

3100

ISRAEL

Ofer Sabath Beit-Halachmi The Rabbi

ONE DAY'S FOOD

IN OCTOBER

BREAKFAST Rugelach (pastry), chocolate (2), 3.3 oz • Nescafe instant coffee, 12 fl oz; with whole milk, 1 tbsp • Filtered water, 9.1 fl oz • Coffee (at work; not in picture), 8 fl oz

LUNCH Salmon sandwich: *Café Hillel* low-calorie bread, whole wheat, 5.4 oz; lox, 1.8 oz; tomato, 1.8 oz; lettuce, 0.2 oz; low-fat cream cheese, 1 tbsp • Kalamata olives, 0.7 oz • Coffee, 10.9 fl oz

MIDAFTERNOON SNACKS Pita bread, 2 oz • Hummus with pine nuts, 4.2 oz • Eggplant with mayonnaise, 3 oz • *Coca-Cola*, 16.9 fl oz • Coffee, 12 fl oz

DINNER Rigatoni pasta, 2.4 oz; with organic ketchup, 1.3 oz • Pita bread, 2 oz • Turkish tomato spread, 1.6 oz • *Dannon* yogurt, plain, 7.1 oz • Hard-boiled egg, 2.4 oz • Cottage cheese, 3.9 oz • Cucumber, 2.4 oz • Tomato, 6.9 oz • Filtered water, 18 fl oz

SNACKS AND OTHER Ice cream, vanilla with caramel, 3.9 oz • Homemade cookies, 1.2 oz • Red wine, 7.2 fl oz • Multivitamin • Filtered water, 18 fl oz

CALORIES 3,100

Age: 43 • Height: 6'1" • Weight: 165 pounds

TZUR HADASSAH • "There are options," says Ofer Sabath Beit-Halachmi as we discuss the Jewish Reform rabbi's day's worth of food at his home outside Jerusalem. He means menu options, because what he eats depends upon whether he's working from home, has his daughter in tow, is out with his wife, Rachel, who is also a rabbi, or in Jerusalem for meetings. There are options, but there are also rules: *kashrut*—ancient Jewish dietary laws that detail which foods can and cannot be consumed, and how those foods must be prepared and eaten.

Among those allowed are animals with cloven hooves that chew their cud, certain poultry, and fish with fins and scales. All must be ritually slaughtered, and there can be no mixing of milk and meat in the same meal.

Rachel is a vegetarian, Ofer is not. Outside their home he eats fish and chicken, but they purposefully keep a vegetarian household to accommodate even the most observant Jew. "This makes it easier to host people from other denominations of Judaism," Ofer says. "An Orthodox person can eat at this table without any hesitation." Most Friday nights their home is filled with guests for Shabbat dinner.

The couple's lives and their scholarship are influenced by the concept of *eco-kashrut*,

a term coined in the 1970s that draws more than the dietary laws into the equation. "I'm learning much of this from my wife," says Ofer. "She's very wise." *Eco-kashrut* is about ethical and sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry, but it also examines traditional dietary laws through the prism of humankind's heavy footprint on the earth, to lessen that impact both for the good of the earth and for spiritual well-being. Ofer is learning from his daughter, Tehillah, age 4, as well. These days the meal options he spoke of earlier are often defined by her tastes: much more pasta—one of her favorite foods—with organic ketchup.





Ofer Sabath Beit-Halachmi, a Reform rabbi wearing a *tallit* (prayer shawl), on the balcony of his home in Tzur Hadassah with his typical day's worth of food. Ofer's town in the Judean Hills about 15 minutes southwest of Jerusalem is a communal settlement where residents lease land and houses from the state of Israel for a 99-year period. On Friday evenings Ofer leads the Shabbat service in a small portable building that is kindergarten by day and synagogue at night and on weekends. At right: Congregants gather in Ofer and Rachel's home for a meal that begins with the recitation of the *kiddush*, the prayer over wine. Challah, a bread with great religious and cultural significance and part of every Shabbat meal, is covered in the center of the table.

3100

LATVIA

Aivars Radziņš The Beekeeper

ONE-DAY'S FOOD

IN OCTOBER

BREAKFAST Sour rye bread, 2.8 oz • Honey, 1 tbsp • Butter, 2 tsp • Hard-boiled egg, 2.3 oz • Homemade pork meatballs, 2.5 oz • Ham, 0.8 oz • *Lavazza* coffee, 11.2 fl oz

LUNCH Meatball and rice soup with sour cream and dill, 9 oz • Breaded pork cutlet, 6.9 oz • Boiled potato with sour cream sauce, 6.8 oz • Salad of lettuce, tomato, and onion with vinegar, 1.8 oz • Salad of carrots and cabbage with vinegar, 1.8 oz • *Lauku* kvass (fermented drink made from bread), 16.9 fl oz

TEA BREAK Cake with raisins and hazelnuts, 2 oz • Black tea, 9 fl oz; with honey, 1 tbsp

DINNER Fried homemade pork meatballs, 3.2 oz • Boiled potato with onion sauce, 7.7 oz • Cooked carrot with sour cream sauce, 2.8 oz • Salad of cucumber and tomato with sour cream sauce, 6.8 oz • Sour rye bread, 3.5 oz • *Lauku* kvass, 16.9 fl oz

CALORIES 3,100

Age: 45 • Height: 5'8½" • Weight: 165 pounds

VECPIEBALGA • Several years after Aivars Radziņš's estranged father died, his stepmother called to ask if he wanted some of his father's beehives. There were 10 of them, he recalls. "I didn't know anything about beehives and honey." He took a two-year beekeeping course in Latvia's capital, Riga ("everything is in Riga!") and turned it into a family project. Now they have 50 hives, sprinkled throughout the countryside and behind his house in the village of Vecpiebalga, in central Latvia.

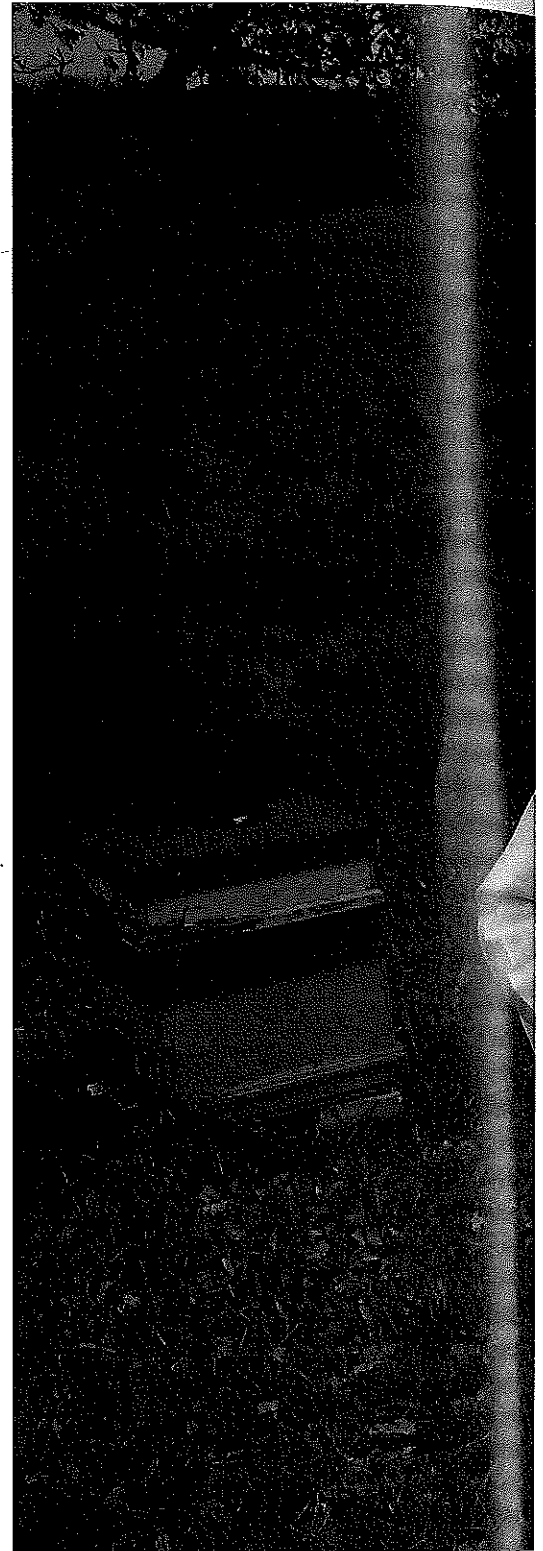
In Latvia, honey is both a cottage industry and big business. "We could easily have 200 beehives and make it our full-time work," he

says. "Right now it's a professional hobby."

Regarding the generic mass-produced honey on grocery store shelves, he admits that "some are good." But when it comes to the delicately flavored honeys that come from personal beekeeping husbandry and knowing where your bees have been buzzing around, "there is no comparison," he says.

Aivars, whose university degree is in mechanical engineering, is also a full-time forester and a part-time nurse and driver for his wife, Ilona, who's the sole doctor within a 15-mile radius of their house. So far, there haven't been any surgeries on the kitchen table, "but we have delivered babies," he says. "In the countryside, when we have an emergency it can take even an hour for help to arrive," says Ilona. And there are many small injuries. "One time a fisherman came with a big harpoon through his hand, and a fish on the end of it!" says Aivars.

While he speaks, the beekeeper attempts to slice a wholesome country rye, baked by a friend this morning and exchanged for honey. The dark, whole grain loaf was baked on a bed of maple leaves, both for beauty and to keep it moist in the wood-fired oven. "It should stand for a few days and mature," Aivars says, brandishing a knife, but he wants to cut it anyway, to share with us. As he saws





Aivars Radziņš, a forester and beekeeper, in his backyard with his typical day's worth of food. Since Aivars's government salary and his wife's pay as a rural doctor are both very low in this former Soviet republic, he used inherited beehives to create a home business producing honey to supplement their income. He holds a smoker and wears his beekeeping garb for the main portrait, and also models a nineteenth-century Latvian outfit (at left) that he wears when selling honey at local festivals and markets; last summer at the Latvian Song and Dance Festival his traditional dress took first prize. Although rich in culture and architecture, Latvia is among the poorest and least populated members of the European Union; its population has declined since gaining independence in 1991.



In their cozy kitchen (top left) overlooking the fruit trees and sauna house, Ilona makes tea for guests and shares her family's honey, drizzled on a dense slice of dark sour rye bread (bottom left). Received in exchange for honey, the loaf comes wrapped in maple leaves baked into the crust. Top right: The Radziņš family enjoys a traditional Sunday lunch at a neighborhood restaurant, complete with kvass, a fermented drink made from rye bread and sweetened with sugar or fruit.

at the bread, Ilona looks as though she'd like to take over the cutting, but she waits, watchfully. "I must change the knife maybe," he says. Finally, success. The maple leaves are crisp and dark, baked onto the bottom of the loaf, and cling to the slices as they're passed around. The bread has a woodsy aroma and a tangy bite, and the Radziņš's honey is a perfect accompaniment.

Aivars and Ilona have purposefully cobbled together a life that incorporates what they consider the best parts of country living: bartering for goods and services, gathering the fruits of the land with their three daughters, and living within modest means. A rural doctor in Latvia doesn't make much more than the country folk she treats. "We're here because we want to be here," says Ilona. "We understand that we can't get big salaries here in the country."

They build their honey business bit by bit and year by year, using their own labor and found materials to piece together what they need. "If we bought that sink [new]," says



Aivars, pointing at a refurbishment project in the honey-processing building, "we would have to raise the price of the honey."

They get their potatoes and carrots from Aivars's mother and their milk from a local dairy. Crates of apples and cakes of creamy yellow beeswax are stacked in the entryway to their house. "Out here in the countryside, there's a lot of natural production," says Ilona. "Here [it's] bread and bees. In the neighboring district, people sell meat: raw and smoked meats, lamb and beef."

The family favors the flavors of the cold Baltic sea region: sour rye bread, sour cream sauces, pickled salads, preserved meats, cabbage, root vegetables, and dill weed. Aivars's favorite beverage is *kvass*, a drink made with fermented bread. Historically, these fermented, pickled, marinated, smoked, and dried foods were a necessity, due to the region's short growing season.

The climate also means long naps for the bees. Aivars says that although this results in lower production, the quality is

higher, and his award-winning honey testifies to that. "In other countries, bees work a lot longer. They go around and keep making honey all year. Our bees work only four months a year. For the other eight months of the year they live in a very good house," he says, laughing.

Does he blend the honey from his different hive locations? "We keep the honey in separate tanks," he says. "Then we can recall for the customers very funny stories about how their honey came to be made."

The couple experiments with herbal preparations made by infusing honey with herbs and root vegetables. A strong-tasting rutabaga honey they make is "more of a medication—for men's health," Ilona says euphemistically.

They also sell (and use) bee by-products as holistic remedies: bee pollen, propolis (the sap that bees use to plug holes in the hive), and royal jelly (the nutritious secretion fed to future queens and worker bees).

Aivars and Ilona also built their own sauna. As with beekeeping, Aivars studied the subject in depth before they built it. Now he sounds a bit like a sauna salesman as he sings its virtues, but it's an easy sell: The charming dacha-style house with wood-burning fireplace overlooks a natural plunge pool. "After we take a sauna, we swim in the pond, and then back to the sauna," he says. It's a nice way to end a bee-keeping day, or a day in the forest.

"Our bees work only four months a year. For the other eight months...they live in a very good house."