

Needless to say, this year's Passover will offer new and particularly complicated challenges to the many observances associated with holiday. In this update, we will offer some guidance for those affected by COVID-19.

Though we are all experiencing the impact of COVID-19, different geographic areas differ in particular challenges, and often at different times. Our yearly Passover guide expresses the ideal for which individuals and communities can strive to maintain. It will be helpful to give it a quick read to see what may be possible within those guidelines.

What we are going to provide below are some suggestions for alternative options that still fit within a reasonable interpretation of Jewish Law, and the unprecedented time in which we are living.

Seder:

This year most of us have been instructed (or mandated) to remain home. This presents significant challenges to both the traditions of family and large seders, and communal seders as well. We feel that as a matter of Jewish law (which certainly includes public health concerns instituted by civic and medical authorities) these directives should be maintained. We don't take this decision lightly, as we are very aware of how emotionally significant Seder can be with family members and special friends and with as many people as possible at the physical table. God willing, these private small immediate family & individual seders will not be necessary in the future. But they are necessary this year, so please stay home.

We also recognize that emotional concerns play an active role in the halakhic process. Just as Agmat Nefesh (anxiety) allows for preparation of the Yom Kippur break-fast while it is still Yom Kippur, so will we see communities and individuals adapting to meet the emotional needs of Jewish life. We need to make sure that we are in contact with, and provide reasonable options for—those unable to conduct their own seder and for family members, friends who live far apart and, especially, for the elderly and infirm in our communities. Ve'ahavta le-re'ekha kamokha, loving our fellow human beings, is utmost among our concerns during this crisis. This could mean that, for this year, many of us may expand our usual Yom Tov observances to include as many as possible, keeping in mind civic and medical instructions to limit sedarim to only those who reside in the household.

As different practices emerge in different communities, let's all remember to treat one another as kindly as possible, reserving judgement for the One imbued with the amount of compassion with which to do it lovingly, always.

A few tips to keep in mind when purchasing food for the seder:

Matzah - One is obligated to avoid hametz throughout Passover, but the obligation to eat matzah is limited to fulfilling the rituals of the first/second night seder alone. Therefore, communities should ensure that each home has at least enough matzah for each person to fulfill the obligation of אכילת מצה, eating matzah, for [each] seder. Think, basically, about one piece of matzah per person, per seder.

Karpas - Can be any vegetable. [In Israel, boiled potato is a common food for karpas]

Maror - If horseradish is not available, people are encouraged to find other vegetables or fruits that can bring a tear to the eye if consumed raw: hot peppers, fresh ginger, mustard greens, raw lemon. In Israel, romaine lettuce is commonly used as maror.

Egg and Roasted Shankbone on Seder Plate -- A roasted beet and rice (if consuming kitniyot) in place of the shankbone and egg.(Pesachim 114b)

Kashering/Cleaning:

This may be one area in which not much has to change, for many households. The directions are laid out in the CJLS Pesah Guide. Cleaning this year may actually be a bit more difficult as many of us have been in our homes living differently than normal. But the general rule is, places must be well-searched and specifically cleaned for hametz only if it's a place for which and in which hametz is normally consumed and cooked. Furthermore, the prohibition of owning & seeing hametz applies specifically to amounts of pure hametz that is at least the size of an olive (k'zayit). This is your yearly reminder that dirt is not hametz.

Destruction of Hametz/Bi'ur Hametz and Bittul Hametz/Renouncing of Hametz:

It is a mitzvah to search for and destroy Hametz. If cleaning is unusually difficult this year due to conditions of isolation, it is well to remember that at the end of that process we renounce "all hametz whether I am aware of it or not." If cleaning is sufficient to protect against obvious contact with hametz, we can rely on the formula of bittul (renunciation). More information

Sale of Hametz:

We have set-up an online form for those in North America to appoint Rabbi Mordy Schwartz as the agent for sale of hametz. Grocery store owners and other businesses that will be open over Pesah should not fill out the form, but should email Rabbi Schwartz to arrange for the sale.

Cleaning/Kashering for elderly/infirm:

In these households, if there is an already living-in-home caretaker in place, cleaning and kashering should be carried out, to the extent possible, according to the guidelines which apply to all. In a household where there is no able-bodied caretaker in place, the residents of the household should do their best to remove hametz from every surface that will be used for the preparation or consumption of foods during Passover. These surfaces should be wiped down with all-purpose cleaning materials. If possible, refrigerator shelves should also be wiped down. If the oven will be used during Passover, the walls of the oven should be wiped down and aluminum foil placed between the rack and the baking dish.

For homes in which vessels will not be able to be kashered in the normative manner (due to physical capability or general concerns of danger with heating elements), we recommend designating a few cooking vessels to be used for passover cooking before and during the holiday, to clean them well, and let them sit for 24 hours (or at least overnight). So long as they don't have visible foodstuff caked on, they are acceptable for preparing Passover food. This technique can also be used for cutlery and non-porous dishes as well.

## Purchasing of Food:

Hierarchy of purchasing: While the CJLS formally permitted Ashkenazim (who choose) to consume kitniyot in 2015, due to the unprecedented disruptions in the food supply, the CJLS encourages everyone to consider putting aside the Ashkenazic custom of eschewing legumes (beans and lentils) corn and rice, if only for Passover 5780 (2020).

Below are guidelines for following “best practice” under trying circumstances:

Hierarchy of purchasing: It is important to note that many products that are plain, unflavored dairy products (like milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, and hard cheeses), frozen fruits and vegetables, packaged legumes, and rice can be purchased with a year-round hekhsher before Passover as a matter of course. This is not latitude granted during difficult circumstances, this is a normative, albeit general, halakhic permission. It is only if they are purchased during Passover itself that many of these items need to carry a Kosher for Passover certification. While in normative years we give a stricter ruling for many of these products due to our limited capacity to offer specific guidance on each variation, this year, due to severe circumstances, we also offer the option to rely more expansively on the principle.

In general, we tend to be strict on our Passover lists due to the overall complexity of certifying individual items. This year we have simply relied on our current knowledge to lessen the burden we are all feeling, while still being within the normative constructs of Passover Kashrut.

This year, due to the limitations on product availability and in order to limit individuals having to check multiple stores, if you are unable to find an item below with a Kosher for Passover certification due to COVID-19 then here's what you can do.

Food requiring no Kosher for Passover certification no matter when purchased:

Baking soda  
Pure bicarbonate of soda, without additives  
Eggs  
Fresh fruits and vegetables (including pre-washed bagged)  
Fresh or frozen kosher meat (other than chopped meat)  
Nestea (regular and decaffeinated)  
Pure black, green, or white tea leaves  
Unflavored tea bags  
Unflavored regular coffee  
Olive oils (and other pure oils)  
Whole or gutted fresh kosher fish  
Whole or half pecans (not pieces)  
Whole (unground) spices and nuts  
OU/Star-K Raisins  
Kosher wine  
Plain butter, either salted or unsalted  
Plain seltzer water

The following list of basic foods is ideally for pre-Passover purchasing food, but could extend, if determined necessary based on food supply shortages, and their likely production before Passover began, to purchase on Hol-HaMoed as well.

all pure fruit juices

Filletted fish

Frozen fruit (no additives)

Plain cheeses (without added flavor morsels)

Non-iodized salt

Pure white sugar (no additives)

Quinoa (with nothing mixed in)\* GF ideal

White milk

Some products sold by Equal Exchange Fair Trade Chocolate

Frozen Vegetables (needs to be checked for possible hametz before cooking)

Chopped meat

Plain, non-flavored almond milk, rice milk, soy milk, cashew milk.

Non-flavored Cream Cheese with ingredients of milk and cream, salt, stabilizers (xanthan and/or carob bean and/or guar gums)

Non-flavored Yogurt with milk and bacteria, only (which are Lactobacillus bulgaricus and Streptococcus thermopiles).

Canned Tuna with just tuna, water or oil, salt, and pyrophosphates

100% maple syrup

100% Agave

Ground Salt and Peppers

Plain (non-Flavored) Decaf Coffee

Pure Honey

Dried fruit, prunes only without potassium sorbate

Canned vegetables/fruit with year-round hekhsheer in which ingredients are the item itself, salt and water.

Kitniyot:

Fresh kitniyot: Corn on the cob and fresh beans (like lima beans in their pods) may be purchased before and during Passover, that is, treated like any other fresh vegetable.

Dried kitniyot (legumes, rice and corn) can be purchased bagged or in boxes and then sifted or sorted before or on Passover. These should ideally not be purchased in bulk from bins because of the concern that the bin might previously have been used for hameitz, and a few grains of hameitz might be mixed in. In any case, one should inspect these to the extent possible before Passover and discard any pieces of hametz. If one could not inspect the rice or dried beans before Passover, one should remove pieces of hametz found in the package on Passover, discarding those, and the kitniyot themselves remain permissible.

Frozen raw kitniyot (corn, edamame [soy beans], etc.): One may purchase bags of frozen non-hekhsheered kitniyot before or during (if necessary) Passover provided that one can either absolutely determine that no shared equipment was used or one is careful to inspect the contents before Passover and discard any pieces of חמץ. Even if one did not inspect the vegetables before Passover, if

one can remove pieces of (hameitz) found in the package on Passover, the vegetables themselves are permissible.

Requires Kosher for Passover label at any time:

- All baked goods
- Farfel
- Matzah
- Any product containing matzah
- Matzah flour
- Matzah meal
- Pesah cakes
- All frozen processed foods
- Candy
- Chocolate milk
- Herbal tea
- Decaffinated Tea
- Ice cream
- Liquor
- Soda
- Vinegar
- Margarine

Another way to potentially find acceptable foods without a specific Kosher for Passover designation during pre-Passover shopping, when the situation demands, is to prefer certified Gluten Free (and oat free) products.

Lastly, many of us have already opened products in our homes that are Hametz-free, but used in the course of normal year-round cooking. If one is able to ascertain/highly assume that no hametz contaminated the opened product, or at best a negligible amount, it is possible to use such products during Passover this year.