

Kasher L'Pesach כֹּשֶׁר לְפֶסַח

Rabbi Jon's Guide to Kosher for Passover 5771

During Pesach, we are commanded two things: to eat matzah and also to rid our diets and our homes of *chametz* -- anything leavened made out of wheat, barley, rye, oats, or spelt. In many ways the command to avoid *chametz* is the larger one. We must eat matzah on the first day, but avoid *chametz* throughout the holiday.

Chametz represents what is old and spoiled in our lives and our world. Pesach was a holiday when grain from the last year's harvest would be swept away, and we would begin eating grain that is fresh and new. As the product of fermentation, *chametz* came to represent 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. Flat matzah, by contrast, represents humility, simplicity, and a sense of perspective.

The *halachot* (Jewish laws and paths) regarding what may or may not be eaten on Pesach are meant to help us on the path toward renewal and Godliness, and toward increased Jewish commitment. The laws are demanding and for many people daunting! I encourage everyone to view yourself on a ladder, and to consider climbing this year a bit farther than you were on Pesach a year ago. Some of the rungs:

- eating matzah and avoiding bread
- removing all bread, pasta, etc. from the home
- avoiding obvious *chametz* out of the home
- not eating out during Pesach at non-kosher restaurants other than a vegetable salad
- 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

The easiest way to observe Pesach is to eat simple and fresh. 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 during the rest of the year.

To adapt a line from the Haggadah: Anyone who adds to their experience of eating during Pesach is deserving of praise!

Wishing you a zissen (sweet) and kosher Pesach!

--Rabbi Jon

Note: The lists below follow the rulings of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative movement, as I interpret them. **There are many foods not listed here specifically that can be eaten if they have Kosher for Passover certification. This list is particularly valuable as a guide to what regular, year-round products can be purchased so as not to pay a “Pesach premium.”** As is the case during the year, the letter “K” or the words “Kosher for Passover” are not regulated; look for an O-U (O around the U) or other Kosher symbol as well. Most O-U-certified products have a small P on them if they are Kosher for Passover, rather than the words. If you have any questions about particular foods, about the issue of *kitniyot* (legumes), or about making your kitchen and home Kosher for Pesach, contact me at (603) 883-8184 or rabbi@tba.mv.com.

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

fresh fruits and vegetables

fresh spices (e.g. mint, basil)

100% pure non-pasteurized fruit juices without any added ingredients (vitamins, minerals, etc.)

fresh milk (not extended shelf life unrefrigerated milk)

eggs

fresh kosher meat (obviously does require kosher certification)

fresh fish

powdered or liquid detergents; food wraps and foils of all varieties

baking soda

extra virgin olive oil

raisins -- Berkeley and Jensen, Trader Joe's, Hannaford, Market Basket

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

salt -- noniodized

Realemon reconstituted juice

tea:

any unflavored non-decaffeinated -- loose or teabags

any Lipton's decaffeinated teabags

coffee:

all ground and whole bean unflavored caffeinated coffee

instant caffeinated coffee: Folgers and Tasters Choice

ground and whole bean unflavored decaffeinated -- Swiss water method only

unflavored seltzer or bottled water

unsweetened cocoa powder

For Sephardim or others who eat kitniyot (legumes) during Pesach, these may also be eaten without Kosher for Passover certification:

plain uncooked, unenriched rice
dry lentils and dry beans of any variety
uncooked/unroasted/unprocessed nuts of any kind
corn, canola, peanut, or soybean oil that has regular non-Pesach kosher certification

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 *taarovet 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.)

canned tuna packed in water with no other ingredient beside salt
unopened pure dried spices manufactured in the United States -- *but onion or garlic salt or any spice blends require certification before or during Pesach*
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*
cream cheese
cottage cheese
lactose-free milk
soy milk -- Soy Dream original unenriched/unflavored --
for Sephardim or others who eat kitniyot
almond milk -- Trader Joe’s or Market Basket original unenriched/unflavored --
for Sephardim or others who eat kitniyot
frozen fruit with no sugar or additives
granulated white sugar
packaged quinoa without added ingredients
Tropicana orange juice

Those who do eat *kitniyot* (legumes) and also uphold the strictest standard can eat peanut butter, hazelnut butter, etc. on Pesach. There is no kashrut authority in North America that supervises this for Pesach in the Sephardic way. 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 wheat.

Medicines

Many medicines are made with binders that come from *chametz*. We follow the rule that the preservation of life (*pikkuach nefesh*) is an overriding principle. Medicines should be taken during Pesach as needed.