

# THE Easy-Peasy GUIDE TO Pesach



Seed

Life tools for Jewish families

# Introduction – What is Chametz?



Pesach is a cornerstone of Jewish life. On Pesach we commemorate how Hashem took us out of slavery in Egypt in order to give us the Torah. This was the birth of the Jewish nation.

We don't just relate the story of the exodus, we relive it. The Jewish people left Egypt with such haste that they didn't have time for the dough that they had taken with them to rise. Therefore, the Torah prohibits us from eating or deriving benefit from chametz for seven days (eight days outside Israel) and even prohibits owning chametz.

Chametz is made by mixing one of the five grains (wheat, barley, spelt, oats or rye) with water and leaving it to rise. The time that it takes to rise depends on the conditions e.g. temperature and any other ingredients added to the dough. Matzah is dough that has been baked before it has risen. Once it has been baked it will no longer rise even when mixed with water and so cannot become chametz. Therefore, although one may not use flour from one of the five grains for cooking on Pesach, one can use ground matzah (matzah meal) instead.



Kitniyot (legumes) are prohibited to eat on Pesach according to Ashkenazi custom, however, it is permitted to own them. Kitniyot includes rice, beans and corn. The reason for this prohibition is because when their flour is left to rise it looks like chametz and people may confuse this with real chametz. Additionally, kernels of legumes and grains may become mixed together. Sephardi custom permits eating Kitniyot.

## Summary

**Chametz = Dough that has risen**  
– forbidden to eat and to own on Pesach

**Matzah = Dough that has been baked before it has risen**

**Kitniyot = Legumes - forbidden to eat but permitted to own**



# Cleaning for Pesach

We are not allowed to own chametz on Pesach. Therefore, we make sure to thoroughly clean all the places that chametz may have been brought during the year. This includes our home, office, cars, garage etc.

Chametz that you don't want to destroy, and utensils used for chametz throughout the year (unless kashered for Pesach), should be stored in cupboards or rooms which will be locked or sealed with tape and labelled as 'chametz' for the duration of Passover. The chametz must be sold to a non-Jew by signing a form giving your Rabbi permission to do this. Alternatively, you can sign this form online.

## Preparing the Kitchen

We are not allowed to own even the tiniest amount of chametz and eating chametz is prohibited even if it is mixed with other ingredients in a product.

It is permitted to own chametz that has been spoiled to the extent that even a dog would not eat it and small crumbs that are unpalatable. However, these are still forbidden to eat. Therefore, when cleaning our homes, we must take extra care when cleaning the kitchen to ensure that even the smallest amount of chametz does not fall into our Pesach food.

## Dishes and Utensils

Any utensil that has been used during the year for chametz may not be used on Pesach. Most people have a separate set of Pesach dishes and utensils. It is possible to kasher some utensils for Pesach use. Ask your Rabbi for details of how to do this.

## Oven and Stove Top

In order to use an oven for Pesach it should first be thoroughly cleaned with a strong oven cleaner including spraying oven cleaner into any inaccessible areas (e.g. vents and the fan). The oven should then be kashered by heating it for an hour at its highest setting. All racks and trays should then be covered with silver foil. If possible, the inside of the glass door should also be covered.

If you have a self-cleaning (pyrolytic) oven it can be kashered by running a cleaning cycle. If possible, leave the racks and trays inside whilst kashering and they may then be used without covering.

The grates on the stove top should be cleaned as above and turned on full for 15 minutes whilst covered with a *blech* or heavy duty tin foil. Alternatively, after cleaning you can cover the grates with silver foil for the duration of Pesach. If this is not possible leave the burners on for 15 minutes to heat up the grates and then use as normal.



Electric hobs should be cleaned and then kashered by turning to their highest setting for 15 minutes. If possible the area between the burners should be covered with a heat- proof material or alternatively pour boiling water on it to kasher.

Induction hobs should be cleaned well and if possible kashered by pouring boiling water on them.

## **Microwave**

It is preferable not to use a microwave on Pesach that has been used during the year. If one needs to use the microwave it should first be thoroughly cleaned and is then kashered by placing a bowl of water inside and heating it until the microwave is filled with steam.

When using the microwave on Pesach place a flat microwave-safe object as a separation between the microwave plate and the cooking dish.

## **Sink**

If the sink is made from stainless steel it can be kashered by thoroughly cleaning it and then pouring boiling water from a kettle onto every part of it. After this it may be used as normal for Pesach. If the sink is made from porcelain it should be thoroughly cleaned and a plastic insert should be used during Pesach.

## **Dishwasher**

Dishwashers are very hard to get absolutely clean and therefore it is recommended not to use it for Pesach if it has been used during the year.

## **Countertops**

Ideally countertops should be thoroughly cleaned and then covered for the duration of Pesach. Alternatively, after cleaning, boiling water should be poured onto every part of the countertop from a kettle that has just boiled. After this it may be used as normal.

## **Fridges, Freezers, cupboards, tables etc.**

All surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned. The custom is to cover surfaces that will be used to place food on. If the food is always kept in containers there is no need to cover the surface.

## **Summary**

**We are not allowed to own any chametz at all on Pesach.**

**Therefore we clean our homes, cars, offices etc. and destroy or sell any chametz that we find.**

**Take extra care when cleaning the kitchen!**



# Pesach Shopping Guide

Based on information from the London Beth Din ([www.kosher.org.uk](http://www.kosher.org.uk))



To be certain that a product is kosher for Pesach, it must have rabbinical certification or have been checked by a reliable authority. Otherwise it is possible that it contains chametz ingredients, or traces of chametz if it was processed on the same equipment as chametz products.

- Unsupervised frozen fruits and vegetables are not permitted for Pesach. Many factories use citric acid as a processing aid which is often derived from chametz.
- Artificially sparkling water needs Pesach supervision. All still bottled water and naturally carbonated water may be used.
- Kosher for Pesach baby formula is sold in kosher stores. In cases where this cannot be used, see [www.kosher.org.uk](http://www.kosher.org.uk) for a list of approved products. Separate utensils should be used as most baby milks, including kosher for Pesach baby formula, contain kitniyot. Since feeding bottles usually come into contact with chametz, it is recommended to purchase new ones for Pesach.
- Matzah used all year round is chametz, and not for Pesach use. Only matzos baked especially for Pesach may be used on Pesach.
- Many common brands of pet foods contain cereal and are therefore not suitable for Pesach. We cannot feed pets on Pesach with food containing chametz nor can we own it. See [www.kosher.org.uk](http://www.kosher.org.uk) for a list of approved products.
- Fish food flakes or pellets contain chametz and are not suitable for Pesach. Frozen cubes of bloodworm, cockle, mussel, lancefish, brineshrimp etc may be purchased from aquarium fish shops.
- Medicines:

All inedible creams and ointments are permitted.

Pain killers in tablet form are permitted. Soluble tablets should be avoided.

All antibiotics in tablet or capsule form are permitted.

Children's medicines should only be purchased with supervision.

Supervised toothpaste and mouthwash should be used.

- Cosmetics:

In general all facial cosmetics, nail varnish, nail varnish removers, antiperspirants, hairsprays, shampoos, shower gels, baby wipes and soaps may be used as they are inedible.

Lipsticks and perfumes should be approved for Pesach use.



## Searching for Chametz

On the night of the fourteenth of Nissan (the night before the first seder) we check all the places in which we may have had chametz to ensure there is no chametz remaining.

The custom is to hide ten pieces of bread around the house. Make sure they are wrapped up well so you don't leave crumbs in your clean house! It is a good idea to write down where you hid them just in case you forget. After you find these pieces keep them to burn the next day.

The search for chametz should be done straight after nightfall. There is no need to turn off the lights in the room during the search. The custom is to use a candle in order to see in the nooks and crannies. An electric torch is also acceptable.

The bracha we make before beginning the search can be found on page 654 of the ArtScroll siddur. After making the bracha try not to talk about other matters until the search is finished. After completing the search we declare that any chametz we have missed and do not know about is considered worthless in our eyes. This is called "Bitul" and can also be found on page 654. It should be said by each person **in a language that they understand**.



## Burning the Chametz

The next morning (the morning before Pesach) take the pieces of bread that you found during the search and any other chametz that you did not sell and burn them. Stop eating chametz by the end of the fourth hour of the day and burn the chametz by the end of the fifth hour. The exact times vary each year and can be found on any Jewish calendar.

We do not say a bracha on burning the chametz.



After ensuring the chametz has been fully burnt we make another declaration that any chametz left in our possession is worthless and we do not own it. This must be said before the end of the fifth hour of the day.



# Seder Night

The Seder table should be laid before Pesach begins in order that we can start the Seder as soon as possible. However, make sure not to start the Seder before nightfall since none of the mitzvot can be fulfilled until then.

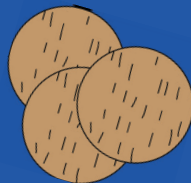
There are five special mitzvot to fulfil on Seder Night.

Two of these are Torah-based mitzvot: 1) Eating matzah, 2) Relating the story of the Exodus. Three are Rabbinic mitzvot: 1) Drinking four cups of wine, 2) Eating Maror and 3) Saying Hallel

## Eating Matzah

Use matzah that has been specially baked for the mitzvah. This is called "Shmura Matzah".

There are three times on Seder night that we eat matzah. The following table indicates the amount of matzah required to fulfil each mitzvah and the time required to finish it:



	Machine Matzah	Hand Matzah	Time
Motzi – Matzah	2/3	1/2	2-4 minutes
The Korech Sandwich	1/3	1/4	9 minutes
Afikoman	2/3	1/2	2-4 minutes

Note: Rakusens matzot are smaller therefore the amounts above must be doubled.

If you are unwell you can have the smaller amount (1/3 machine matzah / 1/4 hand matzah) for all the mitzvot.

## Relating the story of the Exodus

We relate the story using the Haggadah. Make sure that you say it in a language that everyone at the Seder understands.

The Torah states that it is a mitzvah to teach the story to our children. Try to make sure that children stay awake not only to say Ma Nishtanah but also to hear the answers to their questions! Preferably, they should stay awake until after eating matzah and maror. The mitzvah is not limited only to parents but applies to everyone.

In extenuating circumstances the minimum amount of the Haggadah that must be said or heard is the section beginning "Rabban Gamliel used to say..." until after the second cup.



## Drinking four cups of wine

We drink four cups of wine on Seder night corresponding to the four expressions of redemption in the Torah. The four cups must be drunk at the appropriate points in the Haggadah.





It is also acceptable to use grape juice for the four cups.

The minimum amount for each cup **to contain** is 86ml (when Seder night falls on Shabbat the first cup should contain 150ml). It is preferable to finish the whole cup or at least drink the majority of it, so make sure not to use a glass that is too big!

The minimum amount one can drink to fulfil the mitzvah is 45ml.

(To give you an idea of these measurements a standard plastic cup contains 200ml.)

Preferably, the cup should be drunk in two swallows or at least within nine minutes.

It is customary for someone else to pour the cup for you to show we are acting as nobility.



## Eating Maror

Maror means bitter herbs. It is preferable to use romaine lettuce (make sure to check it for bugs by washing thoroughly and holding the leaves up to the light to check) or one may also use ground horseradish.



We eat maror twice on seder night. Firstly by itself and secondly in the Korech sandwich together with matzah. The amount of maror required each time is a volume of 30ml (about two leaves of romaine lettuce).

## Reclining

We recline each time we eat matzah and when we drink the four cups. If you forget to recline you must eat or drink again besides for the last two cups of wine. Some people recline when eating karpas too. Do not recline when eating the maror.

Use extra pillows to arrange a comfortable chair to recline on.

Women do not have to recline but may do so if they wish.



For any comments or further questions please contact

Rabbi Dov Birnbaum at [dbirnbaum@seed.uk.net](mailto:dbirnbaum@seed.uk.net)

07341 479 282

*Sponsored in memory of **Shimon Gedalia ben Nachman Halevi z"l** who showed his children the majesty of Seder night*

Head Office

Mowbray House, 58-70 Edgware Way, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 8DJ

Tel: 020 8958 0820 email: [info@seed.uk.net](mailto:info@seed.uk.net)

[www.seed.uk.net](http://www.seed.uk.net)

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