

HIWP Community Kashruth Guidelines

Version #1: January 2013

Keeping kosher is the hallmark of the Jew. It is a bedrock Jewish commitment, and one that lifts us, sanctifies us. In many places in the Torah, the kosher laws speak in terms of “it is pure for you”- and purity is a goal in our observance. Here are some helpful guidelines in establishing and maintaining a kosher diet, and home, in the hopes that we be uplifted along the way.

What does and doesn't require *hashgachah* (kosher supervision)

Produce

Everything that grows from the earth is kosher in its pure, unprocessed, cleaned state. Whatever G-d permitted Adam and Eve, is permitted for us to eat too. **Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables**, (with no additives, flavors, or blends), grains and dried beans etc. do not require *hashgachah*. Make sure to properly clean and inspect all fresh produce (not just for dirt but for small insects which are both unpleasant and non-kosher too). Many fruits and vegetables will need to be soaked in warm salt-water mix, or vegetable wash to properly loosen the insects that are commonly found on fruits and vegetables. That is the common method for cleaning leaf lettuce, for example. , At times, one might need to refrain from using a certain product when it is clear that there is infestation (yuch). For some more guidance, see this site : <http://www.star-k.org/cons-appr-vegetables.php> . You may purchase basic melon platters without special *hashgachah*.

Most American produced **canned fruits and vegetables** with no additives (save for salt, sugar, corn syrup, and water) do not require supervision. Canned products from the Far East require supervision. For more information on canned products: http://www.crcweb.org/kosher_articles/canned_vegetables.php , regarding dried fruits see: http://www.crcweb.org/kosher_articles/dried_fruits.php.

All **grape products** require kosher supervision (as a special *halachic* category related to wine and non-Jews called “*stam yenam*”), including cooked grapes, juices, vinegar, wine, and natural grape flavorings in foods. Please use mevushal (generally flash-pasteurized) wines whenever hosting beyond immediate families. And purchase liquors that avoid any wine products or caskets in their preparation. Follow this link to a **kosher liquor** list: <http://www.crcweb.org/LiquorList.pdf>

One final note, regarding **produce imported from Israel**: Israeli produce must be tithed before eating, and conform the sabbatical year rules. It's not always easy to ascertain that this was done (and a bit complicated to do on your own). I'd recommend only purchasing Israeli canned produce that mentions this on the label (any OU supervised import will be fine in this regard).

Animal products

A basic note: The primary kosher observing challenge emerges from the fact we eat meat (whether fish, fowl, or mammal) - where the Torah sets forth categories of kosher and non kosher species- and the concern about our

mixing together various ingredients including these animals or their derivatives. Cooking and eating kosher, involves taking care around such things.

Fresh fish does not require a *hashgachah*, but should only be purchased after you see the signs of kosher fish (with fins and scales) on the fish. In addition, if the fish will be cut and filleted at the shop, it is preferable to provide your own knife and cutting board. This is not always possible (and the workers generally prefer their own tools of the trade). In such a case, have the workers wash down the surfaces and the knife they will use. Upon returning home, wash the fish and scrape the fish with your own knife. See the list:

http://www.crcweb.org/fish_list.php

Of course, **meat and poultry** always require *hashgachah*, and should be purchased only from accepted supervisions (see below).

Milk sold in the US does not require special *hashgachah*, but most milk products do.

Prepared and processed food

Must bear a kosher certification symbol. One cannot rely merely on ingredients panels to determine the permissibility of processed foods.

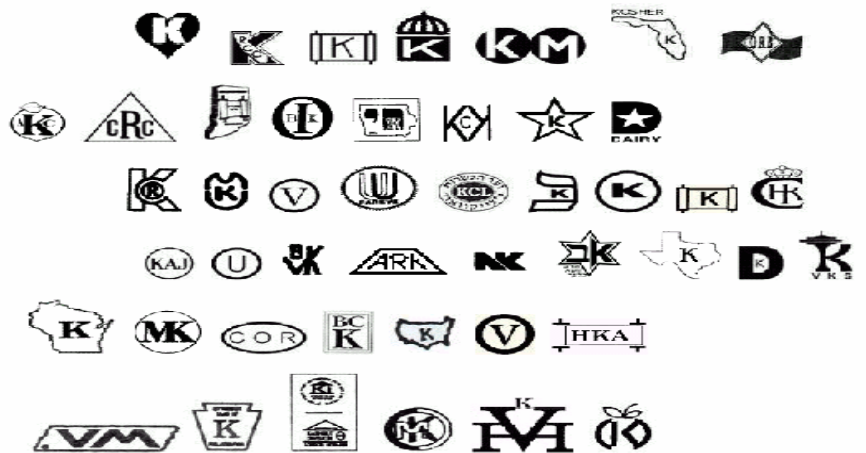
Bakery products require *hashgachah*; be certain to check as to the dairy or pareve status of baked goods.

Please visit this site for other information regarding products that do and don't require supervision (spices; juices; drinks; etc.): <http://www.crcweb.org/listsandlinks.php>

Buy only with a reliable hechsher

A *hechsher* is a stamp of kosher approval, attesting to care in *hashgachah*. The hard part in all of this is that not all *hechsherim*, whether provided by individual rabbis or agencies, maintain the same requirements or provide the same quality of oversight. It is important that you purchase all foods requiring *hashgachah* from one that is recognized and recommended. I can't always get this assessment right, and there might be unfortunate times when a *hechsher* that should make it to the recommended list does not. Note as well that a "k" does not attest to a *hechsher* on a product, as it is not a registered trademark, and can be put on a package by any company. (Interesting note: Kellogg's cereals bearing a "k" are under a recognized kosher supervision).

Many products bear the symbol of these large supervising agencies: OU, OK, Kof-K, Star-K, Half-Moon K, CRC- they are all fine



hashgachot. I have included some of the symbols here.

Please follow this link to a larger **list of commonly recognized supervisions**:

http://www.crcweb.org/agency_list.php

Other *hashgachot* in the area:

- Vaad of Westchester (eg. at Sammy's bagels);
- Vaad of Massachusetts (eg. at some Stop and Shop bakeries);
- Vaad of Queens (eg. Seasons, New Roc Glatt, Eden Wok, Prime Time);
- Vaad of Riverdale (eg. Heislors Bakery; many Riverdale eateries);
- Vaad of the Five-Towns;
- RCBC (Bergen County);
- Vaad of Fairfield County;
- many of the hashgachot in the institutions in the Monsey area;
- Rabbi Avraham Marmorstein (eg. the Fairway kosher sections);
- local *hashgachot* that Rabbis Marder and Greenberg provide (eg. White Plains Bake Shop; Berrylicious)

I cannot recommend Westchester area bakeries, butcher shops and eateries that carry other supervisions (and sometimes none at all but yet call themselves kosher). Unless informed otherwise, these are not to be considered as properly supervised and you should purchase your food elsewhere.

In your kitchen

The brevity of this guide does not enable us to review all of the rules of *kashrut*. Please read any one of many books on the subject if you need to become familiar with the essentials. See this site for kosher basics:

<http://www.star-k.org/cons-keep-basics.htm>. Certainly be in contact with the rabbi to learn more.

As you are aware, kosher laws require not only that all ingredients be kosher in origin, but that meat and dairy not be combined. Maintaining a kosher kitchen requires a fully separate set of meat and dairy utensils for preparing, cooking, serving, and eating, which are washed and maintained independently. Most homes also have a set of basic pareve utensils as well.

For a guide to koshering utensils and the kitchen in general, please see this site: <http://www.star-k.org/kashrus/kk-passover-kashering.htm>. This will come in handy when the inevitable mix-up takes place.

We also **do not cook in the other's utensils and we do not cook meat and dairy dishes in the same oven together** (primarily out of concern of steam and splattering). In general, we assign an oven to be kept as either meat or dairy, and cover the foods of the other "gender". The same holds true for a microwave (where, in addition, there should be some microwave-safe covering on the surface of the glass tray). When one wants to "convert" the regular oven from meat to dairy or visa versa, one generally waits 24 hours, or raises the temperature to high for one hour in between (or runs a self-clean). One further note: even if cooking a pareve item (eg. a potato), if it is cooked in a dairy pot, we do not serve it with a meat meal (and visa versa).

The most common questions that arise in the kitchen involve **utensil mix-ups** either in the cooking, reheating, or washing stage, each which might have different rulings. Whenever an issue arises that would require some rabbinic guidance, make sure to take note of when the utensil was last used prior to this incident, and how hot the temperature was (or whether you were preparing sharp foods like onions).

Of special concern is the involvement of those who themselves are not kosher observant in preparing food in our kitchens. Numerous halachik issues are involved here, both in terms of insufficient oversight/reliability, and, if dealing with someone of another faith, some rules that relate to gentile-cooked food. Please discuss any specific questions you might have about this with the rabbi.

Indeed, if you are uncertain about any aspect of kosher observance, whether as a novice or life-long adherent, please ask me, or others who might be well informed. You can also inquire how you might host in your home on disposables even if you have not yet been able to maintain your kitchen in the standard which has been briefly described.

Reach out to me to find out how you might do this, and for help in getting your kitchen the way you would like it.

Rabbi Chaim Marder