

Passover Preparation

For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread...Passover as a holiday focuses around the table. The food we consume is supposed to remind us of both the bitterness of slavery and the joy of freedom. Food is both celebratory and limited with matzoh as a the basis of cooking for the week.

Passover really begins the week before as houses are cleaned of all *chametz*. People traditionally engage in “spring cleaning,” removing the leavening from the house while also purifying it for springtime.

Here are some guidelines to help you prepare:

Permitted and Forbidden Foods

The Bible prohibits eating of *chametz* (leavened bread.) This refers to food prepared from wheat, barley, oats, spelt or rye that has been allowed to leaven. Ashkenazi Jews added rice, millet, corn and legumes. If any amount of the above becomes mixed with other food, it also becomes unkosher. Matzoh is kosher because it is not allowed to leaven.

Many major food brands have a “Kosher for Passover” label to help if you have questions about them. No special labels are required for coffee, tea, sugar, eggs, fish, fresh fruit and vegetables, salt and dates, honey, dried fruits, frozen fruits and vegetables without any additives (i.e., corn syrup), garlic, pepper, onion, garlic powder, nuts and milk. Wines do not have to be sweet for the seder, but they do have to be kosher.

All medications and prescriptions, leavened or not, are kosher for Passover.

Since corn syrup is not kosher, many soda products have the “Kosher for Passover” label showing that sugar has been substituted for corn syrup.

Tzedakah

It is traditional to give tzedakah during Passover. It is proper to give to Jewish organizations that help families who can't afford Passover foods. It is also appropriate to help all peoples suffering, hungry and homeless or oppressed — experiencing the pain from which we Jews were redeemed, going from slavery to freedom.

Guests

During Passover we open our doors to others, inviting them to share the memory of the miracle. The seder is meant to be understood and that is why it is written in the language of the country (in our case, English). It is fun to have non-Jews come and join with us.

Preparing Your House

The following 10-step approach for koshering your house for Passover is adapted from *The Jewish Holidays*, by Michael Strassfeld:

1. Thoroughly clean with special attention to areas where chametz has been eaten or stored. You may want to clean one room at a time and then allow no further eating in it.
2. If you are certain that no one has brought chametz into an area, like an attic, you don't have to clean it.
3. The dining room and kitchen require special attention. To kasher an oven, clean it and then heat it at its highest point for 15 minutes. For a microwave, boil water in it. A stovetop is cleaned and the burners heated. The sink is cleaned; if it is metal, boiling water is poured over it. The refrigerator is cleaned and the freezer is defrosted and cleaned. Some people choose to cover counters with silver foil.
4. All chametz should be eaten, given away, disposed of or sold, put in a separate cabinet and blocked off.
5. Many people change over all of their dishes, silverware, pots and pans.
6. Cabinets need to be wiped down and relined.

7. If you wish to sell your chametz, the chametz needs to be stored away from the main area as if it is not a part of your house for the week. **Please contact Rabbi Jonathan Singer by noon on Tuesday, March 23**, and he will arrange to sell it. Call 206-525-0915 or email rabbijonathan@templebetham.org
8. The night before the First Seder, finish cleaning the house by conducting a final symbolic search for the *chametz*. Hide a few pieces of bread so that children who participate will have something to find. The search is conducted at night when everyone is home, using a candle and, if possible, a feather for brushing the chametz, a spoon for collecting it and a paper bag to store it.
9. After collecting the chametz, the bittul hametz formula is said: **“All leaven in my possession which I have not seen or removed or of which I am unaware is hereby nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth.”** This phrase is repeated the next morning when the bag of chametz is destroyed. The common method is to burn it. Some have added the following meditation: **“Adonai, our God and God of our ancestors, just as I have removed all chametz from my home and from my ownership, so may it be Your will that I merit the removal of the evil inclination from my heart.”**
10. Your house is now kosher for Passover. On the night before Pesach, many people do not eat in their homes, but go out for pizza or some other leavened product. The day of Erev Pesach, food eaten in the house must be kosher for Passover. However, to make the eating of matzoh special, no matzoh is eaten before the seder.

This ritual cleaning is very personal in terms of its completeness. What is important is to make some kind of distinction for the period of Passover. As Reform Jews, we take the information we have and make choices that make sense for our lives.

Eating During the Week

Some people who do not keep kosher during the year do keep kosher for Passover. People often make sack lunches with matzoh substituted for bread. If you eat in restaurants, order salads in place of leavened foods. Celebrate the end of Passover by having a chametz meal with friends. If you sold your chametz to the Rabbi, don't forget to buy it back.

Chag Sameach. We wish you and your family a Happy and Joyful Pesach.

Rabbis Jonathan and Beth Singer

Traditional Charoset Recipe

1 medium apple, peeled, cored & quartered	1 cup shelled walnuts
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon	1 tablespoon or more sweet red wine

Chop apples and nuts until fine. If you have a food processor, use steel blade and process until apples and nuts are finely chopped – but not until they are a paste. Add cinnamon and just enough wine to hold the mixture together, as in a thick paste.

Israeli-Style Charoset Recipe

1 medium-sized naval orange (preferably Jaffa)	10 pitted dates
1/2 cup slivered or whole blanched almonds	1 large apple, cored and cut into large pieces
1 large or 2 small bananas	1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon sugar	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup sweet red Pesach wine	About 1/3 cup matzoh meal

Use a grater to remove most of the outer, colored part of the orange rind. Reserve the grated rind. Remove and discard the white pith from the orange. Cut the orange into pieces. Put the reserved grated orange rind, orange pieces, dates, almonds, apple and banana through the fine blade of a food grinder, or finely grind them together in a food processor. Stir in the lemon juice, sugar, cinnamon and wine. Then stir in enough matzoh meal for the desired consistency. The mixture will get thicker as it sits. Refrigerate the charoset in a covered container, and serve it chilled. It will keep fresh for about 2 days in the refrigerator. Makes about 2 1/2 cups.