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An app that can generate 64,000 kosher cheesecake recipes aims to prove AI's value for Orthodox Jews

BY PHILISSA CRAMER MAY 24, 2023



An AI bot to generate cheesecake recipes is meant to prove that artificial intelligence can have a place in Orthodox communities. (Illustration by Mollie Suss)

(JTA) — Sara Goldstein’s regular cheesecake recipe is like the rest of the kosher food she makes and shares on her Instagram account — “straightforward, and I wouldn’t say too adventurous.”

But she tried something special this year ahead of Shavuot, a Jewish holiday that begins Thursday night, when dairy foods are traditionally on the menu. In honor of the holiday, she whipped up a bourbon caramel cheesecake, with candied pecans on top.

Goldstein’s baking shakeup was spurred by an online tool that, using artificial intelligence, allows users to mix and match ingredients that

can be made into more than 64,000 different cheesecake recipes. For Goldstein, a chef and kosher recipe developer who lives in Lakewood, New Jersey, [CheesecakeWizard.AI](#) offers a welcome challenge.

“You have to be extra creative in the kosher world because it’s very limited,” she said. “And I think it definitely opened people’s eyes to what’s possible. I mean, saying there’s 64,000 combinations that are kosher — it’s really, really cool.”

The app’s creator, Brooklyn marketing executive Abraham Bree, doesn’t just want to push the bounds of what gets served on Shavuot tables. He’s also looking to prove to clients his value in a world of AI-generated press releases — and to show his fellow Orthodox Jews that ChatGPT and other AI tools can be a boon to Jewish observance, not a threat, despite concerns about internet use in his community.

“Not everybody who is going to go to this website is actually going to actually bake the cheesecake,” Bree said. “They’ll futz around with it, and they’ll push a couple buttons and it’ll make us all meshuggeneh trying to come up with the craziest flavor.... While they’re doing it, the company that’s sponsoring it, their logo and their name is there.”

The app asks users to select their crust, filling and topping preferences, then uses artificial intelligence to spit out a recipe to match. An image integration feature called Midjourney allows users to see computer-generated pictures of what their cheesecakes might look like — from carrot-cake crusts to maple and sweet potato filling to savory toppings such as an olive tapenade.

Since its launch last week, Cheesecake Wizard has been used by about 12,000 people to generate 45,000 recipes — though it remains to be seen how many actual cheesecakes result. Bree said that like Goldstein, he had been drawn to the “boozy options” in the Cheesecake Wizard interface and hoped that when the holiday begins Thursday night, he’ll get a chance to partake.

“After a very long week of work, I’d like to sit down on Shavuos eating cheesecake, and having a splash of bourbon on top would definitely,

you know, add a little more enjoyment to the holiday festivities,” he said.

Bree’s experiment with AI started last spring, when clients began to drop him because, they said, they could use the new technology to create their marketing materials instead. He decided to explore the new terrain. Passover was approaching, and Bree’s first venture was a day-trip generator, inspired by the hassle Orthodox families can face when deciding what to do in the middle of the weeklong holiday, when Jewish schools and workplaces are closed.

Say cheese! Meet your new personalized cheesecake recipe:

Caramel Bourbon Cheesecake with Pistachio Crumble Base and Toffee Crunch Topping

Create New Recipe +* Modify Recipe +*

Ingredients:

- 8 oz Pistachio Crumble Cookies
- 4 tbsp Unsalted Butter, melted
- 24 oz Norman's Kosher Cholov Yisroel Cream Cheese, at room temperature
- 1 1/4 cup Granulated Sugar
- 1/4 cup All-Purpose Flour
- 4 Large Eggs
- 1/2 cup Heavy Cream
- 1/4 cup Bourbon
- 1/4 tsp Salt

this image was generated using AI technology

Abraham Bree created a cheesecake AI generator to show his Orthodox community the value of AI. (Photo by Effy Hirschmann)

CanWeGoNow launched on the first day of chol hamoed, the period of the holiday when travel is allowed, and quickly crashed as the link ricocheted across WhatsApp groups that are the primary form of communication for many Orthodox Jews. Bree called his wife from synagogue and said he needed to scrap their own family’s plan to take their six children to an amusement park. He had to spend the time getting the site back up.

“I said, ‘Pessy, the bottom line is I stepped into something that might be amazing,’” he recalled. “I generally don’t work on chol hamoed, but if there’s a loss involved, the rabbinical leaders say you can work. So I said, ‘If I don’t take care of this, the whole thing’s going to fold.’”

Ultimately, 20,000 people generated tens of thousands of trip ideas in the United States, Israel, England, Australia and even Mexico, where hundreds of people at a kosher-for-Passover hotel got wind of the app.

Bree lost money on the venture, but he gained confidence that AI could catch on in his community, despite some of his Orthodox peers’ ambivalence toward new technologies. Now, he has relaunched his marketing firm to focus squarely on using AI to reach Orthodox audiences. (Its name, MarketAIIng.AI, makes the gambit visible.)

“The Jewish community is always a little bit behind, let’s just face it,” he said. “Our tradition is what kept us going all these thousands of years, so anytime something new comes into the picture, we’re always a little more wary and always a little more concerned. So AI really hasn’t made inroads yet.”

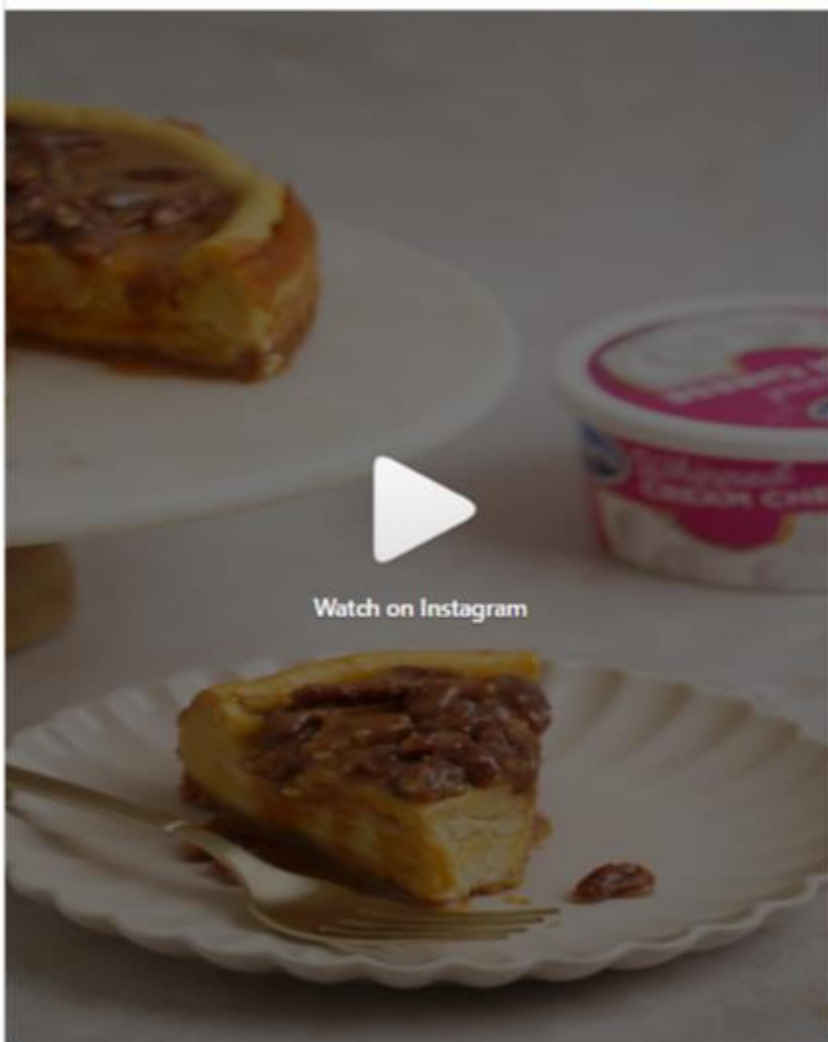
Bree’s latest effort hit a turning point while he was in synagogue, which he referred to as “a mini-networking event” that he attends three times a day for prayers. A self-described ultra-Orthodox Jew, he had been casting about for a kosher corporate partner for the cheesecake bot. An acquaintance named Akiva overheard him lamenting his lack of connections to a fellow worshiper after evening services.

Akiva said his wife worked for a kosher dairy-products company called Norman’s. A few WhatsApp messages later, Bree was in touch with executives there — and now the company’s name and logo appear on the website, and its products are inserted into the cheesecake recipes that the tool generates. Goldstein has also promoted the company on her social media posts about Cheesecake Wizard.



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Had a really fun time using the cheesecake wizard brought to you by @normansdairy to create this CARAMEL BOURBON cheesecake! The website uses AI technology to help you create a custom cheesecake recipe based on your preferences.

Have you tried it yet!? 🍷

#cheesecakewizard #ai #cheesecake #shavuos #normansdairy

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