

CONGREGATION BETH AHABAH FOOD SERVICE POLICY

FOR A VIBRANT AND DIVERSE REFORM JEWISH CONGREGATION

(Edited February 19, 2019)

Congregation Beth Ahabah brings together a variety of Jewish experiences and traditions. Food is a big part of the Jewish experience. Some of us have a familiarity with kashrut (*Jewish Dietary Laws*), while many have had no experience with kashrut. As a Reform community we do not regulate Jewish ritual observance in individual homes. Nevertheless, we feel that having a food service policy for the synagogue is another way of upholding our Jewish values and helps us all to make thoughtful choices each day. **Except as noted below, the policy applies to ALL food served at Congregation Beth Ahabah.**

1. We do not require a *hechsher* (kosher certification) on any food products, including meat, served on our property.
2. When preparing food at home for synagogue use, we do not require that a member's kitchen be kosher, nor do we require that the food brought to the synagogue be on a kosher platter.
3. We support different dietary requirements by providing vegetarian, vegan and/or gluten-free options upon request. This also includes consistent labeling of foods with common allergens such as nuts, dairy, and gluten. As such we request all food to be labeled to indicate both dietary and allergen information. (*e.g. Contains meat, fish, chicken, etc. and/or contains dairy, nuts etc.*)
4. Certain foods which Jews have traditionally avoided, including pork and shellfish (*including but not limited to shrimp, lobster, crab, oysters, clams, mussels, scallops, calamari*), may not be served on our property.
5. We strive to separate meat and dairy in the same menu item, meaning neither poultry nor meat should be mixed with any milk product (*fish is not considered meat*). However, if there is an instance where mixing meat and milk is unavoidable, proper labeling as described in item 3 must be in place so that all can make an informed choice.
6. Meat and dairy menu items may be present at the same meal on separate platters. Individuals may choose if they wish to partake of both.
7. During Passover, no bread or other leaven may be prepared or served on campus. Leaven means food containing one of the five grains – wheat, barley, oat, spelt, and rye – which have been allowed to “rise” through contact with water and/or yeast (*e.g. bread, pasta, breadcrumbs, cakes, cookies, crackers*) unless specifically labeled for use on Passover.
8. For congregational programs away from our property where a group meal is offered, program hosts and participants should adhere to the policy above to the best of their ability.
9. Any individual member or staff member may bring any food into the building for their own personal consumption (*e.g. brown bag/boxed meal for events, meetings, etc.*) and it need not adhere to the policy above.

Jewish family life and ritual is rooted in food – each holiday has its special dish, and nearly all our celebrations take place gathered around a dining table. The customs of kashrut have been a crucial part of Jewish practice for millennia. For some communities, the importance of kashrut is that it is commanded by God. For others, it is a way to create a cohesive community. Our food teaches us about our history and the moral choices we make every day. The blessings we recite remind us that food is a gift that we should never take for granted. In the Torah we are taught that the dietary laws create a food discipline that makes us *kadosh* – holy through:

- Identification and solidarity with the worldwide Jewish community; (*Genesis 1:28; Exodus 23:5, 12; Baba Metzia 31a; Proverbs 12:10*)
- Avoidance of certain foods which Jews have traditionally avoided (*see #4*) as a reminder of the struggle of past generations to remain Jews;
- Support of ethical eating practices, ethical sourcing, and environmentally aware serving materials;
- Raising our awareness to become better stewards of our environment and the world.