

## FEATURES

## VAUDREUIL-SOULANGES

## Plenty of Jewish history, present-day Jewish flavour

Mike Cohen

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Rabbi Mordecai Zeitz arrived in the Montreal West Island suburb of Dollard des Ormeaux 50 years ago and began the journey of building a Jewish community hub. Could the same thing occur 20 minutes west in the region of Vaudreuil-Soulanges?

The *Jewish Tribune* recently spent some time in the area and discovered a lot of Jewish history, with signs that a new community could surface there one day.

Extending to the Ontario border, the Municipalité régionale de comté (MRC) de Vaudreuil-Soulanges has a population of nearly 140,000 people throughout its 23 municipalities.

Historian Elaine Steinberg has done extensive research on the Jewish history of Vaudreuil-Soulanges. She moved her family there 40 years ago, even though she taught at the Jewish People's and Peretz Schools in Montreal.

People in the community assumed that the Steinbergs were among the first Jewish families throughout all of Vaudreuil-Soulanges. But two years ago Jean Luc Brazan, archivist at Centre d'histoire de la Presqu'île in Vaudreuil, chanced upon an early 19th century notarial will of a Jew living in the region. It was the sign Steinberg needed to begin doing some research.

Descendants shared photos and family lore while village storekeepers had stories to tell as well.

"Villagers showed me photos, opened their homes and told stories of a Jewish pedlar," she said.

For reasons unknown, Vaudreuil-Soulanges Jewish history was left unattended, said Steinberg. Despite living in various villages on different dates, the pioneer families shared certain tendencies. They affiliated with a synagogue, stimulated the village economy, were figuratively embraced by their rural community and educated their children to the benefit of Montreal at large and the Jewish community therein.

Steinberg still lives in Vaudreuil West, on the doorstep of Hudson where her children

grew up.

"Although Jewish homes are dotted throughout the region, I think the St. Lazare municipality is the new Jewish frontier," she said. "It has the highest density and has had a Chabad rabbi since 2010, Rabbi Nechum Labkowski.

"Strong communities grow on the foundation of stories, of having a sense we stand on the shoulders of ancestors," Steinberg said. "Heritage gives us pride of place, a right to be and the right to return, as we say in Israel."

The five-star Château Vaudreuil Hotel ([www.chateau-vaudreuil.ca](http://www.chateau-vaudreuil.ca)), right on the Trans-Canada Highway, is another central address for Jewish activity. Independently owned by the Migliorati family since its inception 25 years ago, the hotel features 11 suites, an onsite restaurant and a standalone banquet and meeting facility on 25 acres of gardens right by the lake.

Over the last few years, the Château Vaudreuil has become very popular for Jewish weddings. It has a kosher kitchen, partnerships with two prominent kosher caterers (Tradition/Romano Giorgi and Black Tie/Ernie) and hosts other Jewish functions and business meetings. The Villa d'Este Restaurant even goes the extra mile. Guests requiring kosher meals need only provide 24 hours notice. Breakfast will be brought to your room, with lunch and dinner served in the dining room. This option has greatly increased the number of Jewish guests choosing the hotel, especially those coming by car from Ontario.

Meanwhile, developments like Les Perles de la Gare and Les Perles sur le Parc in Vaudreuil-Dorion are attracting a lot of interest. Project manager Ariel Yudelevich is a civil engineer from Israel who earned his degree at ORT in Tel Aviv. Partnering with Yudelevich are experienced Jewish property developers Joe Levine and Amos Sochaczewski. Their Development Diamant (<http://www.developpementdiamant.com>) already has two projects in place: Les Perles de la Gare and Les Perles Sur le Parc, with different phases both occupied and under construction.



The grounds of the Chateau Vaudreuil, the site of many Jewish weddings.

## 10 Jewish facts about Vaudreuil-Soulange

**1** Historian and former Jewish day school teacher Elaine Steinberg raised her family here and has lived in the region for 40 years.

**2** The region is only a 20-minute drive from the city of Dollard des Ormeaux (<http://www.ville.ddo.qc.ca/en>), which began building up its strong Jewish community 50 years ago.

**3** The five-star Château Vaudreuil Hotel ([www.chateau-vaudreuil.ca](http://www.chateau-vaudreuil.ca)) has become the go-to place for Jewish weddings, meetings and corporate functions.

**4** Two of Montreal's most notable kosher caterers, Romano Giorgi and Ernie the Caterer, have chosen to formally partner with the Chateau Vaudreuil.

**5** Three prominent Jewish developers – Ariel Yudelovich from Israel, Amos Sochaczewski and Joe Levine – have made Vaudreuil the centrepiece of their Développement Diamant housing project.

**6** There are some 200 Jewish families who affiliate with the St. Lazare Chabad. St. Lazare is being recognized as the region's new Jewish frontier.

**7** Last December, the Home Depot in Vaudreuil hosted a Menorah workshop for Jewish families and a giant Menorah lighting with the mayor of Hudson.

**8** The Village Theatre in Hudson has been the site of many Jewish-themed programs, including a standout play last year called *The Widow Schwartz*.

**9** Prominent Montreal stand-up comic and Jewish day school grad Joey Elias was the grand marshall of Hudson's recent St. Patrick's Day Parade.

**10** Ste. Anne de Bellevue, just on the tip of the region, is attracting more and more Jewish families. This includes Maureen Baron, the new chief educational and administrative director of Bialik and its elementary division, Jewish People's and Peretz Schools (JPPS).

## Conquering potato fatigue

Shira Isenberg

**Q: I'm so tired of potatoes for every side dish on Pesach. What are other options if I don't eat gebrocks?**

**A:** Thankfully, we have a world full of interesting vegetables that can serve as stand-ins for the potato on Pesach.

Use this as an opportunity to expand your palate.

### Eight days of substitutes

**Day 1: Purple potatoes.** I know they're technically still potatoes, but they're so much more exciting! Brighten your plates with a little colour by roasting or mashing a few purple potatoes, which are sweeter than white potatoes. Their bright hue is courtesy of the antioxidant anthocyanin (also found in blueberries, cherries and eggplant), which may offer cancer-fighting and heart-protective benefits. Daily consumption of purple potatoes may also help lower blood pressure by a few percentage points.

**Day 2: Quinoa.** Some people think this pseudo-cereal is similar to rice, but it's more closely related to beets and spinach. Naturally gluten-free and high in protein, quinoa is popular year-round, but especially on Pesach for people seeking potato alternatives.

Quinoa is great cooked simply with some chicken or vegetable broth or dressed up with added vegetables, dried fruit or a protein source like chicken, meat or cheese. For a nuttier flavour, toast it before cooking.

**Day 3: Cauliflower.** For those on a low-carb diet, cauliflower is a great potato fake out. It's the same colour and, when mashed, has a creamy texture similar to potatoes, with a fraction of the calories and carbohydrates. It's also delicious roasted or pureed into a soup or simply added to a salad or served with a dip. Plus, it's loaded with nutrients and phytochemicals that can protect against cancer.

**Day 4: Rutabaga.** This vegetable is surprisingly potato-like, with less than half the calories and carbs. It tastes kind of like a cross between a potato and a parsnip, with a little bit of sweetness.

As easy to peel and cut as a white potato, rutabaga is good mashed or you can bake or roast it as well.

**Day 5: Squash.** You should still be able to get winter squash,

a rich source of carotenoids (plant pigments that also act as antioxidants). My favourite is butternut squash because it's sweeter than the others and it cooks quickly. I love roasted butternut squash with olive oil, salt and pepper. Acorn squash is another good option, albeit less sweet. Bake it in halves for an attractive presentation.

Zucchini is another versatile squash. It is delicious in an easy sauté with onions and other veggies, or if you're feeling more ambitious, stuffed or cut into strips for a lasagna.

**Day 6: Celeriac.** If you like celery but hate the fibrous strands that get stuck in your teeth, celeriac is for you. Sometimes called celery root, it has that mild celery taste with a texture that's like a potato. Its nutrient profile is also more similar to celery than a potato (it's low in calories and carbs). Peel and slice it thinly to add raw to salads, boil or roast it or drop it into Pesach cholent instead of potatoes.

**Day 7: Sunchoke.** This knobby tuber of the sunflower plant might look like ginger root, but the resemblance stops there. As the name suggests, they taste similar to an artichoke, which is why they're also called Jerusalem artichokes. (Incidentally, they have nothing to do with Jerusalem; the moniker is thought to be a perversion of the Italian word for sunflower, girasole.)

While sunchoke are part of the sunflower plant, they should not be confused with sunflower seeds, which are, in fact, *kitniyot*. Sunchoke are high in inulin, a starch which our bodies cannot digest and is instead broken down by bacteria in the gut. Inulin is thought to improve immunity and promote gut health.

**Day 8: Carrots.** Try to think beyond your boring baby carrots and see this vegetable for the abundant strengths it brings to the table – it's starchy, sweet, bright orange, packed with nutrients and inexpensive.

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