

# Ritual Foods Like Charoset Mark Passover

By Cathy Dausman



Making the Charoset, from left Vivian Poettgen, Tricia Zucker, Heidi Benenson  
Photos Cathy Dausman



The Jewish holiday of Passover begins the evening of Friday, April 22 and ends the evening of Saturday, April 30.

“Passover is my favorite Jewish holiday,” said Heidi Benenson, explaining that it is “food, drink and song over a hard topic.”

Passover is an eight-day festival celebrated in early spring that commemorates the Israelite emancipation from slavery in Egypt.

As with most holidays in most religions, it is celebrated with ritual and special foods. Benenson recently joined organizers Vivian and Valerie Poettgen making charoset for the Temple Isaiah Women’s Seder service. The ritual meal features matzo (unleavened bread), parsley, signifying spring, salt water for tears, lamb shank for sacrifice, horseradish as a bitter herb, wine as a blessing and a roasted egg which represents new life.

This charoset was made of apples, nuts and honey; it signifies the mortar which binds everything together.

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## ‘Peaceful Parenting’ is a Hot Topic for Lamorinda Moms’ Largest Forum

By A.K. Carroll

Dr. Laura Markham is first and foremost a parent. Which made the renowned parenting expert’s presentation in Lamorinda recently even more resounding, especially when she acknowledged, “Parents don’t get enough support. They need support.”

On Wednesday, March 30, the Lamorinda Moms, a local support group for parents, executed their largest community endeavor to date when they brought in Markham, a clinical psychologist, mother of two, author and founding editor of AhaParenting.com.

“I know how hard it is to be a parent,” said Markham, who was hosted at Orinda Intermediate School. More than 370 parents, caregivers and interested community members showed up for the event, a number that delighted one of the organizers for the event, Meighan Baldwin.

“I would imagine this [will be] one of the first larger scale parenting presentations in the East Bay,” she said.

The evening included an hour-long presentation, a substantial question-and-answer period and a book signing.

“I love to answer questions,” Markham said prior to the event. “I’ll come and do a 45-60 min presentation. It’s always useful, but everybody’s favorite part of the evening is when they get to [ask] ‘What about my family?’”

Markham’s presentation outlined the basic concepts laid out in her first book, “Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids: How to Stop Yelling and Start Connecting.” (She has also published a second book, “Peaceful Parent, Happy Siblings.”)

What is peaceful parenting? “It’s an aspiration,” said Markham. “An increasing ability to respond in a calm and mindful manner.” Markham noted that a peaceful parent isn’t always peaceful, but keeps peace in sight as a goal.

“We monitor and regulate our own moods so we can show up and respond and be the parents our children deserve,” she said.

Markham also put a large emphasis on embracing emotions and connecting with your children, no matter what the situation, touting that “Connection is 80 percent of parenting.”

The reaction to Markham’s presentation was overwhelmingly positive. “When she asked for questions I saw 20 hands shoot up right away,” said stay-at-home mom and Lamorinda Moms publicity team member Kathryn Cooper. “Because Lamorinda Moms is targeted at parents with kids under age six, a lot of questions were targeted at [parents] with young kids.”

Much of the Q&A reiterated concepts from Markham’s presentation in a way that hit home with individuals. “Trying playfulness [as a method of engagement] is something I’d used in the past, but had forgotten about,” said Cooper. “It was kind of an ‘Aha’ tool.”

Though parenting can be a tough go (especially when new tactics and tools seem counterintuitive), at the end of the evening Markham’s words were more encouraging than critical.

“I think that we all do the best we can as parents at all times,” said Markham. “We all need support. The more you give yourself the more you’ll be the parent you want to be.”

“Dr. Laura’s calm demeanor, hands-on approach and factual research is a wonderful mix for her talk,” Baldwin said. “Her focus on connection and emotions allows us as parents to realize and center ourselves and strive for better relationships with our children — from toddlerhood to young and mature adults

Markham’s words resonate with Lamorinda Moms, an organization that seeks to bring information to the community, specifically to parents.

“It’s a wonderful resource for new parents or parents moving from one area to the next,” said Baldwin, who hopes that Markham’s presentation will prove to be the first of many in the community. “If you are a new parent or parents of older children looking for community support, we are here for you.”



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