Cultural Festival 2026 – Something for Everyone!

By Lorna Klein, Festival Co-Chair

From babka baking and comedy films to a children's game show and moving stories from a Holocaust survivor, the 2026 Jewish Cultural Festival offered something for everyone.

The purpose of our Cultural Festival was not just to entertain or educate, but to encourage our Jewish community to be together. The offerings were different, but each one had the goal of getting people to come out, maybe laugh, perhaps learn something new or see something from a different perspective, and ultimately socialize with others.

The Festival kicked off on October 15 with "Fantasy Life" at Beth Am Shalom. This is a romantic comedy about a male nanny, set in New York. And, due to an unforeseen technical problem while the film was underway, everyone who signed up was sent a link so they could see the end of the movie!

On October 18, the JCC of LBI screened a very different kind of film: "Hold on to Your Music: A Mother's Legacy." The documentary features Mona Golabek, a child piano prodigy, telling the story of her mother's escape from Vienna on a Kindertransport. After the screening, attendees heard from Manny Lindenbaum, a child Holocaust survivor who also escaped on the Kindertransport. His moving and inspiring account brought the film's story to life.

Then back to comedy on October 25 at the Marquee Cinema for a double header: "The Everything Pot" and "Ethan Bloom." "The Everything Pot" featured Jewish characters and showed how something relatively insignificant could snowball and create chaos. "Ethan Bloom" had comic elements but touched on more serious themes of the essence of faith, navigating loss and grief and the bonds of family.

For anyone who had always wanted to learn how to make babka, the class at the Chabad of Toms River on November 1 was a huge success. Rabbi Moshe Gourarie, his talented wife Chanie, and several of their children, warmly welcomed participants and helped throughout the class. By following Chanie's demonstrations and guidance, each participant rolled out their own dough, chose chocolate or cinnamon filling, and added toppings. Everyone took home their own babka, ready to bake and then enjoy!

The PJ Library Game Show wrapped up the festival on November 5. The Federa-

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JEWISH 2026 CULTURAL FESTIVAL

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Barbara Cohen

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tion of Ocean County, in partnership with Mainstages, brought a fun, interactive game show to the community. Participating children and the audience got to test their Jewish-American cultural knowledge through trivia and physical challenges. It was truly an experience for the entire family!

We were delighted to welcome so many of you to the festival and hope you en-joyed the events. Thank you to everyone who helped make the festival a fun and meaningful experience for our Ocean County Jewish community.