

Bittul Chametz - Nullifying Chametz

A central law of Passover observance is the requirement to remove all traces of chametz from our homes and our lives. This tremendous care with which we are told to clean our homes for Pesach is directly tied to this attempt to rid ourselves of chametz.

Once the house has been thoroughly cleaned, a final search for traces of chametz is conducted, complete with the symbolic collection of the last pieces of chametz. This search itself is symbolic of the innermost searching of our hearts to rid ourselves of the yetzer ha-ra, the evil inclination. A candle is used because “the soul of a human is a lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts.” We search for and remove this chametz, freeing us to fully celebrate our freedom.

Immediately following the search for chametz, a formula is recited which effectively nullifies any chametz which may not have been found during the search. This is kind of an insurance policy which ensures that any chametz that inadvertently escaped detection is considered “as dust of the earth.”

Materials

You will need ten pieces of chametz (bread crusts, broken pieces of bread, or bagel), a candle, a match, a feather, a wooden spoon, and a paper plate or container.

What To Do

1. On the night before Pesach, immediately after sundown, someone hides ten pieces of chametz around the house. The searchers should not see where the pieces are hidden.
2. Light a candle.
3. Recite the “*Bedikat Chametz* blessing.”

**ברוך אתה יהוה, אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו
במצוותיו, וצונו על בעור חמץ.**

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al bi'ur chametz.

Praised are You, Adonai, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us through commandments, commanding us to remove all chametz.



4. Conduct the search, using the candle to illuminate areas. When a piece of chametz is found, sweep it onto the wooden spoon using the feather, and then deposit it into the container or on the paper plate.
5. Be sure to collect all the pieces that were hidden.

6. After the search is concluded, recite the *Bittul Chametz* formula. It is to be said out loud and in a language one understands.

**כָּל חֲמֵירָא וְחֲמֵיעָא דְאִפְא בְרִשּׁוּחֵי דְלֵא חֲמֵמָה
וּדְלֵא בְעֵרְתָּהּ וּדְלֵא יִדְעָנָא לָהּ, לְכַטֵּל
וְלִהְיוּ הַפְקָר בְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.**

Any Chametz or leaven that is in my possession which I have not seen, have not removed and do not know about, should be nullified and be worthless and considered like dust.

7. Secure the chametz in the container or in a small area of the kitchen where chametz for the morning of Erev Pesach is kept. There are some who take the gathered chametz outside and burn it in their barbecue or other container.

Practical Questions and Answers

Why is a candle used?

The search is conducted at night when the candle's illumination is more effective. The candle is considered the best tool for illuminating the search because it can be used in crevices, nooks, and crannies.

Why use a wooden spoon?

A wooden spoon was probably used because it, too, can be burned with chametz.

Why use a feather?

Whisk brooms were often made of feathers, so this one feather for *Bedikat Chametz* acted as a miniature whisk broom.

Must we use a feather and spoon?

No. This is a custom. The law requires the searching for and removal of the chametz. What tools you use to accomplish this are strictly custom and tradition.

Permitted Foods

Category A

Foods which do not require a kosher le-Pesach label if purchased prior to Pesach:

unopened packages or containers of natural coffee without cereal additives* sugar pure tea salt (not iodized) pepper natural spices frozen fruit	juice with no additives frozen (uncooked) vegetables (see Legumes) milk butter cottage cheese (with no additives) cream cheese (with no additives)	ripened cheeses such as cheddar (hard), muenster (semi-soft) and Camembert (soft) frozen (uncooked) fruit (with no additives) baking soda
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Category B

The following foods do not require a kosher le-Pesach label if purchased before or during Pesach

fresh fruits and vegetables (see Legumes)	eggs fresh fish fresh meat
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Category C

The following foods require a kosher le-Pesach label if purchased before or during Pesach:

wine vinegar liquor oils dried fruit	candy chocolate flavored milk ice cream yogurt soda
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Also in Category C

Baked products: Matzah, cakes, matzah flour, farfel, matzah meal, and any products containing matzah

Canned or bottled fruit juices: These juices are often clarified with kitniyot which are not listed among the ingredients. However, if one knows there are no such agents, the juice may be purchased prior to Pesach without a kosher le-Pesach label

Canned tuna: Since tuna, even when packed in water, has often been processed in vegetable broth and/or hydrolyzed protein, it requires a kosher le-Pesach label. However, if it is known that the tuna is packed exclusively in water, without any additional ingredients or additives, it may be purchased without a kosher le-Pesach label

Is that Kosher for Passover?

Prohibited Foods

leavened bread cakes biscuits crackers cereal	coffees containing cereal derivative* wheat barley	oats spelt rye liquids containing ingredients	or flavors made from grain alcohol
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Most Ashkenazic authorities have added the following foods:

rice corn millet	legumes (beans and peas; however, string beans are permitted)
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Legumes

The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has ruled unanimously that peanuts and peanut butter are permissible, as peanuts are not actually legumes.

Some Ashkenazic authorities permit, while others forbid, the use of legumes in a form other than their natural state, for example, corn sweeteners, corn oil, soy oil.

Sephardic authorities permit the use of all of the above.

Consult the rabbi for guidance in the use of these products.

Detergents:

If permitted during the year, powdered and liquid detergents do not require a kosher le-Pesach label.

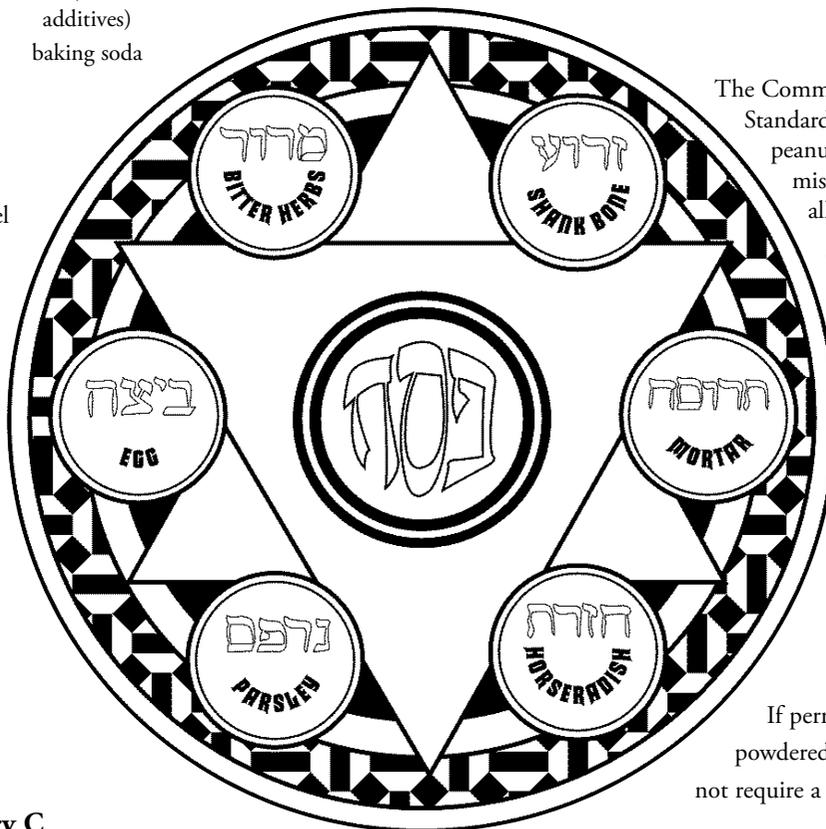
Medicine:

Since chametz binders are used in many pills, the following guidelines should be followed: if the medicine is required for life sustaining therapy, it may be used on Pesach.

If it is not for life-sustaining therapy, some authorities permit, while others prohibit. Consult the rabbi. In all cases, capsules are preferable.

*Coffee:

Be aware that coffees produced by General Foods are not kosher for Passover unless marked KP.



Source material from the "Rabbinical Assembly Pesach Guide"

Category D

The following processed foods (canned, bottled or frozen), require a kosher le-Pesach label if purchased during Pesach:

milk butter juices vegetables	fruit milk products spices coffee	tea fish all foods listed in Category C
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Kashering of Utensils

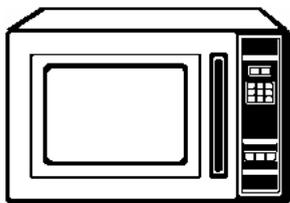
The process of kashering utensils depends on how the utensils are used. According to halakhah, leaven can be purged from a utensil by the same process in which it was absorbed in the utensil (*ke-voleo kakh poletu*). Therefore, utensils used in cooking are kashered by boiling, those used in broiling are kashered by fire and heat, and those used only for cold food are kashered by rinsing.



Metal

(wholly made of metal)

Utensils used in fires (spit, broiler) must first be thoroughly scrubbed and cleansed and then made as hot as possible. Those used for cooking or eating (silverware, pots) must be thoroughly scrubbed and cleaned and completely immersed in boiling water. Pots should have water boiled in them which will overflow the rim. The utensils should not be used for a period of at least 24 hours between the cleaning and the immersion in boiling water. Metal baking utensils cannot be kashered.



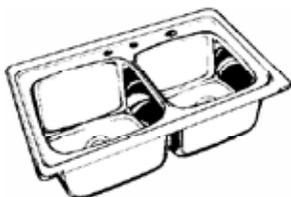
Microwave Ovens:

Ovens which do not cook food by means of heat should be cleaned, and then a cup of water should be placed inside. Then the oven should be turned on until the water disappears. A microwave oven that has a browning element cannot be kashered for Pesach.



Earthenware

China, pottery, etc., cannot be kashered. However, fine translucent chinaware which has not been used for over a year may be used if scoured and cleaned in hot water.



Kitchen Sink

A metal sink can be kashered by thoroughly cleaning and then pouring boiling water over it. A porcelain sink should be cleaned and a sink rack used. If dishes are to be soaked in a porcelain sink, a dish basin must be used.



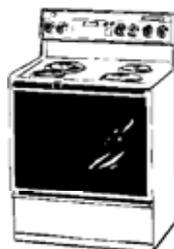
Dishwasher:

After not using the machine for a period of 24 hours, a full cycle with detergent should be run.



Glassware

Authorities disagree as to the method for kashering drinking utensils. One opinion requires soaking in water for three days, changing the water every 24 hours. The other opinion requires only a thorough scrubbing before Pesach, or putting them through a dishwasher.



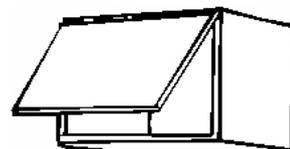
Ovens and Ranges

Every part that comes in contact with food must be thoroughly scrubbed and cleaned. Then, oven and range should be heated as hot as possible for a half hour. If there is a broil setting, use it. Self-cleaning ovens should be scrubbed and cleaned and then put through the self-cleaning cycle. Continuous cleaning ovens must be kashered in the same manner as regular ovens.



Electrical Appliances

If the parts that come in contact with chametz are removable, they can be kashered in the appropriate way (if metal, follow the rules for metal utensils). If the parts are not removable, the appliance cannot be kashered. (All exposed parts should be thoroughly cleaned.)



**Tables,
Closets and Counters:**

If used with chametz, they should be thoroughly cleaned and covered, and then they may be used.



**Chametz and
Non-Passover Utensils:**

Non-Passover dishes, pots and chametz whose ownership has been transferred, should be separated, locked up or covered, and marked in order to prevent accidental use.