

## LATKE-HAMENTASHEN DEBATE 2010

Karin:

Good morning everybody, and welcome to our panel about health care in America and its obtuse relationship to the perennial latke-hamentashen debate. As we all know the American health care system is the best system in the entire world, by far. It is a system that covers each and every citizen regardless of means, a unified and coherent system that is easily understandable by even a fifth grader. Costs are reasonable and uniform, information systems are modern and easily shared across locales. Most health care dollars are spent on actual patient care, not on its administration. American health care outcomes are the best in the world. The focus is on prevention, rather than treatment.

Wait a minute!!!! This isn't right. (Throw cards.....)

Good morning, everybody, and welcome to our panel about health care in America and its obtuse relationship to the perennial latke-hamentashen debate. As we all know, the American health care system – or, non-system, which would be more accurate – is broken and needs to be fixed, before it finally unfixes us. It is an exciting time, as we now seem closer to starting down this necessary road than ever before. And, we all know what the reform should be – we need a system that offers universal coverage at a reasonable cost, and one in which the cost structure is completely aligned with better health outcomes for our citizens.

Now, we are just so close to getting started on this journey, so close, and we need to get that push to get us going. Perhaps the problem is one of symbolism. And, that is where today's debate originates. What symbol – the latke or the hamentashen – would be the better activator to push this reform process along?

Today, we have a representative from each camp to advocate for their side. After they speak, we may have time for questions, if there are any. Finally, you the audience will vote for the new symbol of our push forward.

The order of speaking has already been decided by a complex system involving the spinning of a dreidl, the flipping of a coin and the tossing of salt over the shoulder. Plus, it is Purim not Hanukah, so the latke goes first.

**At the very end:**

Karin:

So there you have it. Are there any questions? Good, I thought not. So now, let's take a vote.

All those.....

Liora:

I am here to convince you today that the latke is the perfect symbol for health care reform.

First of all, latkes are made with all natural ingredients, from nature's bounty. There is the potato, that storehouse of basic nutrition, full of essential nutrients and fiber. Ireland still exists today due to the nutritional value of the potato. There are onions, believed in many cultures to hold healing medicinal properties. There is oil, a vehicle for healthy polyunsaturated fats.

Not only that, but latkes can also be made out of leeks, carrots, zucchini and sweet potatoes. They are thus versatile and support crop rotation, promoting variety and healthy agricultural soils on our nation's farms.

Latkes are also eaten with sour cream, bringing dairy into the mix, and with it, calcium and vitamin D. So, they are good for healthy bones and other bodily functions. They are also eaten with apple sauce, which is technically a fruit. Some more adventurous latke eaters have been known to eat them with ketchup which is federally-defined as a vegetable. What more evidence do we need of the healthy lifestyle promoted by latkes? What better symbol for healthcare?

But, there is much more to it. Latkes are best made communally, in social groups. It is well known that social connection contributes to better health, and this is a foundational element of the latke. The necessary group effort also sets a fine example to our legislators that they need to work together for the good of everyone in getting health care reform passed.

Latkes are round, clearly symbolizing the unifying element of universal health care – health care that is endless, with no beginning and no end. Hamentashen? Really, triangles don't represent our population – there's no unity in a triangle. We're not a nation of Tinky Winkies!

Finally, the latke itself pays homage to a miracle, the lasting of the oil in the time of the Macabees. This presents an optimistic view of life, and in turn, an optimistic view of the possibility of health care reform.

Now, the hamentashen just doesn't do any of this. It fails miserably in fact.

Really, isn't a hamentashen just a glorified Pop Tart, fattening dough surrounding a mysterious filling? Do we want the symbol of our health care system to be a three-sided Pop Tart? I think not.

Also, hamentashen commemorates an event that didn't even really happen, promoting fantasy rather than the reality-based thinking needed to pass health care reform.

Hamentashen symbolizes vindictiveness and possibly even cannibalism – what is this with eating a part of Haman? I ask you, what have we come to as a people?

And, lastly, while perhaps not the direct fault of hamentashen, it is nevertheless associated with drinking large amounts of alcohol. Just like we are told to confuse the difference between Haman and Mordechai on Purim, I would fear that this could lead to the American people being then unable to tell the Senate plan from the House plan from the Republican's non-plan, although, come to think of it, this is already the case apparently.

Now, I recognize that a little hamentashen looks kind of cute and can taste quite good but don't be fooled. The latke should be the new symbol of our health care reform. It embodies health, nature, community, cooperation, optimism. There you have it, the latke.

Michael:

Let's all take a deep breath to clear our minds of that preceding bunch of potato-shredded, onion-crying, over-fried bunch of baloney. I am going to pop a sweet treat here (eats a hamentashen) and go on with my advocacy for the next great symbol of our health care reform – the hamentashen.

Why do I take this position, aside from the fact that it is obviously the only logical one?

First, let's consider how hamentashen are made. Like latkes, they are also best made in social groups, but in a such more meaningful way. First the dough is carefully made from diverse elements and kneaded into a common theme. This is a soothing and sensuous activity which exudes feelings of eroticism and love, which, by the way, are essential features in the propagation of humankind.

Then each hamentashen is personally formed and folded by hand, like fine pottery. It is not just slopped like a latke into a frying pan, bubbling with hot oil, but each hamentashen is carefully placed on a baking sheet, ready to rise and take form. So, just as arts and crafts are good for the soul, so is the making of hamentashen.

Now, the visual appearance. Hamentashen are three-sided, representing the three important elements of our health care system – repeat lab tests, unnecessary MRI's and drugs for erectile dysfunction. No, wait a minute, I meant the three important elements of a good health care system – patients, providers and cute stickers for children.

Hamentashen promote diversity. They are multi-colored, with whites, browns, blacks, yellows, reds, just like America. There is truly a hamentashen representing every American.

Speaking of diversity, hamentashen bring together very diverse food elements – flour, butter, sugar, baking powder – the classic elements of cake and cookies (yum) – with fruit, with preserves, with candy kisses. They are baked and not fried, thus healthier. They can be eaten fresh, right out of the oven, or later, even days later. They are portable, like the Mishkan for the wandering Jews.

Hamentashen represent the mind/body dynamic. A healthy fruit filling benefits the body while the cookie shell is very tasty and emotionally pleasing to the mind. And, better yet, hamentashen set a fine example for the constructive channeling of anger and bad feeling, sublimating the desire for revenge (against our tormentors) into the eating of sweets.

Now, my latke colleague calls hamentashen a glorified Pop Tart. But, what came first, I ask you, the hamentashen or the Pop Tart. One is at least hundreds if not thousands of

years old, steeped in tradition and history – the other was created by Kellogg's of Battle Creek, Michigan in 1964. It would be more accurate to call a Pop Tart a dumbed-down version of a hamentashen.

Anyway, a latke is just a misshapen jumbo McDonald's french fry. Supersize me, indeed!

Since when are latkes really healthy? Trying to pull the "latke is a healthy food item" ruse over on us is akin to John McCain pulling the "Sarah Palin is presidential material" strategy.

Have you ever tried to eat just one latke? You can't! Thus, latkes promote overeating.

Latkes don't keep well. They are fatty. They are dangerous to make (grease can splatter and burn). And, the miracle of the oil didn't happen either, so there. The latke is just on the wrong side of this debate.

But, hamentashen, ah hamentashen – they are artistic, hand-crafted into 3- sided geometric form.

As our rabbis have told us – the world stands on three things – on the Torah, on divine service and on regular preventative health care.

Hamentashen bring diverse food elements into one delectable whole – ever rising to the occasion of needed health care reform. I rest my case.

