

Kasher L'Pesach כִּשֶׁר לַפֶּסַח
Rabbi Jon's Guide to Kosher for Passover 5778 (2018)

During Pesach, there are two practices with regard to food: we eat matzah **מַצָּה**, and we rid our diets and our homes of *chametz* **חָמֵץ** -- anything leavened. Both matzah and *chametz* are defined in terms of five species of grain: **wheat, barley, rye, oats, or spelt**. While we first and foremost associate matzah with Pesach, the avoiding of *chametz* is the more sweeping practice.. The Torah says that we must eat matzah on the first day of Pesach, but avoid *chametz* throughout the festival.

Matzah, according to the Torah, is both the bread eaten by slaves and the bread of the first moments of freedom, baked on the run of our Egypt when there was no time for the bread to rise. *Chametz* (leavened or fermented grain) symbolizes what is old and spoiled, in our lives and our world. The Exodus from Egypt is the Torah's rejection of old but still tenacious ideas about the power some people wield over others. In biblical times, Pesach was a festival when grain from the previous year's harvest would be swept out, and we would begin eating grain that is fresh and new. In Jewish thought, the fermented *chametz* came to be understood as a symbol of decay in a metaphorical sense. Chasidic teachings compare *chametz* and matzah to characteristics of our soul. *Chametz* represents arrogance and a self-centered attitude -- being "puffed up", as we say in English. Matzah stands for humility, simplicity, and a sense of proportion.

The *halachot* (Jewish laws and paths) regarding what may or may not be eaten on Pesach are meant to remind us through our bodies and mouths that we all are descended from freed slaves, and to help us on the path toward renewal, Godliness, and increased Jewish commitment. These *halachot* can seem demanding and for many people daunting! Rather than be daunted, think of "Kosher for Passover" as a ladder, and try to climb a bit further this year. Some of the rungs are:

- eating matzah and avoiding bread
- removing all bread, pasta, etc. from the home
- avoiding obvious *chametz* when you eat outside the home
- not eating out during Pesach at non-kosher restaurants, other than fresh fruits or vegetables
- reading food labels to avoid obvious *chametz* ingredients or items manufactured on equipment with wheat or other grains
- eating only foods that are Kosher for Passover as described below
- focusing your attention as you eat, by saying a *b'racha* (blessing) and reflecting on the path from slavery to freedom

The easiest way to observe Pesach is to eat simple and fresh foods. Indeed, a week spent paying such close attention to our food and where it comes from opens a window on the many choices we face as we eat throughout the rest of the year.

If you have any questions about food during Pesach, or how to prepare your home for Pesach, please do not hesitate to call me. To adapt a line from the Seder: Anyone who adds layers to the experience of eating during Pesach is deserving of praise!

Wishing you a zissen (sweet) and kosher Pesach!
Rabbi Jon

Where to Buy Kosher for Passover Food Nearby

Many local supermarkets carry matzah and a small number of Passover items. Try to shop early when the selection is greatest, and make sure to thank the management for stocking these items so they will continue to do so in the future!

Hannaford and Marketbasket, especially in Nashua and Manchester, carry a good variety of Passover products.

Whole Foods stores carry kosher chicken as well as other Passover products. They also advertise certain Jewish holiday specials that are not Kosher for Passover.

Trader Joe's in South Nashua has kosher meat/chicken and wine available. Contact them in advance to place orders for meat/chicken in quantity; they sell out fast.

New Hampshire State Liquor Store in Nashua at Exit 6 carries many kosher wines.

Stop and Shop in Lexington, MA, Costco in Waltham, MA, and Wegman's in Burlington, MA have large kosher sections.

The lists that follow are based on the rulings of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of Conservative Judaism, as I interpret them. **These pages are particularly valuable as a guide to which regular, year-round products can be purchased so as not to pay a "Pesach premium."** Any food not listed here specifically can be eaten if it has a **Kosher for Passover certification from a qualified rabbi or supervising organization.** As is the case during the year, the letter "K" or the mere words "Kosher for Passover" are not regulated, so they are not sufficient proof of rabbinic supervision. Look for those words along with an O-U (O around the U) or other Kosher symbol as well. Many kosher-certified products have a small P on them if they are Kosher for Passover, rather than the words "Kosher for Passover."

Recently the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards approved a change in the practice for Ashkenazim (Jews of Eastern European descent) regarding the eating of *kitniyot* (rice and legumes). It has been a long-standing custom for Ashkenazim to avoid these foods on Pesach, even though they bear only a passing resemblance to *chametz*. Sephardim (Jews whose origin traces back to Spain and the Mediterranean) have always eaten *kitniyot*. The Conservative movement now approves of Ashkenazim eating *kitniyot* as well. This guide provides guidance on how to eat *kitniyot* appropriately during Pesach, if you choose to do so.

If you have any questions about particular foods, about the issue of *kitniyot* (legumes), or about making your kitchen, cookware, and utensils Kosher for Pesach, contact me at (603) 883-8184 or rabbi@tbanashua.org.

The following may be purchased before or during Pesach without special Kosher for Passover certification and without any Kosher certification: (Explanation: These are items with no *chametz* in them or in their manufacture and processing.)

baking soda

eggs

coffee: all ground and whole bean unflavored caffeinated coffee

all ground and whole bean unflavored Swiss water method decaffeinated coffee

extra virgin olive oil

fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole fresh spices (e.g. mint, basil)

fresh refrigerated milk

fresh fish of kosher species

tea: any unflavored, caffeinated white, green, or black tea -- loose or teabags

unflavored seltzer or bottled water

unground, unsalted nuts -- such as walnuts, or whole or half pecans

unsweetened cocoa powder manufactured in the United States

powdered and liquid detergents, as well as food wraps and foils, are not foods and you may buy and use them during Pesach

The following may be purchased before or during Pesach without special Kosher for Passover certification but require regular Kosher certification: (Explanation: These are items that involve more processing, but are known from supervision to have no *chametz* in their manufacture.)

coffee: instant unflavored caffeinated coffee

fresh or frozen kosher meat

raisins -- Trader Joe's, Hannaford, Market Basket, Berkeley and Jensen, Wegmans, CVS,
Rite Aid, Dole, Newman's Own

tea: Nestea - unflavor instant, regular and decaffeinated

For Sephardim or others who eat kitniyot (legumes and rice) during Pesach, these may also be eaten without Kosher for Passover certification and purchased before or during the holiday. They should be inspected before use and any grains of chametz discarded:

plain uncooked, unenriched rice in boxes or bags

dry beans of any variety in boxes or bags

uncooked/unroasted/unprocessed nuts of any kind

frozen raw corn or edamame that has not been processed on equipment shared with *chametz*

corn, canola, peanut, or soybean oil that has regular kosher certification and is not manufactured on equipment shared with *chametz*

The following may be purchased before Pesach without Kosher for Passover certification, but require a Kosher for Passover label if purchased during the holiday: (Explanation: These are items which may have traces of *chametz* in their additives or processing. Before Pesach begins, the *ta'arovet chametz* or "mixing in of *chametz*" is considered to be *batel b'shishim*, nullified by sixty times its quantity. Once Pesach begins, even trace amounts of *chametz* are forbidden by Jewish law.)

Bolivian or Peruvian quinoa packaged with no other ingredients and marked "gluten-free" --

other quinoa if these are not locally available

canned tuna packed in water with no other ingredient beside salt

cream cheese, cottage cheese, lactose-free milk

Equal Exchange Fair Trade Dark Chocolate (see fairtradejudaica.org)

frozen fruit with no sugar or additives

frozen uncooked vegetables not prepared on equipment shared with grain or pasta

or opened and inspected by you and you discard *chametz*

frozen non-leafy cooked vegetables (including peas if you eat legumes) with no additional ingredients other than salt even without kosher certification, or frozen cooked leafy vegetables (e.g. spinach) with year-round kosher certification

Grade A unsalted butter

granulated white sugar

hard cheeses (e.g. Cheddar), semi-soft (e.g. Muenster) and soft ripened cheeses (e.g.

Camembert) in block but not shredded or grated form *for those who eat cheese without kosher supervision during the year*

noniodized salt

pure fruit juices without any additives

unopened pure dried spices manufactured in the United States -- *but onion or garlic salt*

or any spice blends require certification both before and during Pesach

Those who do eat *kitniyot* (legumes) and also uphold the strictest standard can eat peanut butter, hazelnut butter, etc. on Pesach. There is almost no kashrut authority in North America that supervises these for Pesach. If one chooses to eat nut butters, they should have regular kosher certification, be completely natural, list no other ingredients, and not be manufactured on equipment shared with *chametz*.

Medicine -- Although many medications are made with binders derived from *kitniyot* and even *chametz*, the preservation of life (*pikkuach nefesh*) and health are overriding principles. Medicines can and should be taken during Pesach as needed.

Baby food and infant formula -- For those who adhere to the restrictions on *kitniyot* (legumes), these restrictions do not apply to infants. Pure fruit or vegetable baby food with regular kosher certification is acceptable for Pesach. Any kosher infant formula is as well. If you do not eat *kitniyot*, keep any utensils and cleaning supplies for baby food separate.

Diet restrictions -- If you do not eat grains, or if you have any condition or allergy that makes eating on Pesach difficult, please be in touch. I am happy to consult and advise.