

A Unique Blend: Growing Up “Chewish”

My parents have always told me not to think of myself as half Chinese and half Jewish, because if I think this way, I'll tell myself I'm not a “whole” of anything. I'm *both*, and I've identified as both for as long as I can remember. My parents have also told me to be proud of who I am. I stand out, and that's okay. No one has ever told me I'm weird for being Chinese and Jewish, and no one has ever stopped me from being myself and representing both sides of my identity. This is why I'm so proud to be both, or “Chewish” as we say in my family.

My Chinese and Jewish identity have shaped the person I am today and the people I connect with; I'm proud and honored to be a part of the Asian and Jewish communities, and I have met some great people in both of them. I'm a blend of two amazing and different cultures, each with its own set of holidays, beliefs, and traditions.

Being a blend of two different cultures helps me be my true self because I feel special knowing that I'm unique. I get three different new years (calendar, Lunar, and Jewish), while most people get one. As celebrations of birth and a rite of passage into adulthood, I received a red egg & ginger party, a baby naming, and became a bat mitzvah. Today, I love dim sum with my Chinese family as much as I do a meaningful Seder with my Jewish relatives.

I'm truly myself around my family members and the wide range of friends I have. I think about showing my true self by not thinking about what I do or how I can fit into a certain community. Instead, I focus on how I feel accepted and welcomed by those who surround me.

I grew up in the Bay Area, in a diverse community, but in an area with many Asian people. I was also born in New York, among a lot of Jews. I think of myself as a bridge between the two cultures coming together and forming a delicious and unique soup. I can make matzo ball soup, as well as wonton soup- two different soups representing both the Jewish and Chinese side of me. Being a combination of these two cultures is uniquely me because it shows how I'm not afraid of being different and standing out.

What I've learned about myself is to embrace and appreciate all parts of me —my personality, and especially my identity. Embracing and valuing *both* my Jewish and Chinese identity truly makes me happy with who I am – I see myself as who I want to see versus what others want to see (or want me to see). I am unique, special, and different, and recognizing this gives me the confidence to be my true self.