

The Rabbinical Assembly

Pesah Guide 5770

This guide is based on the Guide that was prepared for the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Jewish Law and Standards by Rabbi Mayer Rabinowitz and accepted by the Committee on December 12, 1984 with a number of changes that reflect subsequent decisions of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards and the ongoing changes in food production. Additional material on smooth top electric ranges, medicines, cosmetics, and toiletries has been added. This document has been prepared by Rabbi Barry Starr, a member of the Kashrut Subcommittee of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, and Rabbi Paul Plotkin, Chair of the Kashrut Subcommittee.

Of all the festivals, Pesah is the one that not only requires the most effort to prepare for, but by halakhic standards is the most complex. Yet most Jews are committed to doing their best to observe the laws of Pesah. Here we are providing a set of guidelines for Pesah food and preparations. We will present some principles first and then proceed to specifics. Of course we cannot cover every possibility in this brief outline. Please contact your local Conservative rabbi or local religious authority if you have any questions. For Conservative rabbis in your area, see: In the USA: <http://uscj.org/findasynagoguesea5425.html>
Internationally: <http://www.masortiworld.org>

Because of the strictness of the halakhah regarding Pesah, the need to remove hametz physically from the home and diet, and the complexity of food preparation procedures in the modern world, there may be great variance in the approach of different Rabbis to Pesah halakhah. We cannot present all of the various approaches. We have chosen a path that follows Jewish Law while at the same time enabling our communities to observe Pesah with joy.

Kashering of Kitchen Appliances and Utensils

It is customary (and easiest) to remove the utensils and dishes that are used during the year, replacing them with either new utensils or ones used year to year only for Pesah. This is clearly not possible for major appliances and may not even be possible for dishes and utensils. There is a process for kashering many, but not all, kitchen items thus making them kosher for Pesah. The general principle used in kashering is that the way the utensil absorbs food is the way it can be purged of that food (*Ke-volo kakh pol-to*). Thus utensils used directly on a fire need to be kashered by fire (*libbun*), utensils used in cooking require boiling (*hag'alah*) and utensils used only for cold food are kashered by rinsing. Specific items are covered below.

- a. Earthenware (china, pottery etc) cannot be kashered. However fine translucent chinaware that was put away clean and that has not been used for over one year, may be used after washing. The china is then pareve and may be designated for milchig or fleishig use.
- b. Plastic items generally may not be kashered. Consult your Rabbi for specifics.
- c. Metal utensils used in a fire must first be thoroughly scrubbed and cleaned and then must be subjected to direct fire. A blow torch and a self-cleaning oven are two ways to

accomplish this purging (*libbun*). This is a complicated and potentially dangerous procedure and may result in discoloration of the metal being purged. Exercise caution when performing *libbun*. Metal baking utensils cannot be kashered because they require direct fire and this will warp them.

- d. To kasher metal pots used for cooking and eating and silverware and utensils wholly of metal not used for baking, thoroughly clean the item, then following a strict 24 hour waiting period, where they are not used, immerse the item (*hag'alah*) in water at a rolling boil. For pots and pans, clean handles thoroughly. If the handle can be removed, do so for a more thorough cleaning. Each item must be completely exposed to the boiling water to accomplish *hag'alah*. Pots and pans are either immersed in a larger pot of boiling water (may be done one section at a time) or filled with water brought to a rolling boil and then a heated stone is dropped into the pot such that the boiling water overflows to cover the sides of the pot. In the case of silverware every part of each piece must be exposed to the water at a rolling boil. Following this process, each utensil is rinsed in cold water.
- e. Ovens and Ranges – every part that comes in contact with food must be thoroughly cleaned. This includes the walls and top and bottom of the oven. Then the oven or range should be heated as hot as possible. The oven should be heated at maximum heat for an hour; the range top until the elements turn red and glow. Then parts of the range top around the elements that can be covered should be covered, usually with aluminum foil. Self cleaning ovens are put through the full cleaning cycle while empty. Following this process the oven should be again cleaned to remove any ash. If the oven was very dirty to start, two cycles may be needed to assume a thorough cleaning.
- f. Smooth top electric ranges present a challenge. We recommend cleaning the top thoroughly and then turning on the burners to maximum so that it heats as hot as possible and then carefully pour boiling water on the surface area around the burners.
- g. Microwave ovens that have no convection option should be thoroughly cleaned. Then an 8 ounce cup of water is placed inside, the oven is turned on until the water almost disappears (at least 6 of the 8 ounces is gone). Heating to complete dryness may damage the oven. A microwave oven that has a browning element cannot be kashered.
- h. Convection ovens are kashered like regular ovens. Make sure to clean thoroughly around the fan.
- i. Glassware is a subject about which the authorities disagree. One opinion requires that glasses be soaked in water for three days, changing the water every 24 hours. Another opinion requires only that the glasses be scrubbed and cleaned thoroughly or run through a dishwasher. Glass cookware is treated like a metal pot. See above for procedure. Glass bakeware like metal bakeware cannot be kashered.
- j. A dishwasher needs to be thoroughly clean including the inside area around the drainage. Then a full cycle while empty should be run with kosher detergent. After 24 hours of not being used the dishwasher is again run empty for the purpose of kashering. The

dishwasher and the racks are pareve following this process. For enamel coated dishwashers, consult a rabbinic authority.

- k. Other electrical appliances can be kashered if the parts that come in contact with hametz are metal and are removable, in which case they may be kashered like all other metal cooking utensils. If the parts are not removable, the appliances cannot be kashered. We recommend whenever possible that small appliances be used that are strictly for Pesah thus avoiding the difficulty of kashering these appliances.
- l. Tables, closets, and counters should be thoroughly cleaned and covered for Pesah. The coverings can be contact paper, regular paper, foil or cloth that does not contain hametz (e.g. been starched with hametz starch). Alternatively, boiling water may be poured over the counters after they have been thoroughly cleaned. The use of this alternative method depends on the material of which the counter was made. Below is a list of materials for countertops that the Chicago Rabbinical Council affirms may be kashered for Passover. It is important to note that these materials may be kashered only if they are not stained, scratched, or cracked. Surfaces with a synthetic finish also must be cleaned and covered as they may not be kasherable. For questions contact a rabbinic authority.

Common Brands:

Avonite
Buddy Rhodes
Caesar Stone
Cheng Design
Corian
Craftart
Formica
Gibraltar
John Boos
Nevamar
Omega
Pionite
Silestone
Spekva
Staron
Surrell
Swanstone
Wilsonart
Zodiaq

Common Materials:

Acrylic
Granite
Marble
Metals (stainless steel, copper)
Plastic laminate
Polyester Base
Quartz resign
Slate
Soapstone
Wood, butcher block

- m. A metal kitchen sink can be kashered by thoroughly cleaning and scrubbing the sink (especially the garbage catch), letting it sit for 24 hours and then carefully pouring

boiling water over all the surfaces of the sink including the lip. A porcelain sink cannot be kashered, so Pesah dish basins and dish racks must be used, one each for milchig and fleishig.

- n. Non-Pesach dishes, pots, utensils and hametz food that have been sold as part of the selling of one's hametz should be separated, covered or locked away to prevent accidental use.

Foods and Food Stuff

The Torah prohibits the ownership of *hametz* (leavened grains) during Pesach. Therefore, we arrange for the sale of the hametz to a non-Jew. The transfer, *mekhirat hametz*, is accomplished by appointing an agent, usually one's rabbi, to handle the sale. It is a valid and legal transfer of ownership. At the end of the holiday, the agent arranges to repurchase the items on behalf of the owner, since the hametz is again permitted. If ownership of the *hametz* was not transferred before the holiday, the use of any such *hametz* remains prohibited after the holiday (*hametz she-avar ha-Pesach*).

Since the Torah prohibits the eating of *hametz* during Pesach, and since many common foods contain some *hametz*, guidance is necessary when shopping and preparing for Pesach.

An item that is kosher all year round, and that is made with no hametz, and is processed on machines used only for that item and nothing else may be used with no special Pesach supervision. White milk would be an example of such a product. In most cases however, since we do not know enough about the processing of products or the sources of ingredients products ought to have Pesach supervision. Those who wish to follow other opinions should check with their Rabbi.

What follows is a general guideline. All kosher for Pesach items must have a label indicating the name of a recognizable living supervising Rabbi or kosher supervision agency. Items that have a label that is not integral to the package and does not indicate the product and current Pesach year, should not be used without consulting your Rabbi.

Prohibited foods include the following: leavened bread, cakes, biscuits, crackers or coffees containing cereal derivatives i.e. anything made with wheat, barley, oats, spelt or rye. Any food containing these grains or derivatives of these grains (the five prohibited species for Pesach) are forbidden. Foods containing flavorings, which may be derived from alcohol produced from one of these grains which would be hametz, need Pesach supervision.

Ashkenazi Rabbinical authorities have added the following foods (*kitniyot*) to the above list: e.g. rice, corn, millet, beans and peas. These and other plant foods (e.g. mustard, buckwheat and

sesame seeds) are not permitted on Pesah. Although many rabbinic authorities have prohibited the use of peanuts and peanut oil, our Movement's Committee on Laws and Standards has permitted their use and consumption on Pesah provided said items have proper kosher certification and no obvious hametz. Most Sephardic authorities permit the use of all the kitniyot foods other than those that might have come in contact with the prohibited grains. The further processed products whether liquid or solid from kitniyot are also forbidden by most rabbinical authorities. These might include but not be limited to: corn sweetener, corn oil, soy oil and ascorbic acid (vitamin C). Israeli products are often marked "contains "kitniyot" and, thus, Ashkenazi Jews who do not use kitniyot need to be vigilant when purchasing Israeli products.

Permitted Foods:

- a. The following foods require no kosher l' Pesah label when purchased before or during Pesah: fresh fruits and vegetables that have not been coated (the supermarket is required by the FDA to have a list of such products), eggs, fresh fish from a kosher source and fresh kosher meat or frozen, raw hekhshered meat other than ground products as ground products with prohibited materials could be made on the same equipment.
- b. The following products require reliable kosher l' Pesah certification (regular kosher supervision being not sufficient) whether bought before or during Pesah: all baked goods (matzah, Pesah cakes, matzah flour, farfel, matzah meal and any other products containing matzah, canned or bottled fruit juices, canned tuna, wine, vinegar, liquor, decaf coffee, dried fruits, oils, frozen uncooked vegetables, candy, chocolate flavored milk, ice cream, yogurt, all cheeses and soda. (These restrictions hold for Ashkenazic Jews; for Sephardic Jews, the presence in some of these products of kitniyot but not hametz may not present a problem.
- c. The following foods require no kosher l' Pesah label but do require Kashrut supervision if purchased new and unopened before Pesah: natural coffee without cereal additives, non-confectioners' sugar, pure tea (not flavored herbal or decaf tea), salt with no iodine, milk (in the absence of a kosher Pesah alternative), frozen uncooked fruit with no additives, and baking soda.
- d. Any processed food bought during Pesah must have a kosher l' Pesah label.
- e. Any detergent, because it is not a food and it is not eaten, may be used for Pesah as long as it has valid kosher supervision.
- f. Medicines: Since hametz binders are used in many pills, the following guidelines should be followed: If the medicine is required for life sustaining therapy, it may be used on Pesah. If it is not for life sustaining therapy, authorities differ in their

approaches. Please consult with your Rabbi. Capsules, because they do not need binders, are preferable to pills.