

The Rabbinical Assembly Pesach Guide

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. Also, additional material on smooth top electric ranges, medicines, cosmetics, and toiletries has been added.

One no longer has to live in a large Jewish community to have access to products that are certified as kosher for Passover. Many products that are under kashrut supervision all year long are supervised for Passover as well and are available to consumers. These are products that do not contain hametz and therefore do not require a change in ingredients for Passover. In addition, those living far from stores that carry a full array of products that are kosher for Passover can now shop on the Internet to order foods that are kosher for Passover and have them shipped to their homes. In addition, there are some general rules that can make it possible to acquire certain items, without Passover certification, before Passover and use them on Passover.

General Considerations

The Torah prohibits the ownership of *hametz* (leaven) during Pesach. Therefore, we rid our places of residence and business of much of our *hametz* before Pesach and arrange for the sale of any remaining *hametz* (whether we are aware of it or not) to a non-Jew. The transfer, *mekhirat hametz*, is accomplished by appointing an agent, usually the rabbi, to handle the sale. It is valid and legal transfer of ownership. At the end of the holiday, the agent arranges for the reversion of ownership of the now-permitted *hametz*. If ownership of the *hametz* was not transferred before the holiday, the use of this *hametz* is prohibited after the holiday as well (*hametz she-avar alav ha-Pesach*).

Because the Torah prohibits the eating of *hametz* during Pesach, and because many common foods contain some admixture of *hametz*, guidance is necessary when shopping and preparing for Pesach. During the eight days of Pesach, *hametz* cannot lose its identity in an admixture. Therefore, the minutest amount of *hametz* renders the whole admixture *hametz*, and its use on Pesach is prohibited. However, during the rest of the year, *hametz* follows the normal rules of admixture, i.e., it loses its identity in an admixture of one part *hametz* and sixty parts of non-*hametz* (*batel be-shishim*). This affords us the opportunity to differentiate between foods purchased before and during Pesach. So, for example, foods like milk that rarely, if ever, contain *hametz* may be bought before Passover for use on Passover without special certification of their status as being kosher for Passover. Those who wish to be strict need not accept this leniency in their own homes, but they should accept as kosher for Pesach any homes they visit where the practice is to use this leniency, for it is well grounded in Jewish law.

A problem that has arisen with regard to this leniency, however, is the fact that the food industry changes its practices very rapidly, and sometimes items that appear to be clear of

hametz may in fact contain some *hametz*. Therefore in this Guide we will explain only the general principles and suggest you consult with your rabbi for up-to-date information about various foods from year to year. Moreover, your rabbi should be consulted when any doubt arises. In particular, *Kosher le-Pesach* labels that do not bear the name of a rabbi or one of the recognized symbols of rabbinic supervision, or which are not integral to the package, should not be used without consulting your rabbi.

Prohibited foods include the following: leavened bread, cakes, biscuits, crackers, cereal, coffees containing cereal derivatives, wheat, barley, oats, spelt, rye, and all liquids containing ingredients or flavors made from grain alcohol. Most Ashkenazic authorities have added the following foods (*kitniyot*) to the above list: rice, corn, millet, legumes beans and peas; however, string beans are permitted. The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has passed a rabbinic ruling (a *teshuvah*) that even for Ashkenazim, peanuts and peanut oil are permissible because they were not known, and therefore not banned, by northern European authorities. Some Ashkenazic authorities permit, while others forbid, the use of legumes in a form other than their natural state, for example, corn sweeteners, corn oil, soy oil. Sephardic authorities permit the use of all *kitniyot*. Many vegetarians and others with health needs have asked for permission to eat *kitniyot* on Passover. The CJLS does not have a comprehensive *teshuvah* on *kitniyot* and its derivatives, and therefore each rabbi must rule for his or her own congregants on an individual basis. The Vaad Halakhah (Committee on Jewish Law) affiliated with the Masorti/Conservative Movement in Israel has adopted a *teshuvah* written by Rabbi David Golinkin that may offer some insight, but he does limit his *teshuvah* to the Land of Israel.

PERMITTED FOODS:

A. The following foods require no *kosher le-Pesach* label *if purchased before or during Pesach*: Fresh fruits and vegetables (for legumes see above), eggs, fresh fish, and fresh meat.

B. The following foods require a *kosher le-Pesach* label if purchased before or during Pesach: All baked products (*matzah*, cakes, *matzah* flour, *farfel*, *matzah* meal, and any products containing *matzah*); canned or bottled fruit juices; canned tuna; wine; vinegar; liquor; oils; dried fruits; candy; chocolate flavored milk; ice cream; yogurt and soda.

DETERGENTS: If permitted during the year, powdered and liquid detergents do not require a *kosher le-Pesach* label.

MEDICINES, COSMETICS, AND TOILETRIES:

MEDICINES

1) All pill medications (without *hametz* binders) that one swallows are permitted without special rabbinic certification as being kosher for Passover.

2) All chewable pills that have *kitniyot* are permitted. If the chewable pills have *hametz* and no substitute is available, ask your rabbi.

3) All liquid medications that have *hametz* should not be used. If they contain no *hametz* but do contain *kitniyot*, they are permissible.

Before discontinuing any medication, consult with your rabbi and physician.

COSMETICS AND TOILETRIES

1) All varieties of body soaps, shampoos, and stick deodorants are permitted for use on Pesach regardless of their ingredients.

2) All types of ointments, creams, nail polish, hand lotions, eye shadow, eyeliner, mascara, blush, foot and face powders, and ink and paint may be used regardless of their ingredients.

3) Colognes, perfumes, hairspray, shaving lotions, and deodorants that have restorable, denatured alcohol should not be used. This applies only to products in a pure liquid state.

4) Lipstick that contains *hametz* should not be used.

KASHERING OF UTENSILS: The process of kashering utensils depends on how the utensils are used. According to *halakhah*, leaven can be purged from a utensil by the same process in which it was absorbed in the utensil (*ke-voleo kakh poletu*). Therefore, utensils used in cooking are kashered by boiling, those used in broiling are kashered by fire and heat, and those used only for cold food are kashered by rinsing.

A. EARTHENWARE (china, pottery, etc.) may not be kashered. However, fine translucent chinaware which has not been used for over a year may be used if scoured and cleaned in hot water.

B. METAL (wholly made of metal) *UTENSILS USED IN FIRE* (spit, broiler) must first be thoroughly scrubbed and cleansed and then made hot until it glows. Those used for cooking or eating (silverware, pots) must be thoroughly scrubbed and cleaned and not used for 24 hours. Then they are completely immersed in boiling water. Metal baking utensils cannot be kashered.

C. GLASSWARE:

1. *Drinking and serving utensils (plates, serving platters, etc.)*. Authorities disagree as to the method for kashering glass utensils used for drinking and eating. One opinion requires soaking in water for three days, changing the water every 24 hours. The other opinion requires only that one thoroughly scrub them or put them through a dishwasher.

2. *Glass cookware*. This category includes cookware made of modern materials that are as non-porous as glass, such as Pyrex. There is a difference of opinion as to whether glass cookware needs to be koshered or can be. One opinion is that it must be kashered. After thoroughly cleaning it, wait 24 hours. Then, boil water in it that overflows the rim, or immerse it into boiling water. The other opinion is that, only a thorough cleansing is required. Others believe that glass cookware cannot be kashered.

3. *Glass bakeware*, like metal bakeware, cannot be koshered for Passover.

KASHERING OF APPLIANCES:

A. CONVECTION OVENS

1. The Oven Itself.

- Remove all oven racks.
- Remove fan housing/covering from the back of the oven.
- Spray abrasive cleaner (e.g., Dow Easy Off) on the entire oven, including its walls, oven floor, and fan assembly, and all parts of the door and the door crease if there is any dirt there.
- Spray the doors, including the glass.
- If the back plate cannot be removed, then thoroughly spray the cleaner over and inside the entire fan assembly.
- After all the areas are covered with cleaner; heat the oven to 300 degrees for about 20 minutes.
- Wash the oven with a long handled brush, using cold water and soap, removing all the

loose dirt. Take care not to short electrical parts of the oven.

- Reapply cleaner to areas that have a great build up of dirt. Steel wool and scrapers may be required. Baked on dirt and grease must be removed before you can begin to make everything kosher.
- After you have examined the oven and have determined that all dirt has been removed, the oven should be turned up to the highest possible setting for one and a half hours with the fan blowing.

2. Oven Racks and Grates.

There are two ways to kasher:

Stovetop method:

Take the grates or racks and place them on the stovetop. This can only be done if the oven top can handle the heat, so in all likelihood it is only a gas stovetop that can be used for koshering racks and grates this way. Otherwise the racks and grates need to be heated with a blowtorch.

To use the stovetop method:

- Wrap the entire stovetop with a double layer of foil wrap, covering over the entire stovetop with the foil. The shiny side should be facing down in the direction of the stovetop. This causes maximum heat.
- Set the burners to a low heat.
- Tightly seal the foil wrap around all the racks and grates, and place them on the stove top.
- Raise the burners to highest setting.
- With long metal pliers, carefully check if *libun* (white-hot heat) has been accomplished. If the metal of the racks and grates is glowing with a red color, then it has been accomplished.
- After half an hour, carefully and from a distance, remove the foil and allow the racks and grates to cool down, and then return them to the oven that is now kosher for Passover.

Inside the oven method:

Clean the oven racks very carefully to ensure all food residue and stains are removed. Then put them in the bottom of the oven (not on the tracks) as it is being kasherred as per the instructions below.

D. Regular Ovens.

Thoroughly clean all surfaces of the oven. This must be followed by *libun kal*. The required heating would be *kash nisraf mebachutz*. Closing the oven and heating it up to 500 degrees for an hour and a half will suffice.

E. Self-Cleaning and Continuous Cleaning Ovens.

Self-cleaning ovens should be scrubbed and cleaned and then put through the self-cleaning cycle, or the ovens can be cleaned and kasherred by running the full self-cleaning cycle.

Continuous cleaning ovens must be kasherred in the same manner as regular ovens.

F. Stovetops:

There are at least 4 types of stovetops:

Gas Stoves with space between the burners:

Clean the metal parts above and around the gas area then turn on the heat. If the burner parts can get hot enough to burn straw then that will suffice, if not put them into the hot

oven during oven kashering. It may be easier to just clean the burner area then cover the burner with foil inverted side up to heat clean and kasher the burner area. In either case you still need to put foil in the middle area after cleaning.

Gas stoves that have no open space between the burners (commercial or high end)

Clean thoroughly to remove all food, then cover whole area with inverted foil and turn on heat. The result is that the entire stovetop is kosher and there is no need for foil.

Electric Coils with open metal between the burners:

Clean under the electric burner replacing any foil or other catch material. Turn on coils till very hot. Clean open top area and cover in foil. Some pour boiling water over mid area then foil as well. There might be a case for not covering in foil once boiling water has been poured over it, but most cover in foil anyway.

Smooth Top Electric Ranges:

Smooth top electric ranges present a problem. They cannot be covered with foil, nor heated at a high temperature, nor cleaned with an abrasive cleaner. Consult with the manufacturer on how to clean the smooth top. Then discuss with your rabbi if that method of cleaning is adequate enough to kasher the smooth top. Some will not be able to be kashered. We suggest leaving the burners on until they are bright red and have reached maximal temperature for a few minutes. After they cool down for a while pour boiling water over the glass areas in between burners.

H. Microwave ovens.

Microwave ovens, which do not cook food by means of heat, should be cleaned, and then a cup of water should be placed inside. Then the oven should be turned on until most of the water is boiled. A microwave oven that has a browning element cannot be kashered for Pesach.

I. Dishwasher.

A full cycle with detergent should be run, then the machine should not be used for a period of 24 hours, after which, it should be run with only water set at the highest temperature.

G. Other Electrical Appliances:

If the parts that come into contact with *hametz* are removable, they can be kashered in the appropriate way (if metal, follow the rules for metal utensils). If the parts are not removable, the appliance cannot be kashered. (All exposed parts should be thoroughly cleaned.)

COUNTERTOPS

There are many types of surface used for countertops. Some can be kashered by cleaning and then pouring boiling water over the surface; others need to be cleaned and then covered. 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 are kasherable, only as long as they are not stained, scratched, or cracked. Surfaces with a synthetic finish also must be cleaned and covered as they may not be kasherable.

Common Brands:

Avonite
Buddy Rhodes
Caesar Stone
Cheng Design
Corian

Craftart
Formica
Gibraltar
John Boos
Nevamar
Omega
Pionite
Silestone
Spekva
Staron
Surrell
Swanstone
Wilsonarat
Zodiaq

Common Materials:

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

TABLES, CLOSETS

If used with *hametz*, they should be thoroughly cleaned and covered, and then they may be used.

KITCHEN SINK

A metal sink can be kashered by thoroughly cleaning it, then leaving it unused for 24 hours, and then pouring boiling water over it. A porcelain sink should be cleaned and a sink rack used. If, however, dishes are to be soaked in a porcelain sink, a dish basin must be used.

HAMETZ AND NON-PASSOVER UTENSILS

Non-Passover dishes, pots and *hametz* whose ownership has been transferred to a non-Jew should be separated, locked up or covered, and marked in order to prevent accidental use.