale at all **One Book | One Community** events. It is available in hardcover, softcover, and e-book versions.



“She wanted to watch the world around her go by, and make up stories in her head about everything she saw, and sing all the little songs they taught her in Sunday school...”

— Edie, *The Middlesteins*

About the Author

“With a wit that never mocks and tenderness that never gushes, [Attenberg] renders this family’s ordinary tragedies as something surprisingly affecting... Attenberg is superb at mocking the clichés of middle-class life by giving them the slightest turn to make people suddenly real and wholly sympathetic.”

—Ron Charles, *Washington Post*

Jami Attenberg has written for the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Salon*, and more. Her debut collection of stories, *Instant Love*, was published in 2006. She is also the author of the novels *The Kept Man* and *The Melting Season*. Her third novel, *The Middlesteins*, was published in October 2012 by Grand Central Publishing. It appeared on *The New York Times* Best Seller list and this year will be published in England, Taiwan, Russia, Italy, France, Turkey, and the Netherlands. She grew up in Buffalo Grove and lives in Brooklyn.

An Interview with Author Jami Attenberg

In this interview with Spertus Institute's Brian Zimmerman, Jami Attenberg shares her inspiration behind the story, reveals which character she would most like to have dinner with, and reminisces about some of her favorite mealtime memories.

What started you on your path to becoming a writer?

I've always written. I've loved writing since I was four or five years old. For a while I wrote in high school, was editor of my high school newspaper, that kind of thing. I wrote poems and stories here and there. But what really started me on my path was when I went to school and got a degree in creative writing at Johns Hopkins University. Writing was always the thing I loved most, and I'm a firm believer that if you can find the thing you love most in this world that you should definitely pursue it. A lot of people spend their whole lives trying to figure that out. I feel I got lucky figuring it out right away.

"...what would happen if he decided someday that he didn't want to be a doctor and wanted to be a dancer instead, if his parents would believe in him the same way..."

— Josh, *The Middlesteins*

Did your parents have any influence on you becoming a writer?

Definitely. My mom was a substitute teacher, and she encouraged my writing from a young age. I taught myself how to read when I was four or five years old—from the backs of cereal boxes, actually. My parents supported my love of books, and just the fact that they would encourage me to study creative writing was really amazing of them. They are delighted about my career, even though it's a challenging one. And they couldn't be more excited that I've put out four books.

Can you talk about your influences for writing *The Middlesteins*?

There are certainly books I read that I was inspired by. I remember reading *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout, which was a novel told in stories about a small town in coastal Maine. Like *The Middlesteins* it spanned different decades, with stories that start small and get bigger and more important over time. I thought I'd really like to write a comparable story about the community where I grew up.

Can you talk about how the characters in *The Middlesteins* changed as you were writing the book?

I would say that the characters I thought were simpler in the beginning became more complicated for me at the end. I look back now, for example, on the Benny character and I find that I have some issues with him that I wasn't even aware of. He's very likeable, and an easygoing guy, but he also doesn't really step up when his family needs him most. And for me Edie was the hardest character to write, but by the end of the book she was tough, and I really just loved her. I felt this huge understanding and compassion for her. She's the one I would most want to hang out with. To me, she is the most interesting, smartest, and most politically and culturally aware out of all the characters in the book. She was the deepest person.

Did anything about the characters surprise you?

They all surprised me. I had issues with all of them when I started the book. It's much more interesting to create a complicated character with flaws than it is to create a character who is perfect and very likeable. Those kinds of books are very predictable: We're happy...the end. I usually like to start with characters who are flawed and write my way into loving them—or at least liking them.

This book is notable for the way its characters can engage in destructive behavior, but still gain our empathy. How did you achieve that effect in your writing?

I just tried to write from a place of compassion. That was the most important thing for me. I was just trying to understand them, and I hope the reader is trying to understand them along with me. I was digging deep when I was writing this book, and hoping that it works, that I'm conveying what I wanted to convey. But there's no math to it. It's a very organic, emotional, visceral process that's hard to define. Basically, I wanted people to understand these characters. I didn't want people to feel sorry for them. Like with Edie, I wanted people just accept her for who she is. I feel like people judge others based on their physical appearance, whether they're too big or too small, and I wanted to look beyond that. I hope the reader will look beyond too.

Suburban Chicago plays a huge role in this book. It's almost another character. How much was real and how much came from your imagination?

In a lot of what I wrote, there was a map in my mind of where things were located. But some of the stuff I invented. That Chinese restaurant where Edie meets Kenneth, for example, doesn't exist. When I was growing up in Buffalo Grove, there weren't many decent Chinese restaurants in the area, so sometimes I felt like I had to invent a place so that I could have eaten there! On the other hand, I could see some places very vividly in my mind. Old Orchard Mall was there, and so was the McDonald's where one of the scenes took place. In my head I know exactly where that McDonald's is. I know exactly where the high school is. But I kind of deliberately left a lot of it vague. I wanted it to feel more universal. Because for me, the landscape is as important as the characters.

A big element in this book is food. In the course of your research, did you encounter any interesting theories about how Jews relate to food? Was food a big part of your family growing up?

Writing about food felt very instinctual. I didn't have to think too hard about it. I have a family and friends and I've traveled—so I already had some ideas about how people relate to food and how Jews relate to food. And again, it's not all Jews that relate to food the way I do, but I'm glad it feels universal to people. I did, however, research some stuff about Chinese food.

Did you discover the secret of why Jews love Chinese food?

There are a bunch of reasons, and everybody has a different story behind it. To be honest, though, my family wasn't much of a Chinese food family. We were more like a pizza family, or a hot dog from Portillo's family. We did Eduardo's a lot, but not necessarily Chinese food. It wasn't until I moved to New York that I started eating Chinese food.

Do you consider *The Middlesteins* a Jewish book?

I didn't really set out to write a Jewish book. None of my other books have been about characters that are Jewish, even though I'm Jewish. It's certainly been embraced by the Jewish community, which is wonderful. People have been incredibly generous with me in the last year, inviting me to speak and inviting me into their temples and homes. It's a wonderful experience to have people feel a personal connection to my work. It's opened up a whole new world for me, with opportunities that I didn't even know existed. It's nice to be embraced.

Have you been surprised by any of the responses to the book so far?

Just that it's done as well as it has is surprising. It's been really exciting to have people review it and buy it. You know, I've never had my books sold in foreign countries before and now it's going to be sold in seven countries. It's amazing. When I was flying back from Lithuania a few weeks ago I had a layover in the Frankfurt airport. I was wandering through the bookstore when all of a sudden I saw my book on the shelf. To see it out there in the world is just so thrilling. It's great to get nice emails from people around the globe, to get reviews in different countries, and to see my book translated into different languages.

“Food was made of love,
and love was made of
food, and if it could stop
a child from crying, then
there was nothing wrong
with that either.”

— *The Middlesteins*

Schedule of Programs and Events

Reservations requested for free programs and advance tickets recommended for programs with a fee.

Visit spertus.edu/Middlesteins or call **312.322.1773** to make reservations and purchase tickets.

Parking for Spertus Events

\$10 discounted parking is available with Spertus validation at The Essex Inn (2 blocks south of Spertus at Michigan Avenue and 8th Street)

The Middlesteins is on sale at the Spertus Shop in the Spertus Institute lobby and at shop.spertus.edu and will be for sale at all **One Book | One Community** events. Jami Attenberg will be signing books at the Author Events.



Kick-Off Event

Jews and Chinese Food

Thursday, October 17 at 6:30 pm at Spertus Institute | Ticketed Event
610 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago

From the grit of the Lower East Side to the cul-de-sacs of contemporary suburbia, Jews have had a special relationship with Chinese food, a relationship deliciously explored in *The Middlesteins*. Spertus Institute's **Chef Laura Frankel** will “wok” you through the history of Jews and Chinese food while you learn to make bao dumplings with pulled brisket, lo mein noodles with wok-charred long beans and more. Ample tastings will be provided. You won't leave hungry!

All tickets \$25. Ticket holders get 2 for 1 admission to the **One Book Finale** on November 11.



Schedule of Programs and Events continued on next page »

“It doesn’t have to be that complicated...You could just participate in order to feel connected to something bigger than yourself. It makes me feel safe. Not alone.”

— Daniel, *The Middlesteins*

Schedule of Programs and Events

Reservations requested for free programs and advance tickets recommended for programs with a fee.

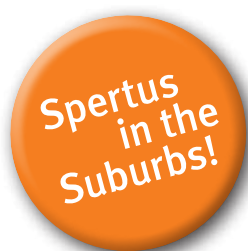
Visit spertus.edu/Middlesteins or call **312.322.1773** to make reservations and purchase tickets.

Spertus Book Discussion

Wednesday, October 30 at 6:30 pm at Spertus Institute | Free
610 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago



Join us at Spertus for an informal discussion of *The Middlesteins* with expert facilitator **Rachel Kamin**, Director of the Gray Cultural & Learning Center at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El. Perfect for those who have read the book, plan to read the book, or just want to learn more.



Suburban Book Discussion

Tuesday, November 5 at 7:00 pm at the Skokie Public Library | Free
5215 Oakton Street, Skokie



Skokie Public Library

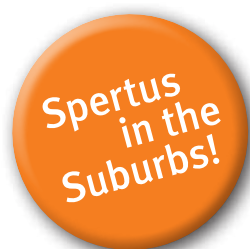
This book discussion will be led by Skokie Public Library reference librarian **Lee Leibik**, who has led book discussions for over half her professional career and who, like the author and characters of *The Middlesteins*, grew up in suburban Chicago. **Jami Attenberg** will join the final part of the discussion via Skype.

Schedule of Programs and Events continued on next page »

Schedule of Programs and Events

Reservations requested for free programs and advance tickets recommended for programs with a fee.

Visit spertus.edu/Middlesteins or call **312.322.1773** to make reservations and purchase tickets.



Meet Jami Attenberg at one of three events in three locations!

■ Suburban Author Event #1

Sunday, November 10 at 2 pm at Congregation Etz Chaim | Free
1710 S. Highland Avenue, Lombard

■ Suburban Author Event #2

Sunday, November 10 at 7 pm at Congregation Beth Judea | Free
5304 Rd, Long Grove



■ Spertus Author Event #3 | One Book Finale

A Literary Conversation: *Chicago Tribune's* Bonnie Miller Rubin interviews author Jami Attenberg

Monday, November 11 at 7 pm at Spertus Institute | Ticketed Event
\$15 ticket price includes reception | 610 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago

Bonnie Miller Rubin has been working in daily journalism for more than 35 years, including stints at the *Gary Post Tribune* and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. She joined the *Chicago Tribune* in 1990 and was part of a team that won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for explanatory journalism. At the *Chicago Tribune*, she covers health and family issues. She has also written for *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and has authored several books, including *Fifty on Fifty*, a look at women's lives at the half-century mark.

What did I love about The Middlesteins? I knew these people...In fact, I kept re-reading the cover blurb about Jami Attenberg—because I was convinced that she HAD to know my family, that somewhere along the line our paths had crossed. Perhaps over a bar mitzvah sweet table? Or a shiva tray?

I love that the protagonist, Edie, could be really smart about some things—after all, she is a successful lawyer—and be so utterly out-of-control when it came to food. Like Edie, who has not sought comfort in a package of

devil's food cookies or in a mound of luscious noodles at a Chinese restaurant? And, like members of Edie's family, who hasn't tried futilely to help someone who doesn't want to be saved? What I loved most of all is the way all of her characters were not caricatures, but flawed, loving people—as familiar to me as any I've ever encountered in fiction.

—Bonnie Miller Rubin



All Around the House

September 22, 2013–January 12, 2014
On display on the 8th floor
at Spertus Institute
610 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago

In conjunction with **One Book | One Community**, with its focus this year on contemporary Jewish life in Chicago, Spertus Institute is honored to present a pair of large-scale photographs by **Jay Wolke** along with a slide presentation of his work. These images, from his landmark study of Chicago Jewry, offer vivid windows into age-old traditions reenacted in a uniquely American context.

Jay Wolke was born in 1954 and raised in Chicago, where he works as a Professor and Chair of the Art and Design Department at Columbia College. He holds a BFA from Washington University in St. Louis and an MS in Photography from the Institute of Design at Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). Wolke has had solo



exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago, the St. Louis Art Museum, Harvard University, the California Museum of Photography, and Foundation Studio Marangoni/ Florence. His photographs are in the permanent collections of the Museum

of Modern Art, New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among others.

In addition to his work at Columbia College, since 1981 he has taught photography and art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Institute of Design at IIT, and Studio Art Centers International in Florence, Italy.

Exhibit Hours

Sunday–Thursday 10 am–6 pm

Friday 10 am–3 pm

Closed Saturdays and Jewish and secular holidays

Admission is free

Jay Wolke's monograph, *All Around the House: Photographs of American-Jewish Communal Life*, is for sale at the Spertus Shop. Centered entirely on Jewish life in Chicago, Wolke's photographs capture the rich complexity of a diverse, contemporary, unapologetically American Jewish community.

“Why did people need to be gotten so much? Why couldn’t they just accept that he had left his wife and respect his decision? Why did he need to justify his existence to anyone?”

—Richard, *The Middlesteins*

Discussion Questions

1. Each of the characters in *The Middlesteins* suffers from some sort of flaw. How did each character’s shortcomings impact the novel? Did you find any one character particularly relatable or sympathetic? Or conversely, were there any characters you could not relate to or found especially frustrating?
2. A young Robin yells at her mother, “You don’t disappoint me... you disappoint yourself.” How is this line representative of the novel as a whole?
3. Edie is described as, “...an eavesdropper and a gossip, but she was also the kind of person to whom even strangers would tell their secrets. She seemed wise. She seemed warm. If she didn’t know how to help, she would at least know to make you feel better. It was only when you really got to know her that she could be kind of terrifying.” Do you think this is an accurate description of Edie? How does this depiction compare to your own understanding of Edie?
4. What was your reaction to Richard’s decision to leave his wife? Did your opinion of Richard change as you read the book?
5. In the chapter titled *Male Pattern*, Benny compares Rachelle and Edie. Did you find yourself comparing them as you read the book? Do you agree with Benny’s assessment that Rachelle is nothing like Edie, or do you see similarities between them?
6. What stereotypes did you see in the book? How did the book challenge those stereotypes?
7. In her review for NPR’s *All Things Considered*, Meg Wolitzer says, “the novel culminates in a glorious celebration; an explicitly Jewish spin on the traditional wedding scene that closes Shakespeare’s comedies; namely a b’nai mitzvah extravaganza...” What role does the impending b’nai mitzvah play throughout the book? What is its significance as the culminating event?

Discussion Questions continued on next page »

“This is the end,
beautiful friend.”

—Benny, *The Middlesteins*

8. How did you interpret the final scene of the novel, in which Richard Middlestein hugs his granddaughter, Emily, while she is crying over Edie’s death? What do you think Attenberg is trying to say about family relationships?
9. What role does Judaism play in the novel and how do the characters define themselves as Jewish?
10. Food has a paradoxical place in this novel. Edie is clearly killing herself with overeating, and yet food is almost always described as a form of love. What is your understanding of the role of food in this novel? When is food the source of pain and when is it relief?
11. This book has been described as simultaneously comedic and heartbreaking. What emotion would you use to describe your experience reading this book?
12. Attenberg periodically uses foreshadowing throughout the novel, with statements like “but he didn’t know that then.” Did you find the comments on the future helpful, intriguing, or bothersome? How did they satisfy or disappoint the ways you interpreted the novel’s ending?
13. Did you find the ending of the novel hopeful?

“It’s a family dinner, he said.
With just a touch of Jew. “

—Daniel, *The Middlesteins*

Recipes by Spertus Executive Chef Laura Frankel

Chef Laura Frankel is Executive Chef for Spertus Kosher Catering and the author of the *Chosen Bites* column in the *Jerusalem Post*. Chef Laura is a passionate teacher who has made it her mission to reimagine and revitalize the diverse and delicious traditions of Jewish cooking. She has written two books, *Jewish Cooking for All Seasons* and *Jewish Slow Cooker Recipes*, both available at the Spertus Shop.

Dry Fried Chinese Long Beans

Chinese long beans are fun to eat and make a great presentation. They are easily found in Asian markets and sometimes at farmer’s markets or grocery stores with large produce sections. This recipe creates a wok-charred flavor, similar to the smoky flavor created by grilling. You need a really hot wok and sturdy wok spatulas. No wok? No problem. A cast iron skillet will work as well.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 pound Chinese long beans, ends trimmed off
- ½ pound shitake mushrooms
- 2 scallions cut into thin bias segments
- 3 garlic cloves, slivered
- ¼ cup Sichuan soy sauce (recipe follows)
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds

Heat the wok over high heat until it is very hot. Add the sesame oil and tilt the wok to spread the oil. Add the beans and begin tossing them in the wok. Continue stirring and constantly tossing (yes, like a maniac) for 3-5 minutes, until the beans become wrinkled and charred.

Add the mushrooms, scallions, and garlic and continue tossing until the garlic is slightly softened and fragrant, about 2 minutes.

Add the Sichuan soy sauce and sesame seeds and toss to coat. Serve immediately, garnished with additional sesame seeds and chopped scallions.

Sichuan Soy Sauce

Soy sauce out of the bottle is not exactly a “sauce” and isn’t nearly as good as this homemade creation. This simple flavor enhancing treatment will guarantee a delicious and authentic sauce that can be used during cooking and as a condiment at the table.

Ingredients

- 3-inch piece of ginger, chopped
- 1 scallion, chopped
- 1 piece of star anise, broken
- 1 teaspoon lightly crushed black peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon lightly crushed anise seed
- 1 teaspoon lightly crushed fennel seed
- 1 teaspoon lightly crushed coriander seed
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 4 cups soy sauce (I use *Oshawa Organic Nama Shoyu Unpasteurized Soy Sauce*)
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 cup water

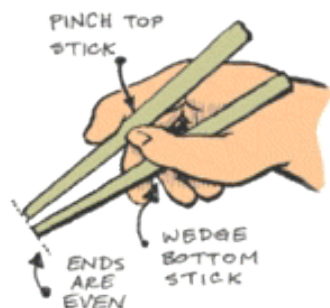
Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil, simmer 1 minute. Remove from heat and let steep 10 minutes. Strain through *chinois* or cheesecloth.

Store the soy sauce covered in the refrigerator for up to 6 months.

Insider's Guide to Chopsticks

Chopstick Etiquette

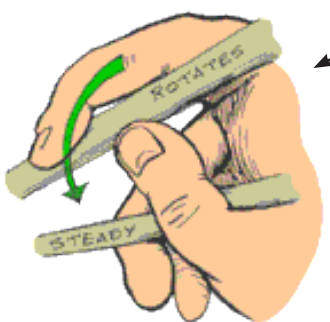
1. Never waive your chopsticks over food or poke your dinner with the tips of your chopsticks because it is considered poor manners.
2. Equally forbidden is using chopsticks to pull a dish forward. Use only hands.
3. If you need to rest your chopsticks, leave them on the chopsticks rest or by the side of your bowl or plate. Do not stick them into a bowl of rice because it resembles ancestral offerings and is frowned upon.
4. If the table settings include serving spoons or chopsticks, use them instead of your own set to get yourself food.
5. Do not suck on the tip of the chopsticks.



How to Use Chopsticks

There are two important things to remember for effective use of chopsticks. One is that the two lower ends must be even, that is, one must not protrude over the other. The other condition is that the two chopsticks must be in the same plane.

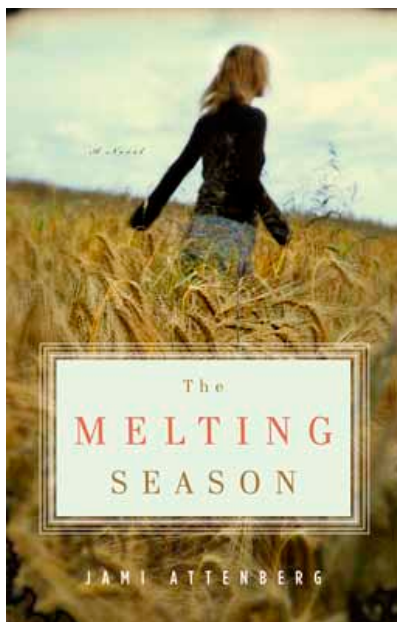
Place the first (lower) chopstick in the base of the thumb and index finger and rest its lower end below on the ring finger as shown. This chopstick remains fixed.



Hold the other (upper) chopstick between the tips of the index and middle fingers, steady its upper half against the base of the index finger, and use the tips of the thumb to keep it in place.

To pick up food, move the upper chopstick with index and middle fingers. With a little practice, you will be able to use chopsticks with ease.

Source: chinatownconnection.com/how-to-use-chopsticks.htm



About the Cover Design

From author Jami Attenberg about the cover of *The Middlesteins*

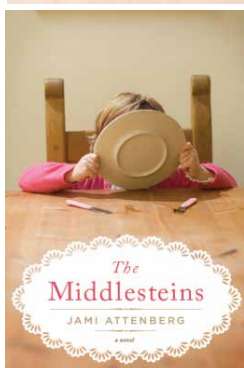
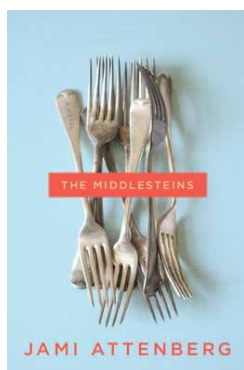
I've had my ups and downs with my book covers in the past. Mostly downs, to be frank. I heard another author joking recently about how grateful she was that her book cover wasn't some girl running through a field of wheat, and I was like, wait, that was actually my last book cover. I'm the joke! Ha, ha, ha. Hilarious.

But still, I had high hopes for *The Middlesteins*. I was with a new publisher, and my editor, the great and talented Helen Atsma, had promised me they would find a way to relaunch me. No wheat fields allowed. I believe she said no to a lot of designs before they actually nailed it. I ended up seeing the cover about two months later than originally expected. I was getting a little nervous. I tried not to nag. I'm sure I did.

The original version I saw did not have the red box in the center. The title and my name were in red lettering over an open yellow space. I think there was some conversation around wanting to make the title and my name feel a little bolder, and they came back with the yellow lettering within the red box and then I fully fell in love with it.

I love, of course, how eye-catching it is. It makes you want to pick up the book, which is half the battle. It feels different and special, bold, possibly funny, possibly weird. It's thematically appropriate without giving anything away. I like that the cover feels gender-neutral. And I also like that it sometimes makes people feel hungry.

I think Catherine is massively talented, and that this cover was an extremely important part of the success of this book. I've not met her in person, but based on the character and charm of this cover, I can only imagine I would like her very much. I'm really grateful to her.



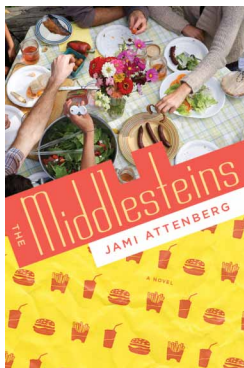
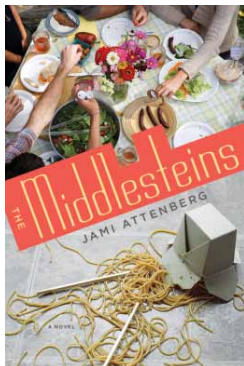
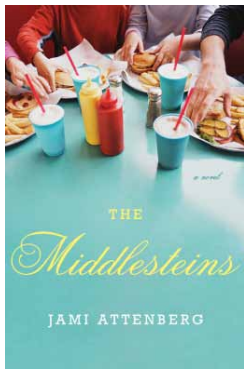
From cover designer Catherine Casalino

When I heard editor Helen Atsma describe *The Middlesteins* at our initial launch meeting, I immediately wanted to design the cover. I have a real soft spot for novels with dysfunctional characters and love working on fresh fiction. I also thought it would be an opportunity to push design-wise.

After reading the manuscript (which I loved!), I knew that I wanted something food-related on the cover. Food almost seems to have a magical power in the book—it pulls the family apart and also connects them to each other. There's this great scene when the daughter-in-law is following Edie all over town as she goes through one drive-in after another. You can just picture the neon signs, the crinkly wrappers, and the plastic cups—all those great visual elements that surround fast food.

It took a lot of rounds to get to the final cover. All of the things I explored for the cover had some kind of food element ranging from silverware to cookies to people at a table.

Cover design continued on next page »



Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* had been mentioned as a comparative title, so I did a lot of designs featuring photos of families at dinner, but none of them seemed quite right.

The fast food wrapper that ended up being the cover was something that I initially created as a secondary element—a colorful patterned panel working alongside a photograph of a family. However, the design just felt too cluttered.

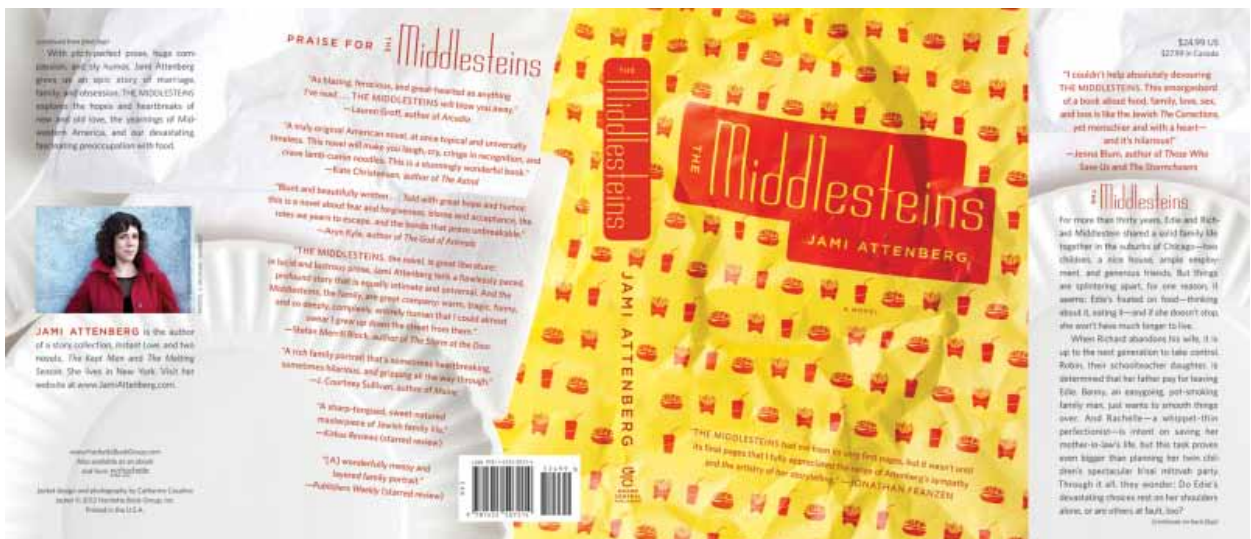
Everyone liked the wrapper, though, and at some point the idea of having people on the cover got abandoned and I started working up designs where the whole cover was the wrapper. I wanted to make the title look like a fast-food logo, so I picked a typeface that had a McDonald's-looking M.

I created the food wrapper in Adobe Illustrator, printed it out, crumpled it up, and then photographed it including napkins and paper plates for the back and flaps.

I have a background in photography, so I love creating original art when I can. Photographing the wrapper gave the whole cover a three-dimensional look, and I thought the bright colors would catch the eye whether you were coming across the book in a store or online.

I was really grateful that everyone in house was willing to go with a more graphic treatment as opposed to something that directly illustrated the characters in the book. When Helen shared the cover with Jami, she wrote back "LOVE IT!!! WANNA MARRY IT!!!" which totally made my day.

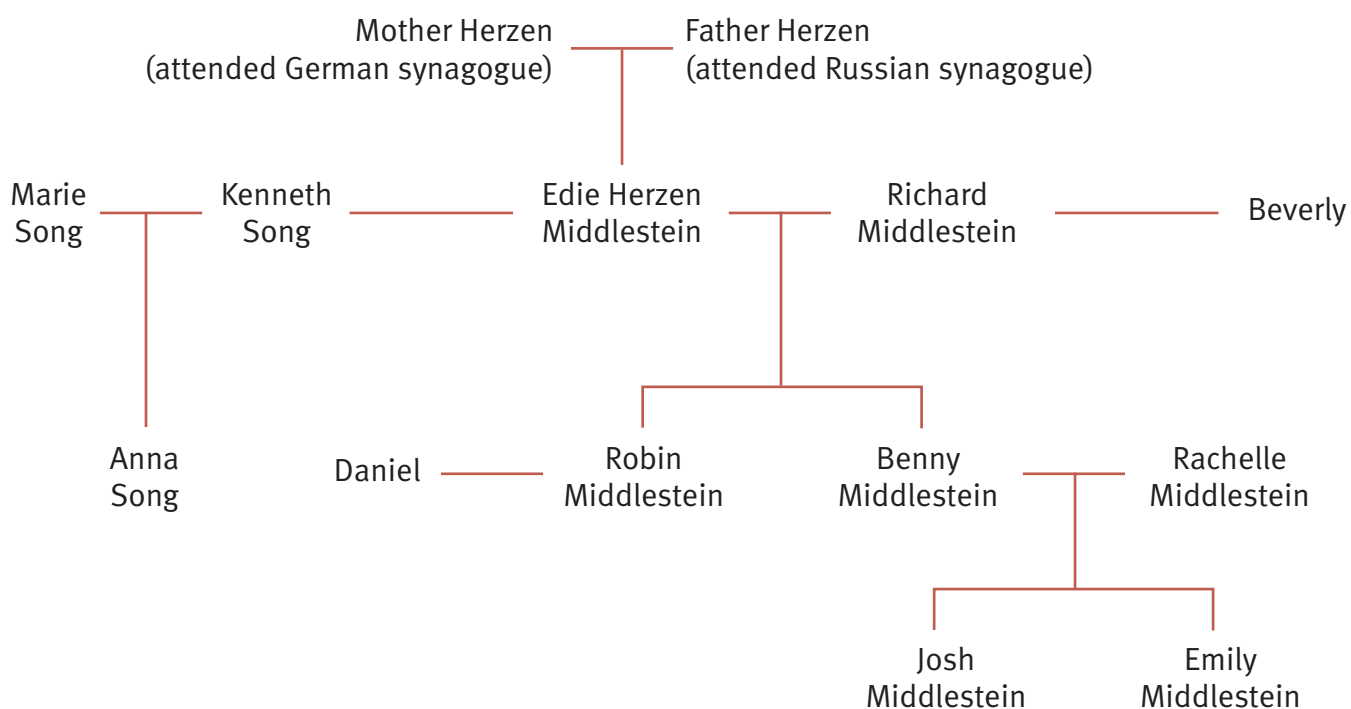
Catherine Casalino is a book cover designer and an art director at Grand Central Publishing in New York. Catherine began her career at Rodrigo Corral Design and has worked in-house at Simon & Schuster and Random House. She also freelances for publishing houses and other clients throughout the United States. Her design work has been recognized by AIGA, *Print Magazine*, the Type Directors Club, *Communication Arts*, *Eye Magazine*, and the New York Book Show.



Final Jacket

THE Middlesteins

FAMILY TREE



“When they moved to Skokie ten years before from Hyde Park, they left behind the synagogue that Edie’s mother had grown up with, and suddenly practicing her faith became irrelevant without a personal sense of history attached to it.”

—*The Middlesteins*

Chicago’s Jewish Community

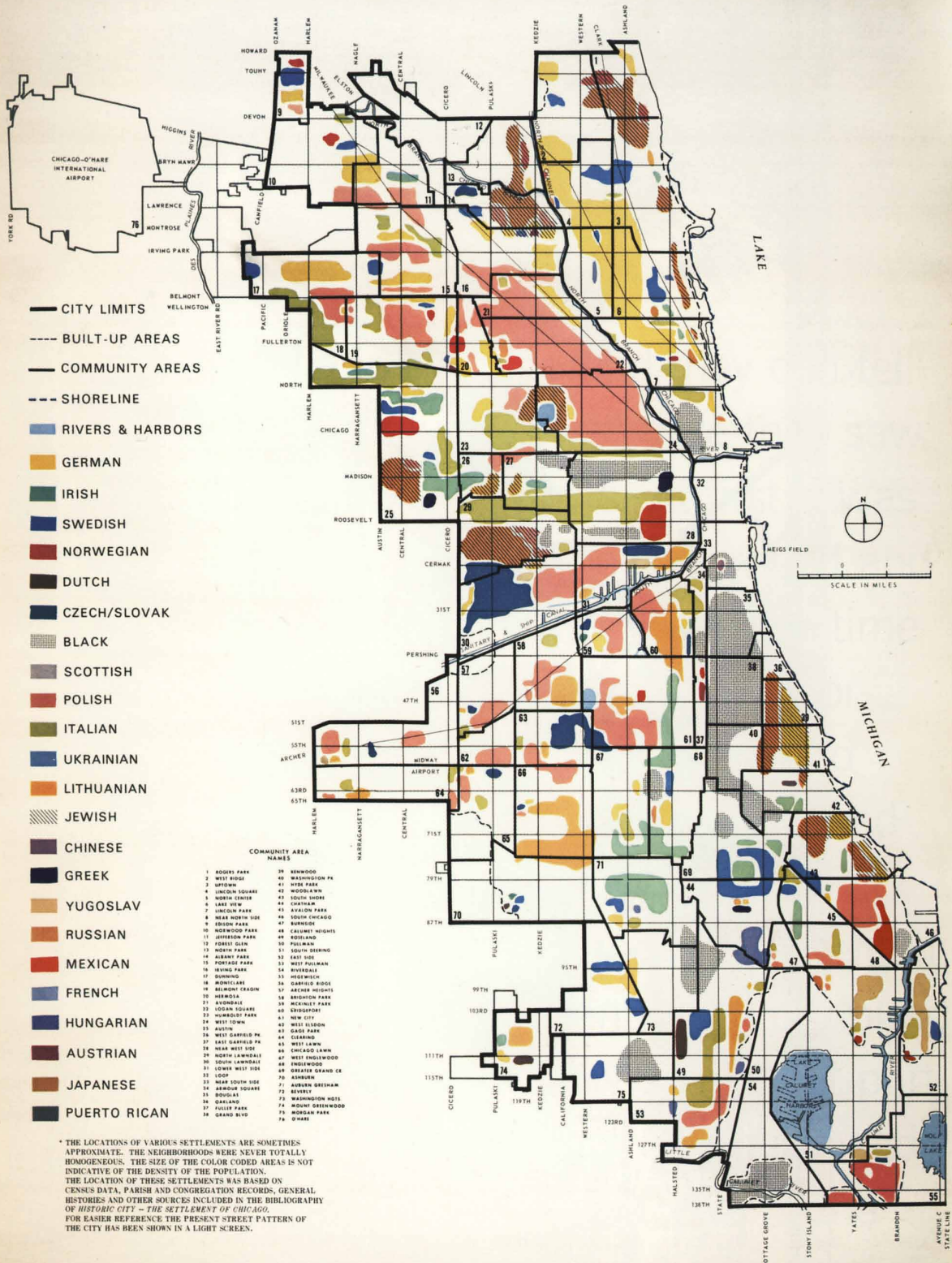
The map on the following page illustrates the ethnic composition of the City of Chicago in 1950, around the time of Edie Herzen’s birth. Most Jews still lived within the city proper, with the more affluent German Jewish population (shown in mustard with slanted black lines) living primarily in the Hyde Park area where the Herzens had their modest apartment.

The area of most concentrated Jewish settlement at this time was the greater Lawndale area on the West Side. This mostly eastern European Jewish community is the large area of brown with slanted black lines between Roosevelt and Cermak Roads. Through the early decades of the 20th century, as many as 40% of Chicago’s Jews lived in the area. By 1950 the Jewish population was beginning to leave Lawndale as economic fortunes improved and other areas of Chicago and its suburbs opened to them. By the late 1950s, few Jews would be left on the West Side.

Other areas of heavy Jewish settlement shown are Austin at the far western edge of the city, Humboldt Park on the near Northwest Side, South Shore just beyond Hyde Park, and Rogers Park and Albany Park/Hollywood Park on the far North Side. Smaller areas along the lakefront in Uptown and Lakeview also were home to significant Jewish populations. Through the 1950s and 1960s, these Jewish communities would all diminish—and some disappear entirely—as the great exodus to the suburbs took its course. As the Herzens moved to the near north suburb of Skokie in the 1950s, later the Middlesteins would move further northwest to Buffalo Grove, epitomizing the migration of Chicago’s Jewish population.

See Map on next page »

COMMUNITY SETTLEMENT MAP FOR 1950



CITY OF CHICAGO
RICHARD J. DALEY, Mayor

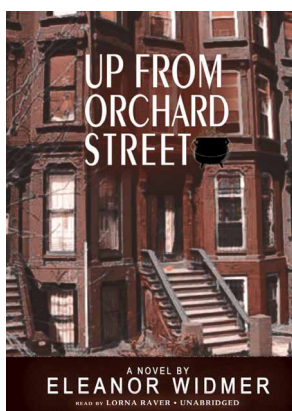


DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
LEWIS W. HILL, Commissioner

1976

“She had been a lawyer once, a long time ago, but not so long ago that she had forgotten what she knew. ‘I was very good at what I did,’ said Edie Middlestein. She said it like it was a promise.”

—*The Middlesteins*



Suggested Reading

Suggestions about Families and Food

The Middlesteins is about many things: relationships, families, and food, to name just a few. **Rachel Kamin**, Director of the Gray Cultural & Learning Center at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, recommends these books based on the themes explored in *The Middlesteins*. (See page 10 for a chance to join Rachel’s group discussion of *The Middlesteins*.)

Tomorrow There Will Be Apricots

by Jessica Soffer

About the families we’re given and the families we make—and about food.

Love and Shame and Love

by Peter Orner

Explores families and relationships, with a Chicago connection like *The Middlesteins*.

Up from Orchard Street

by Eleanor Widmer

Jewish families and food on New York’s Lower East Side.

The Wholeness of a Broken Heart

by Katie Singer

Mothers and daughters over four generations of a Jewish-American family.

Good in Bed and Certain Girls

by Jennifer Weiner

Themes include women, weight, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and mothers and daughters.

An Almost Perfect Moment

by Binnie Kirshenbaum

A dark comedy about family members with flaws.

The Six Granddaughters of Cecil Slaughter

by Susan Hahn

Tells the story of a family of Hungarian-Jewish immigrants in Chicago.

The Love Song of A. Jerome Minkoff: And Other Stories

by Joseph Epstein

About Jewish men, mid-life crisis, and Chicago.

See also **Fabulous Small Jews**.

Saving Ruth

by Zoe Fishman

A coming-of-age novel that deals with a young Jewish woman coming home to Alabama, and her relationships with family and food.

One Last Thing Before I Go

by Jonathan Tropper

A dark comedy about one dysfunctional family’s struggle to reconnect.

See more Suggested Reading on next page »

Books about Jewish Chicago

Based on *The Middlesteins*' setting in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs, **Betsy Gomberg**, Spertus Director of Marketing and Communications and author of the *People of the Books* blog at JUF.org, provides this wide-ranging list of books about Jewish Chicago from the 1930s to the present day.

The Old Bunch (1937)

by Meyer Levin

Set on the West Side of Chicago, Levin's sprawling novel follows 19 first-generation Jewish Chicagoans in the 1920s and 1930s.

Passage from Home (1946)

by Isaac Rosenfeld

Set in Chicago in the 1930s, Rosenfeld's semi-autobiographical novel tackles teenage rebellion—before it was called that.

The Adventures of Augie March (1953)

by Saul Bellow

This portrait of a Jewish Chicagoan in the Great Depression won the National Book Award for Fiction in 1954. Named one of the hundred best novels (ever) by both *TIME* magazine and the Modern Library Board.

Letting Go (1962)

by Philip Roth

Chicago in the 1950s is one setting (along with New York and Iowa City) of Philip Roth's award-winning first full-length novel.

The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb (1996)

by Irving Cutler

The classic guide to Jewish Chicago.

Total Recall (2001)

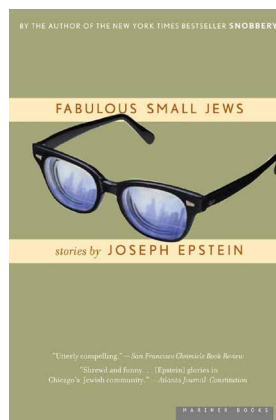
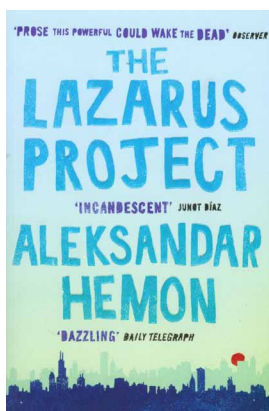
by Sara Paretsky

Paretsky always places the exploits of private eye V.I. Warshawski in contemporary Chicago, with very real explorations of the city's cracks and crevices. This one explores stories of child survivors of the Holocaust.

Days and Nights at The Second City (2002)

by Bernard Sahlins

Second City founder and longtime producer/director Bernie Sahlins, who died earlier this year at age 90, tells the history of Second City from its humble start in 1959 to its role as the launching pad of American comics and comedy.



Fabulous Small Jews (2004)

by Joseph Epstein

The characters in the 18 finely crafted stories in this collection are lawyers, professors, scrap-iron dealers, and more.

Crossing California (2004)

by Adam Langer

Langer's debut novel, set in West Roger's Park in the late 1970s and early 1980s, shines a brutal—and funny—light on teenagers and parents in transition.

Tales of a Theatrical Guru (2006)

by Danny Newman

The legendary theater impresario's autobiography is juicy and inspirational, with honest, heartwarming portrayals of his Jewish identification and his 44-year marriage to Yiddish theater star Dina Halpern.

The Lazarus Project (2008)

by Alexander Hemon

A contemporary young writer, himself an immigrant to Chicago, becomes obsessed by the 1908 killing of a Russian-Jewish immigrant by Chicago's chief of police. (The source material for this book includes another good read, the nonfiction account of the Lazarus Averbuch mystery. Called *An Accidental Anarchist*, it is written by Joe Kraus and Walter Roth of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.)

The 188th Crybaby Brigade:

A Skinny Jewish Kid from Chicago

Fights Hezbollah—A Memoir (2010)

by Joel Chasnoff

A coming-of-age story from the former Chicagoan, who, at age 24, trades life as a comedian and writer in New York for a year as an Israeli tank soldier.

Living Jewishly: A Snapshot of a Generation (2012)

by Stefanie Bregman

A collection of personal essays from Jewish 20- and 30-somethings conceived and compiled here in Chicago.

See more Suggested Reading on next page »

Beyond Books

Gail Goldberg, librarian at the Asher Library at Spertus Institute, put together this list of blogs, websites, and articles.

Blogs & Websites

<http://dishingwithyourdaughter.com>

<http://blogs.forward.com/the-jew-and-the-carrot/134102/jews-and-chinese-food-a-christmas-story>

http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/cityofate/2010/06/so_why_do_jews_eat_chinese_foo.php

http://salon.com/2011/09/29/i_am_the_jewish_mother_i_never_thought_id_be

<http://tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/53569/jewish-christmas>

<http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1770.html>
Interactive map of Chicago-area Jewish congregations from 1849 to 2002

<http://jewishchicago.spertus.edu>
Interactive map of Jewish Chicago

Articles

Ramer, Alia. "“You Can’t Wear That!” *New Jersey Jewish News*, March 08, 2012., 26-27, *Jewish Studies Source*, EBSCOhost

Adams, Fradl. 2012. “Déjà - Vu No More.” *KASHRUS Magazine* 33, no. 1: 68-75. *Jewish Studies Source*, EBSCOhost

Siegel, Donald. “From Lokshen to Lo Mein: The Jewish Love Affair with Chinese Food.” *Association Of Jewish Libraries Newsletter* XXV, no. 4 (2006): 30. *Index to Jewish Periodicals*, EBSCOhost

Emma Meyers, et al. “Is There a Secret Ingredient in the Jewish Relationship with food?” *Moment Magazine* 38, no. 4 (July 2013): 28-35. *Jewish Studies Source*, EBSCOhost

Jacobs, Meredith. “Surrendering to Motherhood.” *Washington Jewish Week*, May 10, 2012., 22, *Jewish Studies Source*, EBSCOhost

Lee, Jennifer 8. “Why Chow Mein Is the Chosen Food of the Chosen People.” *Na’amat Woman* XXIV, no. 2 (2009): 12-14. *Index to Jewish Periodicals*, EBSCOhost



Your suggestions for next year's One Book | One Community

We have found that the best people from whom to get book suggestions are other readers. So we want your suggestions for future **One Book | One Community** possibilities.

The **One Book | One Community** program is committed to sharing books that explore Jewish themes, excavate aspects of Jewish history or traditions, or portray the richness and diversity of the Jewish experience.



If you have a book you'd like to share with Jewish Chicago, send your suggestion to onebook@spertus.edu. We'll post our favorite suggestions to share new ideas of what to read next!

"This was it, Chicago.
The end of the line."

— Robin, *The Middlesteins*

Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership offers dynamic learning opportunities, rooted in Jewish wisdom and culture and open to all. These opportunities are designed to enable personal growth, train future leaders, and engage individuals in exploration of Jewish life. Graduate programs and professional workshops are offered in the Chicago area, in select locations across North America, and through distance learning. Public programs — including films, speakers, seminars, concerts, and exhibits — are offered at the Institute's Michigan Avenue facility, in the Chicago suburbs, and online.



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