



# Falafel Nation: Cuisine and the Making of National Identity in Israel (Studies of Jews in Society)

By Yael Raviv

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## Falafel Nation: Cuisine and the Making of National Identity in Israel (Studies of Jews in Society) By Yael Raviv

When people discuss food in Israel, their debates ask politically charged questions: Who has the right to falafel? Whose hummus is better? But Yael Raviv's *Falafel Nation* moves beyond the simply territorial to divulge the role food plays in the Jewish nation. She ponders the power struggles, moral dilemmas, and religious and ideological affiliations of the different ethnic groups that make up the "Jewish State" and how they relate to the gastronomy of the region. How do we interpret the recent upsurge in the Israeli culinary scene—the transition from ideological asceticism to the current deluge of fine restaurants, gourmet stores, and related publications and media?

Focusing on the period between the 1905 immigration wave and the Six-Day War in 1967, Raviv explores foodways from the field, factory, market, and kitchen to the table. She incorporates the role of women, ethnic groups, and different generations into the story of Zionism and offers new assertions from a secular-foodie perspective on the relationship between Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism. A study of the changes in food practices and in attitudes toward food and cooking, *Falafel Nation* explains how the change in the relationship between Israelis and their food mirrors the search for a definition of modern Jewish nationalism.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"[*Falafel Nation* is] a thought-provoking read for someone interested in a detailed, intellectual exploration of the origins of Israeli identity from a new perspective."—Joy Getnick, Jewish Book Council  
(Joy Getnick *Jewish Book Council*)

"*Falafel Nation* is an extraordinary, insightful study of Zionism and modern Jewish nationalism."—*Washington Book Review*  
(*Washington Book Review* 2016-01-03)

"Raviv successfully accomplishes a difficult task in a work that foodies, historians and sociologists will find of great interest."—Rachel Esserman, *Reporter Group*  
(Rachel Esserman *Reporter Group*)

"Informative and intriguing."—Sheldon Kirshner, *Times of Israel*  
(Sheldon Kirshner *Times of Israel*)

"This book is an excellent cultural and culinary history in the making of Israel's modern day identity, and how religious and secular ideologies surprisingly worked together to unify the nation. . . . Excellent writing and thorough research."—Jordan Griffith, *International Social Science Review*  
(Jordan Griffith *International Social Science Review*)

"*Falafel Nation* [is] a book that makes food a partner in the creation of Israel in the twentieth century, set in the context of migrations, politics, intergroup struggles, and state building. This work will be an important addition to the literature on food history and the history of Israel."—Hasia R. Diner, author of *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*

(Hasia R. Diner 2015-03-04)

"What do Israelis talk about when they talk about food? Yael Raviv explores the food stories emerging from Zionism as they take shape in response to crisis, propaganda, and wave after wave of immigration. This lively and enlightening study of agriculture and cuisine as powerful elements in the task of state-making deserves wide readership in the academy and beyond."—Laura Shapiro, author of *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*

(Laura Shapiro 2015-03-04)

"Original, thought-provoking, and in many ways groundbreaking. *Falafel Nation* is rich with interesting and insightful ideas and comments that made me think time and again of the ways in which Israel can be observed from the culinary perspective. No doubt, approaching Israeli history, society, and political conflicts from the kitchen and the restaurant allows for a fresh and, indeed, critical view of this society."—Nir Avieli, author of *Rice Talks: Food and Community in a Vietnamese Town*  
(Nir Avieli 2015-03-04)

“Everybody who is interested in nation-building should read this book. Using falafel as a metaphor, Yael Raviv has done a brilliant job at portraying her native country. Bravo!”—Joan Nathan, author of *Quiches, Kugels, and Couscous: My Search for Jewish Cooking in France*  
(Joan Nathan 2015-04-02)

#### About the Author

Yael Raviv is the director of the Umami food and art festival in New York City. She has a PhD in performance studies from New York University and is an adjunct professor in the Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health at NYU. Her work has appeared in *Women and Performance*, *Gastronomica*, and elsewhere.

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##### **Johnnie Nystrom:**

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##### **Jessica Rodriguez:**

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**Richard Byrnes:**

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