**Sukkot Fun Facts and Activities**

The festival of Sukkot begins on the 15th day of the month of Tishrei, the fifth day after Yom Kippur.  It is quite a drastic transition – one of the most solemn days of the year, to one of the most joyous! This year, Sukkot begins **tonight, Friday evening, October 2.**

Sukkot is one of the three pilgrimage festivals.  Like Passover and Shavuot, Sukkot has a dual significance – historically and agriculturally.  Historically, Sukkot commemorates the forty-year period during which the children of Israel wandered through the desert following the liberation of Egyptian bondage.  Agriculturally, Sukkot is a harvest festival and marks the end of a long growing season - olives ready to be picked and pressed into oil; and fruits either ripen, are eaten or stored.  To celebrate, the farmers and their families would go to the Temple in Jerusalem and offer thanks.

The word “Sukkot” means “booths,” and refers to the temporary dwellings that Jews are commanded to live in during this holiday.  Why?  The Torah records that following the exodus from Egypt, the Jews lived in “booths” – sukkot – in the desert.  Because of the holiday’s strong agricultural elements, some scholars believe that the current custom of building your own sukkah stems from the harvest when the workers lived in temporary huts in their fields.

Another observance during Sukkot involves what are known as the “Four Species” – the lulav and the etrog.  The lulav and the etrog have symbolic significance.  The etrog, a citron fruit, has a great smell and looks like a big bumpy lemon.  It represents the heart (being true).  The lulav is made up of three different branches.  The palm represents the spine (being straight with ourselves and others); the willow represents the lips (being careful what we say); and the myrtle represents the eyes (noticing what’s important).  With these four species in hand, we recite a blessing and wave the species in all six directions – east, south, west, north, up and down, symbolizing that God is everywhere.

There are many ways for you to enjoy Sukkot with your family even during a pandemic!  What can you do at home to celebrate the holiday?

1. Visit an apple orchard or pumpkin farm with your family.  The weather is perfect to enjoy plucking a delicious Minnesota apple from a tree or choosing a big, round pumpkin to add to your sukkah or front steps.

2. Purchase a variety of gourds and make a special Sukkot centerpiece for your table.

3. Go on a nature hike.  This year the colors of the leaves on trees are magnificent!  Make a collage.

4. No sukkah?  Bring your sukkah inside!  Decorate your house-- making paper chains are always fun!

5. Prepare a meal featuring "nature's bounty".  A vegetable soup--a fruit salad--or homemade caramel apples!

6. Have you ever seen how brussels sprouts grow? (On a stalk.)  Trader Joe's (or the Minneapolis Farmer's Market) are selling stalks of brussels sprouts.  Buy a stalk and have your child pull the sprouts off the stalk then roast them in the oven.  YUM.

7. It is traditional to serve "stuffed" foods on Sukkot--so enjoy stuffed peppers or cabbage.  [Here is a great recipe for Sweet Squash Nachos.](https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/september-2020/sukkah-snack-sweet-squash-nachos) Some commentators liken stuffed foods to miniature cornucopia--representing a bountiful harvest.  Sukkot also includes the notion of welcoming guests into the sukkah, thus "stuffing" them into a wrapper of sorts. Sukkot is a week- long festival to try lots of different recipes. [Here are some additional ideas for you.](https://toriavey.com/toris-kitchen/sukkot-recipes/)

8. It is customary, as well as a mitzvah, to extend hospitality to others, by offering to visit and share a meal in the sukkah or in your home.  While this is more complicated during a pandemic, invite a family for a Zoom Sukkot Dinner.

9. It is traditional to try a new fruit during the High Holydays.  Have you ever tasted an Asian pear? Starfruit? Pomegranate? Rambutan? Jackfruit?  Passionfruit?

10.  Honey Tasting.  There are hundreds of different kinds of honey - - from the mundane to the exotic. Use various bowls, bottles and dishes to serve varieties of honey.  Dip apples, challah, etc. and let everyone have a taste.  This is lots of fun to do while you are waiting for dinner to be served.

11.  Apple Tasting**.**This activity can be lots of fun and easy for you to do at home with your entire family.  All you have to do is buy different colored apples--red, yellow, green, pink, etc.  Then have a taste testing.  Which color do you like best?  Which apple is the crunchiest? Which apple is the sweetest?  Which apple is the roundest?  Which apple do you like best?  Do all apples have the same number of seeds?  Take a piece of paper and make a chart--great math skills opportunity too.

The hustle and bustle of Sukkot is concluded with the celebration of Simchat Torah.  Want more information on what the Adath has planned.  Check it out [here](https://www.adathjeshurun.org/hhd.html).