

# Food Desert Seder Plate

The story of passover ends with the Jewish people wandering into the desert for 40 years. But there are deserts in our midst – food deserts – that we can transform into Promised Lands of access to healthy food and opportunities for good jobs.

**What is a food desert?**  
Areas with limited access to fresh and healthy food. Those who live in these areas are forced to rely on small convenience stores or liquor stores to do their shopping. These options are often far more expensive and offer a more limited selection than any supermarket.

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Share the story of living in a Food Desert. Pass this around your Seder table and each read a section.

## BEITZAH—EMPTY

On the food desert seder plate, there is no egg. Fresh eggs are one of the luxuries lacking in these neighborhoods.

### Is it harder to open a supermarket in a food desert than in a higher income neighborhood?

Absolutely not. The grocery industry often uses this argument to explain their abandonment of food deserts. In reality, operating costs are no different, land is often less expensive to develop, and the neighborhoods can fiscally support supermarkets.

## CHAZERET—ROTTEN LETTUCE

A fresh leaf of lettuce symbolizes Chazeret. Fruits and vegetables in small stores in food deserts are often rotten and unhealthy.

### Can Community Gardens and Farmers Markets solve this problem?

No. While community gardens and farmers markets can play a weekly solution for hundreds of residents, they can't reach the thousands of daily customers of a supermarket. Those working multiple jobs rely on the convenience of the long hours that supermarkets stay open.

## CHAROSET—\$11.04

CharoSET symbolizes the mortar that our ancestors used while slaves. Grocery workers in food deserts are paid \$7,000 less a year than grocery workers in other parts of the city (\$11.04 an hour vs. \$14.85 an hour) – an unnecessary economic injustice that pays workers below a living wage.

### Why are small stores in food deserts inadequate shopping options?

While small stores in food deserts often advertise the sale of fruits and vegetables, they tend to offer a limited and sometimes rotting selection. Supermarkets would not only provide better and fresher variety, but would also offer the opportunity of better paying jobs that boost neighborhood economies.

## Z'ROAH—CHICKEN WING

The bone on the seder plate represents the Passover lamb. Many residents in food deserts are forced to consume unhealthy fast food, but with more supermarkets, residents can regain the opportunity to purchase healthy food.

### Can low-income communities support supermarkets?

Yes! Many low-income communities are densely populated, and incomes add up. In South LA, the annual income per acre is \$350,000, roughly four times that of the LA/Long Beach metro average. South LA residents spend hundreds of millions of dollars per year on groceries.

## MAROR—PILLS

Maror symbolizes the suffering that our ancestors experienced as slaves in Egypt. Today, residents of food deserts suffer from health problems related to a lack of access to fresh and healthy foods.

### What are the health impacts of food deserts?

Residents of food deserts have higher rates of health issues related to nutrition and diet. Diabetes, obesity, and problems with cholesterol are just a few of the health effects that a food desert has on its residents. Fresh food is less expensive than medical bills.

## CARPAS—POTATO CHIPS

Carpas is often a cooked potato. In food deserts, where residents lack time and access to groceries, it is much easier to find a bag of processed potato chips than a fresh potato – replacing nutrients with high amounts of empty calories.

### Where are the food deserts in LA?

There are three main areas of the city with neighborhoods that fit the criteria of food deserts: East Los Angeles, South Los Angeles, and North-East San Fernando Valley.



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Join the campaign to transform food deserts at [www.pjalliance.org](http://www.pjalliance.org)