

79TH LATKE-HAMANTASH DEBATE **SNACKONOMICS**

THE HIDDEN FORCES THAT SHAPE WHAT WE EAT



Hillel
The University of Chicago

SUNDAY, FEB. 22, 7:00 PM

ROCKEFELLER CHAPEL

*The Latke-Hamantash Debate is underwritten
by the Gemunder Family Foundation*

Latke-Hamantash Debate

Welcome.....Jenn George
Interim Executive Director, University of Chicago Hillel

Rhythm & Jews.....Abby Gurwitz, Eliška Levisohn, Ella Riebli, Hannah Riegel, Mila Shulman, Kerenna Klein, Asher Stone, Sammy Mitzenmacher, Jacob Zuckerman
University of Chicago's Premier and Only Jewish A cappella Group

Carillon procession.....Tom Weisflog
University Organist, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel

Opening Remarks.....Rabbi Daniel Kirzane
Rabbi, KAM Isaiah Israel

The 2026 Debaters

Linda Ginzel, PhD

Clinical Professor of Managerial Psychology
University of Chicago Booth School of Business

Avner Strulov-Shlain, PhD

Assistant Professor of Marketing
University of Chicago Booth School of Business

Joseph Dov Bruch, PhD

Assistant Professor of Public Health Sciences
Biological Sciences Division

Closing Remarks.....Beka Dychtwald,
Jake Rymer,
Jenn George

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A Brief History of the Latke-Hamantash Debate

The Latke-Hamantash Debate, a cherished academic tradition, began in 1946 at the University of Chicago as a lighthearted yet intellectual examination of two beloved Jewish foods. Faculty from diverse disciplines have engaged in witty, often satirical arguments, applying their expertise to the merits of latkes and hamantaschen. Over the decades, the debate has spread to universities and Jewish communities worldwide, blending humor, scholarship, and cultural pride. Now in its 78th year, the Debate continues to celebrate Jewish intellectualism with this year's theme, *Snackonomics*, exploring the hidden forces that shape what we eat to answer the eternal question: which is superior, the latke or the hamantash?



*Sheila Jelen, PhD, arguing for the merits of Latkes
78th Annual Latke-Hamantash Debate, 2025*

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Meet the Debaters

Linda E. Ginzel is a clinical professor of managerial psychology at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, where she has taught since 1992. She specializes in negotiation, managerial psychology, leadership, and executive development. An award-winning educator, she authored the best-selling book, Choosing Leadership, whose latest edition adds practical Leadership Modules to help individuals and groups build what she calls Leadership Capital—the courage, wisdom, and capacity to decide when to manage and when to lead.

Ginzel graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Colorado and earned her master's degree and PhD in experimental social psychology from Princeton University. She also worked as a senior consultant in talent development for Mutual of New York's Group Pensions and Operations Center.



Avner Strulov-Shlain's research focuses on the behavioral economics of firms. He is interested in how companies interact with consumers who have psychological biases. How should firms respond to these consumers? and how do they respond in practice? Two strands of findings emerge -- first, that consumers' non-standard behavior should be taken seriously and quantitatively, and second, that companies are sometimes "behavioral" too especially when not taking consumer behavior into account. To answer these questions Strulov-Shlain uses observational data, natural experiments, field experiments, and lab experiments.

Strulov-Shlain earned his PhD in economics from University of California, Berkeley. His pre-doctoral studies include an MA in economics from Tel-Aviv University and a BSc in physics and mathematics from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



Joseph Dov Bruch, trained as a social epidemiologist and health policy researcher, graduated from Harvard University with a Ph.D. in Population Health Sciences and a Master's Degree in Biostatistics. He is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Chicago. He was previously a Visiting Research Scholar at the Department of Health Care Policy at Harvard Medical School. His work asks a range of novel questions centered on the compatibility of different financial systems and actors with population health and health care management, expenditure, and quality.



What is the Latke?

Now understood as a potato pancake, the Latke is the emblematic food of the winter holiday of Hanukkah.

Hanukkah is a celebration of the rededication of the first Temple. Later tradition recounts a miracle of oil used to relight the Temple's menorah burning for 8 days instead of 1 day. Consequently, foods fried in oil have become emblematic of the holiday.

The Latke dates back before the 14th century to when Jews in Italy fried cheese in celebration of the holiday.

What is the Hamantash?

Another food celebrating survival, the Hamantash represents the three cornered hat of Haman, the villain of the Purim story.

Hamantaschen were first created and named in Germany as a pun on the seasonal poppy pastry, Mantashen (poppy pockets). In Israel, these cookies are known as *oznei Haman*, or *Haman's ears*.

The contemporary approach to preparation of the Hamantash is to make this simple pastry increasingly elaborate- like spelt brown sugar with red currant filling for example.



Thank you

The University of Chicago Hillel is proud to be a home for all Jewish students on campus. Since 1946, UChicago Hillel has fostered community and connection across the spectrum of Jewish experience, offering weekly Shabbat dinners, regular prayer services, and a wide range of programs.

We are deeply grateful to the Gemunder family for generously sponsoring this year's debate and extend our heartfelt thanks to all past and present donors.

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