



הזן את העולם

Sustenance for the Planet
A Kosher Food Policy

Introduction

As inheritors of the Jewish tradition, we seek to live lives that are “fit” or “appropriate.” We strive to live lives of commitment to kindness, justice and beauty. In Jewish thought, the term “kosher” refers to something’s “fitness” or “appropriateness.” Torah Scrolls, ritual baths, and choices can all be kosher or they can be not-kosher.

Of course, food can be kosher (or not) as well. Within the Jewish tradition, some food is obviously not kosher or appropriate. Pork, for instance, is never kosher or appropriate in a Jewish context.

Other things are not so clear. Partially hydrogenated oils? A vegetarian dish from a non-kosher kitchen? Food purchased on Shabbat?

This policy is an attempt to articulate a *more fully* kosher way of eating for the Beacon Hebrew Alliance community. It is an attempt to lay out some guidelines for what food is fit for us to eat. This document will govern how food is prepared and consumed within our synagogue and we hope that members of our community will use this document as a basis for reflection on the choices they consciously or unconsciously make about the food they eat at home.

This document initially emerged from the Conscious Jewish Food Choices Group, which met through 2011-2012. It was revised in 2016. The group was made up of BHA members Jennifer Clair, Bobby Gropper, Valerie Gropper, Ann Gross, Jeff Gross, Deana Morenoff, Joan Pirie, Bill Smith and Rachel Zollner and was led by Rabbi Brent Spodek. We are grateful for their learning and deliberation.

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Talking About Values

When we talk about food, we are talking about values and as inheritors of a complex tradition, we inherit many different values. Among the values that we, as a community, hold are:

1. a commitment to *מסרת הכשרות* (*masoret ha-kashrut*) -- the Jewish eating traditions regarding kosher meat and the separation of milk and meat;
2. a commitment to *שמירת הגוף*, (*shmirat ha-guf*) -- the Jewish mandate to care for the bodies we have been given, in this case, through healthy eating;
3. a commitment to *הכנסת אורחים* (*hachnasat orchim*) – the mitzvah of welcoming others. In our context, that means working to make sure that:
 - a maximal number of people are comfortable *eating* at BHA,
 - a maximal number of people are comfortable *preparing food* at BHA, and
 - a maximal number of people can *afford to participate* in communal life at BHA
4. a commitment to *ברכות* (*brachot*) -- traditional Jewish expressions of gratitude for the food with which we have been blessed.

While individual members of the congregation have a wide variety of observances in their own homes, we have adopted the following policy for events and ask that everyone who purchases or prepares food for shul functions to follow this policy.

General Principles

1. Except during Passover, the BHA kitchen is *strictly* dairy, meaning there is no meat. We have made this choice in order to maximize space in our small kitchen and to make it easy for everyone to help with the preparation of food. This means that all ingredients, sauces, etc. must be certified as either dairy or parve. During Passover, all our dishes and utensils are replaced.
2. Cold parve food can be served on dairy dishes without concern that the food becomes dairy; the transferring of “taste” is only relevant for hot foods. Those issues are relevant only with hot foods.
3. The kitchen at BHA serves to both prepare food for our community and also to teach our community about the practice of kashrut.

What we eat

1. At BHA, we only eat kosher food. Some kosher food has a recognized *hekhsher*; some kosher food does not have a *hekhsher* and some does not need a *hekhsher*. Whole fruits and vegetables, for instance, are inherently kosher and do not need a *hekhsher*. Neither do canned or frozen fruits and vegetables which are packaged in either in their own juice or water. Other packaged food does require a *hekhsher*.
2. In general, we seek to avoid industrially processed and packaged food. If industrially processed and packaged food is brought into BHA, it must carry a recognized *hekhsher*. Recognized *hekhshers* are listed at the end of this document.
3. For our potluck meals, we welcome vegetarian food prepared in any kitchen. Vegetarian food should not include any meat products, such as animal-based grease, chicken stock, beef bouillon, etc. **In order to respect the various food commitments in our community, please prepare a little card listing all ingredients with any dish you bring.**
4. We prioritize eating food grown and produced in the Hudson Valley.
5. All cheeses, including those in which rennet, any rennet, is used as the curdling agent are permitted.¹

¹ For further information on the kashrut of cheeses, please see Isaac Klein, “Kashrut,” in *Responsa and Halachic Studies* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1975), p. 57, and “The Kashrut of Cheese,” *Conservative Judaism* 28 (winter 1972):46.



6. We hope that our food is healthy for those who eat it, those who prepare it and the earth from which it comes. To that end, we prioritize purchasing local food so that we can discuss any concerns directly with the producer.

What we drink

We recognize the role that healthy consumption of alcohol can play in Jewish social life; we also recognize the damage that unhealthy consumption of alcohol can inflict on individuals and communities. With that in mind, if alcohol is available at an event, there should be beverages other than water available.

Further, domestic wines and grape juice are deemed kosher not based on their ingredients, but on the basis of whether gentiles were involved in the production of the wine. Since we do not view our gentile friends and neighbors with the suspicion that our ancestors did, we accept all domestic wine and grape juice, regardless of whether it is hechshered. Imported wines must be hechshered

When we eat

Sundown on Friday till sundown on Saturday is Shabbat, the Jewish cathedral in time. It is a full day to accept the world as it is, and not try to change it through force, money or labor. To that end, we do not cook food on Shabbat.

1. Food and ingredients for use in the synagogue should not be purchased on Shabbat or holidays.
2. Commercial deliveries of food or ingredients for the synagogue should be made before or after Shabbat and holidays.
3. Cooking is not permitted on Shabbat but cooked foods may be re-warmed using a timer and a hotplate.
4. The ovens, turned on before Shabbat, may be turned off during Shabbat if it is deemed unsafe to leave them on. Once the ovens are turned off, they may not be turned on.
5. Hot drinks may be served on Shabbat as long as they are prepared using time-set urns.
6. Unless otherwise specified, we only serve parve food on Friday nights at BHA.


How we eat





In traditional Jewish thought, food is not simply fuel for the body; it is a way of connecting with the holiness of the world. To that end, we encourage practices which remind us of the potential holiness of eating. Among the practices we emphasize are:

- singing or chanting blessings before and after we eat;
- making an effort to welcome guests into our home for Shabbat;
- avoiding disposable utensils and instead trying to organize groups to clean after meals.

Appendix A--Examples of Acceptable Hekhsherim and their Symbols

There are more than 1000 kosher certifying agencies; some of the most common symbols are below. A more comprehensive listing can be found at http://www.crcweb.org/agency_list.php.

All hekhsers are acceptable with the exception of a plain “K” and the Tablet K: 

	
Orthodox Union http://www.oukosher.org/	Committee for the Advancement of Torah http://www.ok.org/
	
Kof K http://www.kof-k.org/	Star K http://www.star-k.org/

Appendix B - Glossary of Terms

- **Basari** (Hebrew) – meat, or anything made from meat. Same as fleishic in Yiddish.
- **Fleishic** (Yiddish) – meat, or anything made from meat. Same as basari in Hebrew
- **Halavi** (Hebrew) milk, or anything made from milk, such as butter, yogurt, cheese, etc. Same as michic in Yiddish.
- **Hekhsher:** The special marking found on the packages of products that have been certified as kosher.
- **Industrially Processed Food:** Hard to define, but if it has many difficult-to-pronounce ingredients and/or you can’t easily imagine how it was produced and/or it will last on a shelf forever, it’s industrially processed food.
- **Mashgiach:** is a person who inspects and supervises the kosher status of a kosher establishment.
- **Milchic** (Yiddish) – milk, or anything made from milk, such as butter, yogurt, cheese, etc. Same as halavi in Hebrew.
- **Parve** (Hebrew) that describes food without any meat or dairy ingredients. Jewish dietary laws considers parve food to be neutral; Parve food can be eaten with both meat and milk dishes. Fish, eggs, fruits and vegetables are parve.
- **Treif** (Hebrew/Yiddish) Non-kosher food, food not in accord with Jewish dietary laws.