

Kashrut Policy

Congregation Knesseth Israel, Bound Brook, NJ

Judaism is a theology of the common deed. The purpose seems to be to ennoble the common.

--- Abraham Joshua Heschel

Introduction

Kashrut (the body of Jewish dietary laws and customs [Kosher]) is among the most universally recognized Jewish ritual practices. Observance of the dietary laws ties adherents to the Torah and to Jews in other times and places through the most common of human acts: eating.

Within Congregation Knesseth Israel (CKI), the ways in which individuals observe Jewish dietary traditions vary. Some members observe all the laws of kashrut in all settings, while others observe traditional kashrut to various degrees. Other members eat without regard to the traditional Judaic dietary laws.

Our communal dietary practices reflect a compromise that allows most of our members to participate in community events. The purpose of these guidelines is to document and clarify the specific kashrut practices that we, as a community, have adopted over time.

In the spirit of our community, we seek to retain as much of our tradition as possible even as we modify the practice of certain rituals and adjust our understanding of their meaning. By documenting our practices and the intentions behind them, we hope to ennoble our own community's traditions regarding this most common of all deeds.

Definitions

Kashrut: The dietary laws of Judaism, defining what food is and is not "kosher," are cited in the Torah in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, and expanded in the Talmud and the codes of Jewish law. The Hebrew word "kasher" literally means "fit" or "acceptable."

- **Biblical Kashrut:** Delineates permitted and prohibited animals. Forbids “seething a kid in its mother’s milk.”
- **Rabbinic Kashrut:** Extends biblical mandates to include method of slaughter (shechita), permitted edible parts of each animal, rules on separation of meat and milk, etc.

Treif: Refers to non-kosher foods, such as: pork products (including lard), shellfish (shrimp, crab, lobster, etc.), non-kosher fish or fowl (see below), and foods made with non-kosher gelatin, such as marshmallows. Foods that contain both dairy and meat are considered treif; so are meat and fowl which are not Kosher certified.

Dairy: (also called "milchig" in Yiddish, "halav" in Hebrew): Foods that consist in whole or in part of milk or products derived from milk (e.g., butter and cheese). These are often labeled with a “D” or “Dairy” following the Kosher certification symbol.

Meat: (also called "fleishig" in Yiddish, "basar" in Hebrew): Foods that consist in whole or in part of ingredients derived from the flesh of animals. To be kosher, meat must come from an animal that has split hooves and chews its cud, or domesticated fowl (such as chicken or turkey). Preparation must be according to the requirements of kashrut under rabbinic supervision. These are sometimes labeled “Meat” following the Kashrut certification symbol.

Fish: Only fish that have both fins and scales are considered kosher. Shellfish is treif. Kosher fish is considered pareve (see below).

Pareve/Parve: Foods that in their natural state are neither meat nor dairy. Examples are fruits and vegetables, fish, eggs, pasta, grains, nuts and coffee. Pareve foods can be served with either dairy or meat. These are often labeled “Pareve” or “Parve” following the Kosher certification symbol. Note that certification symbols without an accompanying meat/dairy/pareve mark are usually Pareve.

Kosher Certification: (also called "Hashgacha", "Heksher"): Food products approved as kosher under rabbinic supervision. Some of the more common symbols are:



There is no current standard as to the placement of these symbols on packages. Most often, they can be found on the front label, or near the ingredient list.

General Policies

No food may be brought into the building – even for personal consumption – that does not follow the CKI Kashrut policy. Additionally, all *CKI sponsored community events*, whether on CKI property or off-site, must follow the rules of kashrut as set forth in this policy. Dinners or events held at non-kosher restaurants or facilities (bowling, baseball, etc.) shall follow the **Restaurant Guidelines** below.

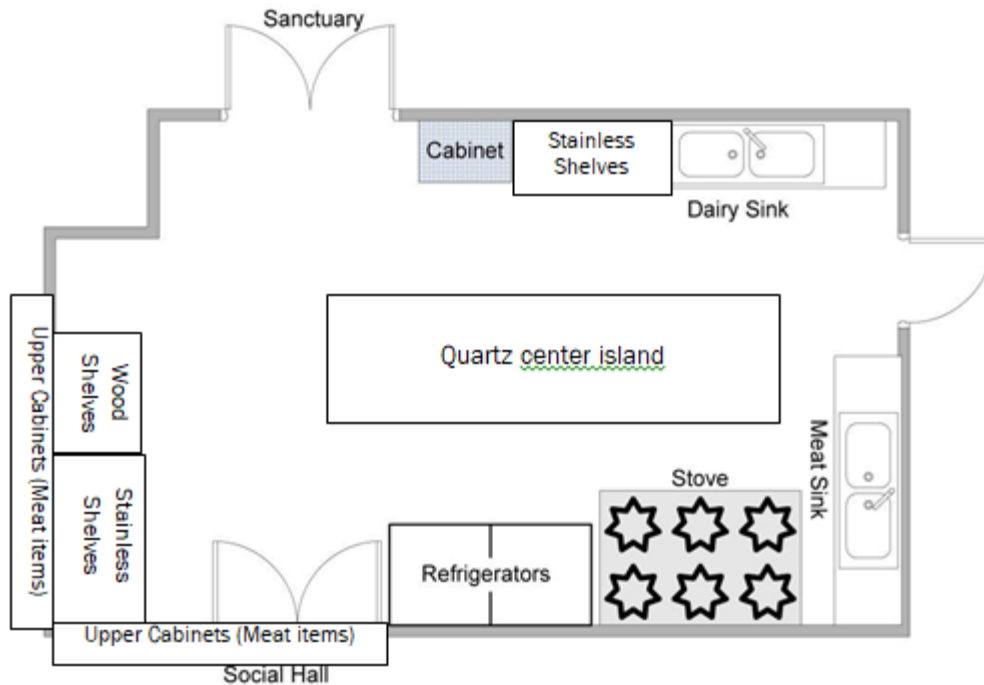
- No foods that contain treif ingredients (see definition on page 2) may be consumed at any event, regardless of whether the food is prepared on-site or off-site. Additionally, no food products that contain treif ingredients may be used for any purpose at CKI (school arts and crafts projects, for example).
- Dairy foods which are factory-packaged and sealed (*not cut and/or packaged in the supermarket*) such as cheese, butter, milk, etc. do not require kosher certification. Smoked cheeses must have a heksher.
- All whole fresh fruits and raw vegetables are kosher and do not require kosher certification.
- All packaged baked goods must have kosher certification.
- Any meat/poultry served must be certified kosher. Furthermore, any food containing meat ingredients (e.g. broth) must be made with certified kosher meat or poultry.
- No dish may be served that contains both dairy products and meat ingredients. Furthermore, dairy foods may not be served at the same event where meat or poultry is served, and vice versa.
- All foods brought into CKI must be checked for kosher certification by the Rabbi or a designated member of the Ritual Committee or the Board.
- Members must use the CKI kitchen for the preparation of all foods served at an Oneg Shabbat, Kiddush, or other function. Foods must not be cut or plattered at home and then brought in.

NOTE: The rules set forth above for CKI communal events do not apply to private life cycle events (such as a shiva minyan, wedding, or brit milah) held in CKI members' homes or sponsored by members at other facilities, even if an open invitation to attend has been extended to the entire community. If there is doubt as to what food to bring to such an event, it is always best to use the CKI Kashrut Policy as a common denominator.

Wine and grape juice

Wines and grape juices used for ceremonial purposes (e.g. Kiddush) must have a kosher certification. A non-alcoholic product should always be available as an option.

Use of Kitchen



Food Preparation

- The quartz center island should not be used as a cutting board or preparation surface. An appropriate meat/dairy/pareve cutting board or plate must always be used.
- All counters used for food preparation are to be cleaned after use by wiping down with appropriate cleaners.
- Meals may be either "dairy" or "meat" and must be consistent for the entire meal, including dessert. Pareve foods may be served with either type of meal.
- Ovens shall be used for only one kind of food (either meat or dairy) at a time. Ovens and stove-tops must be thoroughly cleaned, removing any visible food or crumbs, and wiping up any spills before switching meal types.
- Refrigerators - meat and dairy items may be stored in both refrigerators.
- The double sinks are labelled "Meat" and "Dairy." During a meat or dairy meal, use only the appropriate labelled sinks to prepare the meal and clean up. If all the foods being prepared are pareve, select and use only one set of the sinks.

- Utensils and serving pieces – the kitchen has appropriate preparation and serving pieces for each type of food:
 - Dairy pieces are stored on the stainless counter to the left of the dairy sink, in the cabinets as labelled, and on the wooden shelves.
 - Meat pieces are stored to the right of the meat sink and in upper cabinets, as labelled.
 - Pareve pieces are stored under the stainless counter next to the doors to the Social Hall.
- After washing, utensils and serving pieces should be returned to the storage areas they came from.
- If there is any question about which prep/serving pieces to use, or where to store them, ask a member of the Event Planning Committee (or the Event Coordinator) for help.

Oneg Shabbat, Kiddush, etc.

- As noted earlier, food preparation must not be done at home, and all packaged items brought into CKI must be checked for kosher certification by the Rabbi or a designated member of the Ritual Committee or the Board.
- When a meat meal is served by CKI as part of a Shabbat Dinner or similar event, the food served for dessert or at the Oneg Shabbat or Kiddush following services must be pareve. On all other occasions, the food served at the Oneg Shabbat or Kiddush following services may be either pareve or dairy.

Bagels and other food from outside sources

CKI allows members to purchase and serve bagels, cut fruit, and vegetables from non-kosher sources.

Note: when purchasing bagels from non-kosher bakeries, do not buy cream cheeses prepared in the store or bakery (e.g. lox spread). Rather, purchase only prepackaged cream cheeses with a kosher certification (see page 1 for heksher symbols).

Catering

- All caterers must be provided with a copy of this Policy in advance of the event and must agree to adhere to it.
- A caterer who will be cooking meat (at their own facility or at CKI) must have rabbinic kosher certification, and will be interviewed by the congregation's designated representative to make sure that they understand these guidelines and are willing to abide by them. A caterer need not have rabbinic certification to serve packaged premade kosher meat items such as hors d'oeuvres.
- For dairy events, a caterer without rabbinic certification may be used after undergoing the above approval process.
- As caterers are interviewed and approved, CKI will maintain a list of such approved caterers for event sponsors to consult.
- Subject to separate guidelines governing the private use of CKI facilities, a sponsor of a private event may have the CKI kitchen kashered to their own specifications. The kashering of the kitchen will be at the sole expense of the event sponsor. Similarly, the sponsor or the sponsor's caterer will be responsible for making the arrangements for kashering the kitchen, and all such arrangements must be approved in advance by the Rabbi (or the Rabbi's designee) and a CKI Board Officer.

Men's Club Summer Picnic

The picnic follows the general CKI Kashrut Policy with the following clarifications:

- The Men's Club provides a large variety of food for the entire community, and no outside contributions are needed.
- **All non-meat items must carry a pareve (or non-dairy) kosher certification symbol.** They should be brought in the original packaging. This includes rolls, condiments, side dishes, veggie burgers, desserts, etc.

Pot Luck Meals

The Board will designate some specific calendared events to be categorized as “Pot Luck” meals. This policy only applies to those specified events.*

Pot Luck Dinners follow the general CKI kashrut policy with the following clarifications:

- Pot Luck Dinners are *dairy or vegetarian* meals.
- All food items must be pre-cleared by the event coordinator.
- The Home Cooking Policy listed below must be followed.

Rules for Pot Luck Dinners:

- One table will be reserved for packaged dairy / vegetarian items which have a heksher. These must be brought to the event still sealed. The other table(s) are for dairy / vegetarian food prepared according to the Home Cooking Policy.
- Tables will be covered with disposable tablecloths, and paper/plastic disposable dinnerware will be used.
- We do not use the synagogue kitchen for Pot Luck Dinners. No items may be brought into the kitchen for any purpose.
- All food must be consumed, taken home, or discarded following the dinner. No home-prepared food will be stored in the synagogue. All trash must be disposed of in the outdoor CKI garbage bins.
- Nothing will be cleaned or prepared in the CKI kitchen.

Home Cooking Policy (applies only to “Pot Luck” meals)

When preparing foods at home, containers, appliances and utensils that have not been kashered (ritually cleaned) may be used to prepare food in your home. We urge congregants to be sensitive to the variety of levels of kashrut observance within the CKI community. In all cases, members preparing food at home will comply with the following:

- Ingredients purchased in a store or bakery **MUST** be checked to make certain that they contain no meat or treif ingredients. (see Definitions on page 2)
- A recipe or list of ingredients (or the label from a packaged item) along with the name of the preparer must accompany the dish and be displayed with it. This will also help people with food allergies avoid nuts, glutens, etc.

* Events such as the *Yom Kippur Break-Fast*, *Hanukkah Dinner* and *Shabbat Across America* are not Pot Luck meals.

Guidelines for Meals at Restaurants and Other Non-Kosher Venues

- When possible, a menu specific to the event should be provided, listing pre-approved menu choices (*a pre-set menu might not work, for example, at sporting events where food booths supply individuals with a wide range of choices*).
- The venue must offer vegetarian or dairy menu items.
- The general principles of “**Biblical Kashrut**” (see **Definitions**, p.2) should apply at all non-kosher venues. This means that no biblically forbidden foods should be served, despite the fact that individuals are ordering and paying for their own meals.
- Attendees at these events will use the following guidelines when ordering:
 - No biblically forbidden foods (pork, shellfish, etc.) can be ordered.
 - No mixed dairy/meat items (e.g., cheeseburgers, meat lasagna, Reuben sandwich, etc.) can be ordered.
 - Each individual chooses either a meat, dairy or pareve meal.
 - Don’t order a dairy dessert or beverage when consuming a meat meal.
 - Everyone can sit together, regardless of the type of meal they have ordered.
- Be sensitive and respectful of other’s observance in making all decisions. Ask questions if you are unsure.

Passover Policies

- Prior to the start of Passover, representatives of the Ritual Committee and Executive Board will be responsible for cleaning the kitchen. Non-Passover foods will be discarded or placed into a cabinet, refrigerator or freezer which will be taped/sealed off prior to the start of the holiday.
- The procurement of any food required during the holiday for an Oneg, Kiddush, or Seder will be supervised by a designated member of the Executive Board or Ritual Committee. No other food shall be brought into the synagogue by anyone – member or non-member – from the time the kitchen is cleaned until after the end of Passover.

Charitable Food Collections

- Non-kosher food may be brought into the synagogue for the purpose of charitable food collections. These items must be canned or sealed package, non-perishable items.

Common mistakes and pitfalls

Please take note of the following that can lead to common mistakes:

- Margarine and creamers (even when labeled “non-dairy”) often contain milk-derived ingredients and are **not** pareve. Check for the “Pareve” symbol when buying these items to serve with/after a meat meal.
- Many packaged cakes and cookies (Entenmann’s, Drake’s, TastyKake, Nabisco, Keebler, Little Debbie, etc.) are kosher but **not** pareve.
- Packaged pies and pie crusts are often not kosher, or if kosher, do contain dairy ingredients.
- Most brands of marshmallows are **not** kosher. Kosher marshmallows can be found in the kosher aisle of the grocery store.
- Packaged cake frostings often contain animal fats and are not kosher. Most kosher packaged cake frostings are dairy.
- Most packaged cake and cookie mixes are not pareve.
- *Check the label every time you purchase an item, because ingredients and recipes change. Products that were once kosher may no longer be, and some products that once contained treif ingredients now are certified kosher. Products that were once pareve may change to contain dairy (for example, Wonder Bread Hot Dog and Hamburger Buns).*