

Guidelines for Food and Dining at Temple Sinai
As Approved by the Ritual Committee
May 15, 2013

“No guide for Jewish living would be complete if it failed to address the issue of *kashrut*, i.e. the fitness of certain foods according to Jewish tradition. *Kashrut* has been a basic part of Judaism for too long to be ignored; its role in the life of the Jew and in Jewish history ought not be underestimated. The home in Jewish tradition is the *mikdash me-at* (small sanctuary) and the table is the *mizbei-ach* (altar): it is reasonable, therefore, to ask the Reform Jew to study and consider *kashrut* so as to develop a valid personal position.”

Central Conference of American Rabbis, Gates of Mitzvah, 1979

“We respond to God daily: through public and private prayer, through study and through the performance of other *mitzvot*, sacred obligations, *bein adam la Makom*, to God, and *bein adam la-chaveiro*, to other human beings. We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of *mitzvot* and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as a community.”

A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism, Adopted in Pittsburgh, 1999

As Reform Jews, we are obligated to periodically reevaluate our relationship with God and with Torah. The ongoing study of Torah is nothing less than the continual renewal of our relationship with God and our knowledge of the *mitzvot*. Yet, as Reform Jews, we are also called to balance our personal beliefs and autonomyⁱ with those of our *K'hilah K'dosha*, our sacred community.

With the renovation of the Temple Sinai kitchen, it seemed especially appropriate to fulfill the principle embodied in the Pittsburgh Principles of 1999 that *mitzvot*, such as *Kashrut*, demands “renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times.”

The main motivation for this question came largely from the question of whether the kitchen should be a *kosher* one and how this would impact what foods should be served within or brought into the synagogue building. The most recent reference to food in the synagogue comes from “Rules Governing the Use of Temple Sinai Facilities,” which state only, “No pork, pork products or shellfish may be served or catered with the Temple.” There was broad agreement that the kitchen would not be kosher, in the traditional sense, but neither were these longstanding rules sufficient to address all the Jewish dimensions of food and dining.

Given the interest in a broader examination of food beyond just the traditional notion of *Kashruth*, a sub-committee of the Ritual Committee was asked to explore Temple Sinai's practices regarding food on the grounds and within the confines of the synagogue and to propose guidelines. In developing these guidelines, we took into consideration the following:

1. We recognize that there is a wide spectrum of belief and practice regarding food and Kashruth, in particular, in our congregation. In keeping with Reform Judaism's recognition of individual autonomy and choice, we do not pretend to dictate what members do in their homes. We do hope, however, that these guidelines will encourage our members to explore their own Jewish values towards *kashrut* and other practices regarding food and dining.
2. Very few of these guidelines are "rules." Nonetheless, we came to the conclusion that there should be a minimum of rules governing food and dining on the synagogue premises and at synagogue events. These are denoted by bold print. We hope that other guidelines will serve to begin to raise our consciousness about what we consume and begin a dialogue about the ritual and ethical aspects of these practices from a Reform Jewish perspective.
3. The *halachic* laws of *Kashrut* address what types of food may be eaten and how food is to be prepared. However, food is a part of many other mitzvot and Jewish values as well. The meal is the central focus of the Pesach *seder*, when we celebrate our freedom from slavery. In the ancient agrarian Jewish culture, the Torah required the tithing and other charitable donations from every crop grown in Israel. Likewise, though not part of *Kashrut*, per se, Jewish law also forbids unnecessary cruelty to animals, the principle of preventing *tza'ar ba'alei chaim*, the suffering of living creatures. Therefore, we hope these guidelines will motivate the members of our congregation to consider both the ethical and the ritual aspects of food and dining.
4. We do not expect to "police" the menus that are prepared within our synagogue. Consistent with our communal values of warmth, learning and holiness, we hope that these guidelines will be seen as opportunities for learning and for emphasizing the importance of communal practice as part of building a *K'hillah K'doshah*, a sacred community.

GUIDELINES

We thought it would be convenient and helpful to outline our guidelines in accordance with the values that represent the foundation of our congregation. As our mission statementⁱⁱ says, “We, the members of Temple Sinai, are a community of Reform Jews characterized by warmth, learning and holiness. Our community embodies the values of *Avodah*, *Torah*, *K'hillah* and *Tikkun Olam/K'lal Yisrael*.”

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- I. ***Torah*** Learning and Study To connect with traditional notions of *kashrut*, while maintaining our liberal approach to Torah, these guidelines enable us to connect to the Jewish people, reinforcing our spiritual and cultural bonds with God and other Jews:
 - a. **Shellfish and pork products should not be brought into, served or prepared for other purposes at Temple Sinai or Temple Sinai events and activities inside or outside the synagogue**
 - b. **Milk and meat products will not be prepared or served together at a meal, though serving milk and meat sequentially (or vice versa) is permitted.**
 - c. **During Passover, chametz should not be served.**

- II. ***Avodah*** Ritual Life We seek a sense of holiness in our synagogue, our homes and our daily lives. We connect with God, with our community and with ourselves through worship, study and participation in Jewish activities. Therefore, we encourage our members to:
 - a. Say the appropriate blessings prior to partaking of meals
 - b. Consider taking out a few minutes after the meal to say *Birchat Hamazon*, the blessings after the meal.

- III. ***K'hillah*** Community. We see our Temple community as an extended family, where we can be known and cherished.
- a. We encourage members holding events within the synagogue to take into consideration those with differing dietary practices and offer alternatives (eg. vegetarian, sealed kosher entrees, etc.)
 - b. Consider joining or creating a Jewish Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) to put our purchasing power behind local sustainable farms. (See www.hazon.org)
- IV. ***Tikkun Olam/K'lal Yisrael*** We are committed to the sacred task of promoting social justice and helping those in need, purposefully translating the principles of Judaism, such as *Tzedakah* into action. Therefore, we encourage our members to consider the following:
- a. When holding a festive meal, such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah reception or wedding reception, contribute 3% of the cost of the affair to organizations such as Mazon, an American Jewish organization whose sole focus is combating hunger (www.mazon.org)
 - b. Encourage family members and friends attending a joyous event to bring a can of food for donation to the Stamford Food Bank
 - c. The choices we make for the food we eat have an undeniable impact on ourselves and others. In particular, the following Jewish values intersect with our food choices:
 1. Protecting one's own body (*Shmirat Haguf*) This value implies that we should choose food and meals that maximize health and minimize harm. We encourage our members to eat a healthy diet, moderating intake of fats, sugars and other potentially harmful ingredients.
 2. Pursue peace and justice (*Rodef Shalom v'Tzedek*) This value implies that we should pay attention to the societal impact of our food choices. We encourage our members to avoid food produced by companies or countries that violate values of fair pay, decent working conditions and other related values.
 3. Respect for animals (*Tza'ar ba'alei chayim*) This value implies that should pay attention to manner in which animals we eat are raised and slaughtered. We encourage our members to choose foods from sources that avoid cruel treatment of its animals.

ⁱ Autonomy-defined as self-directing freedom and especially moral independence,+Reform Judaism espouses *informed* autonomy, inviting all Reform Jews to engage in a dialogue with sources of our tradition, responding out of knowledge, our experience and faith.+

ⁱⁱ Temple Sinai Mission Statement:

We, the members of Temple Sinai, are a community of Reform Jews characterized by warmth, learning and holiness. Our community embodies the values of *Avodah, Torah, K'hillah* and *Tikkun Olam/K'lal Yisrael*.

[Avodah](#) - *Ritual Life*

We seek a sense of holiness in our synagogue, our homes, and our daily lives. We connect with God, with our community and with ourselves through worship, study and participation in Jewish activities.

[Torah](#) - *Learning and Study*

We seek meaning and Jewish continuity by engaging all generations in dynamic study of Jewish heritage and practice.

[K'hillah](#) - *Community*

We see our Temple community as an extended family, where we can be known and cherished. We celebrate together in joy and comfort one another in sorrow.

[Tikkun Olam/K'lal Yisrael](#) - *Repair of the World / The Greater Jewish Community*

We are committed to the sacred task of promoting social justice and helping those in need, purposefully translating the principles of Judaism into action. Recognizing that all Jews are responsible for one another, we foster a personal connection with the Jewish people in our greater community, Israel and throughout the world.