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**Rabbi Katie’s Kosher For Passover Guidelines**

While the Reconstructionist movement as a whole is not governed by centrally dictated or uniform *halakhah* (Jewish law), many Reconstructionists continue to observe Jewish ritual practices such as keeping kosher.

These guidelines are not meant to dictate what you choose to do in your own home observance. Rather, they are an invitation to deeper understanding, and a helpful guide for what to bring (or not to bring) to our community seder if you come. When we eat in community, some of us may be asked to engage in a stricter level of Jewish ritual observance in order to be inclusive of those who would not be able to participate if the basic rules were not followed.

**The Basic Passover Rule: No Leavened Bread**

Why No Leaven? When the Israelites left Egypt, they left in haste with no time to let the bread rise. To remember the Exodus from Egypt, the Torah tells us to eat unleavened bread during the full 7-8 days of Passover.

Spring Clean! Leading up to the first night of Passover, the home is cleared of all leavened foods, called *Hametz*. *Hametz* is food made with one or more of 5 grains -- **barley, rye, oats, wheat, and spelt – that have had the opportunity to become leavened.**  Traditionally, all Hametz is either eaten before Passover begins, "sold" to non-Jewish neighbors and friends, or given away.

Symbolically, leaven is analogous to ego and other “emotional baggage.” When we refrain from eating leavening over this week, it is also an invitation to do our “inner Spring cleaning” and purify ourselves from grudges, bad habits, and other “enslavements” that keep us from being fully free.

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| **Allowed on Passover** | **Not for Passover** |
| Fresh fruit & vegetables | BREAD! |
| Eggs | Regular cakes, cookies and pastries |
| Jellies, jams made w/fruit, sugar, fruit juice | Regular bagels, rolls or crackers |
| Fish | Regular cereal |
| Poultry and beef | Regular noodles |
| Dairy products | **The following are restricted only for those following Ashkenazi tradition** (\*see below) |
| Matzo marked “Kosher for Passover” | Processed meat, fish or poultry with corn syrup, corn derivatives, soy products |
| Bagels & crackers marked "Kosher for Passover" | Legumes (beans, peas, corn) |
| Cakes, cookies & pastries made with matzo meal, Passover cake flour or potato flour | Dairy products containing corn or soy |
| Cereal marked “Kosher for Passover” | Rice |
| Noodles marked “Kosher for Passover” | Tofu |
| Quinoa | Beverages made with corn syrup |

Dishes: Traditionally, keeping kosher extends beyond the content of foods to the dishes and cookware on which it is prepared and served. For those of us who keep kosher to this level of *kelim* (utensils), some dishes and cookware may be *kashered* (made kosher in various ways such as running through the dishwasher), but those which are made of unkasherable materials (ceramic, plastic and wood) must be set aside for the duration of the holiday.

**For the sake of the B’nai Havurah seder, we will only be concerned with the ingredients of our food. We will not ask that people who bring food prepare that food on kosher cookware.**

Kosher for Passover Labels: The easiest way to make sure what you buy is Kosher for Passover is to buy packaged items that are labeled "Kosher for Passover."

Flour and Leavening Agents: The most common leavening agents are yeast, baking soda and baking powder. On Passover, observant Jews do not eat any products that contain these leavening agents.

Rice and Legumes: Ashkenazi Jews (with European roots), traditionally abstain from legumes on Pesach. Some say it is because soaking legumes in water is a kind of “leavening.” Others say the practice prevents grains which can become *chametz* from getting mixed up with permitted grains.

Whatever the reason, the ban includes corn and all vegetables that grow in pods (beans, peas, etc.). In our day, the most complicated part is abstaining from products that contain corn and soybean derivatives, such as corn oil, high fructose corn syrup, soybean oil, etc.

\*Sephardic Jews (from Spain and the Middle East) do eat rice and legumes on Passover, which were basic staples in their countries of origin. The catch is that traditionally, Sephardim must sift through all of their permitted grains prior to Pesach to make sure that no forbidden grains are in the mix!

**B’nai Havurah follows the Sephardic rules and allows rice and legumes for the Passover Seder.**