

Your Questions..

FOOD

Allergen Statement

Q. How come the food I bought for Pesach says “may contain wheat” on the label? Isn’t wheat *chametz*?

A. Foods that contain an “allergen” must declare that on their label. Wheat is an allergen, and if the label says, “contains wheat”, the food is presumably *chametz*. (Although, bear in mind that items made with *matzah* meal may be kosher for Pesach even though they obviously contain wheat.) Some manufacturers go one step further and add a “precautionary” statement, such as “manufactured on machinery that processes wheat”, or “may contain wheat”. These types of statements are not required by law and are voluntarily included out of an abundance of caution.

The fact that the food was produced in a facility that also houses or processes wheat is not a reason for consumers to be concerned that the product is *chametz*, because in most cases there is no realistic chance of mixing of *chametz* into other foods. Even if a small amount of airborne flour, for example, did get into the *chametz*-free food, that is not of *halachic* significance, and the food may be eaten on Pesach.

There are some cases where there is a legitimate risk of contamination. One example of this is quinoa, where some factories that package quinoa also package other grains, and it is possible that kernels of wheat or barley will be mixed into the quinoa. In these types of cases, cRc will recommend that the food only be eaten if specially certified for Pesach, which ensures that the food is free of *chametz* and *kitnios*.

Bottled Water

Q. Is bottled water acceptable for Pesach without special certification?

A. Bottles of pure water can be used without Pesach certification. The same is true if it also contains minerals such as calcium chloride, magnesium chloride, magnesium oxide, magnesium sulfate, potassium bicarbonate, potassium chloride, sodium bicarbonate, or sodium chloride. But if it

contains vitamins and/or citrates (e.g., calcium citrate), then it should only be used if certified as kosher for Pesach.

Brown Sugar

Q. What about brown sugar makes it so that it requires Pesach certification? Isn’t it just sugar that does not have the molasses removed from it?

A. Genuine brown sugar is a precursor to white sugar and does not require special Pesach certification. However, nowadays much of the brown sugar sold in the market is white sugar which is colored brown with molasses or caramel color, and those two ingredients are potentially not acceptable for Pesach (for reasons that are beyond the scope of this Guide). Additionally, in some brown sugar, the process begins with an enzymatic “inversion” of the sugar. For these reasons, we recommend that consumers only purchase brown sugar that is certified for Pesach or approved for Pesach by a reliable agency.

Paper Bags

Q. When my mother takes hot cookies out of the oven, she puts them onto a paper bag to cool off. Does she need specially certified bags for Pesach?

A. Any kind is fine.

Vegetable Wash

Q. Does vegetable wash require *hashgacha* for Pesach?

A. Vegetable wash requires *hashgacha* for Pesach. Although there are a few kosher vegetable washes on the market, to the best of our knowledge none of them are certified for Pesach. If consumers wish, they can substitute a small amount of dish liquid (any are acceptable) which will do the same job, if not better.

Vodka

Q. Can unflavored vodka made from potatoes be consumed on Pesach without special certification?

A. Vodka cannot be used for Pesach – even if it is unflavored and even if it is made from potatoes – unless it bears special Pesach certification. The process of producing alcohol for vodka necessitates enzymes, such as malted barley, which may be *chametz*, and involves the use of hot equipment which may have been previously used for

.Answered



chametz alcohol. Therefore, we cannot recommend it without special Pesach certification.

KITNIOS

Anise – Dill and Coriander

Q. I was surprised to see that the cRc shopping guide lists a few varieties of anise (caraway, cumin, coriander, dill and fennel) as *kitnios*. Can you explain to me why that is the case?

A. *Rema* 453:1 rules that anise and coriander are not *kitnios*. Some of the later *Poskim* (*Taz* 453:1 & 462:3, and *Chok Yaakov* 453:9) basically accept this *psak* but suggest that these spices be checked carefully to make sure none of the five grains are mixed into them. Other *Poskim* (*Magen Avraham* 453:3) take a stricter approach and are of the opinion that one should avoid these spices, since it is so difficult to check whether grains are mixed into them. Rav Gedalia Dov Schwartz, zt”l accepted the ruling of *Mishnah Berurah* 453:13 to follow the stricter approach. Accordingly, these spices are listed in our shopping guide as “*kitnios*”, although a purist could argue that even if they are forbidden, the term “*kitnios*” does not apply to them.

Quinoa and Amaranth

Q. Are quinoa and amaranth *kitnios*?

A. Quinoa and amaranth are seeds which are similar enough to wheat and barley that they theoretically would be *kitnios*, and, in fact, some *Poskim* do treat them as such. However, Rav Schwartz, zt”l accepted *Iggeros Moshe’s* (OC 3:63) position that foods which were not consumed by Jews at the time the *minhag* of *kitnios* began are not forbidden on Pesach. At the time when the *minhag* began (6-7 centuries ago), no Jews lived in the South American and Far Eastern countries where these grains grew; therefore, quinoa and amaranth are not considered *kitnios* and may be consumed on Pesach if one can be certain that no *chametz*-grains are mixed in.

This last caveat poses a particular concern for quinoa and amaranth, as these small seeds are often packaged on the same equipment as other small grains such as wheat, barley, and oats,

which means that they can only be used after being carefully checked that no *chametz* grains are mixed in. Accordingly, we recommend that people only use quinoa which is specially certified for Pesach, which ensures that it is free of other grains.

MEDICAL

Hand Sanitizer

Q. Do alcohol-based sanitizers require Pesach certification? What about using them on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*?

A. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers such as Purell, typically contain at least 62% ethyl alcohol, which may possibly be *chametz*. However, Rav Schwartz, zt”l checked a sample of hand sanitizer and said that it is as inedible as other liquid soaps and may, therefore, be used on Pesach, regardless of the source of alcohol. (An additional factor to consider is that the alcohol used in the hand sanitizers is denatured.)

Rav Schwartz, zt”l said that using a hand sanitizer, such as Purell, on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* is no different than using liquid soap. *Iggeros Moshe* (OC 1:113) holds that this is not permissible, but many *Poskim* (e.g., *Shemiras Shabbos K’hilchaso* 14:16) are of the opinion that it is permitted. Rav Schwartz, zt”l accepted this latter approach.

KASHERING

Barbeque Grill

Q. We want to barbecue on *Chol HaMoed*. What do we need to do in order to *kasher* our grill?

A. The grates of a barbeque grill must be *kashered* with *libun gamur*, and the simplest way to do this is by sandwiching the grill between layers of charcoal. Place a layer of charcoal, on a cement surface, put the grate on top of the charcoal, and cover the grate with another layer of charcoal. Light all the charcoal, and allow it to burn for an hour. This will *kasher* the grates. (See <https://kshr.us/Grill> for a short video about this.) Alternatively, one can purchase separate grates for Pesach.

The rest of the grill can be *kashered* with *libun kal*, which can be accomplished relatively easily, as follows: If the grill comes with a cover, light the grill with coals or gas, close the cover, and allow it to burn on its highest setting (or filled with a considerable amount of coal) for an hour. If the grill does not have a cover, follow the same procedure, but make sure that all surfaces of the grill are covered with coals. As with all items being *kashered*, it is crucial that the grill be cleaned thoroughly of all food residue, which is often a particular difficulty in a barbeque grill. In fact, if the grill has too many holes, cracks, and crevices where food may get trapped, one should refrain from *kashering* the grill at all.

Braces

Q. How should I clean out my braces after eating *chametz* for the last time before Pesach?

A. After one who has braces eats *chametz* for the last time before Pesach, the braces must be thoroughly cleaned to ensure no *chametz* remains. We have been told by orthodontists that [for those people who do not have a water-flosser (e.g., Waterpik)] the best way to clean braces is to use a “proxal brush” which has a narrow-bristled end that fits between the different wires and brackets. It is an inexpensive and effective tool for removing all residue from braces and other dental appliances.



Counter Covers

Q. Do you have any recommendations for covering non-granite or stainless-steel countertops instead of using disposable plastic shelf or lining paper?

A. Some people have Formica-type covers professionally made to cover their counters for Pesach. Standard Formica is made of a very thin layer of laminate/plastic glued to a thick piece of wood, and the special Pesach covers are made from the same laminate glued to a thin piece of wood (to make it easier to maneuver and save from year to year). If this is not an option for you, you may want to use disposable plastic shelf-liners, lining paper, or corrugated plastic sheets.

Faucet With Spray Hose

Q. The faucet in my new kitchen has a spray hose. Is the *kashering* of that faucet any different than a regular one?

A. The first step in *kashering* any item is to remove all residual *chametz*. With this in mind, *Rema* 451:18 rules that any utensil which has small cracks and crevices where food might get caught should not be *kashered* for Pesach, because of the difficulty in getting the utensil perfectly clean. This poses a concern for many pull-out faucets because the hose is made of a ribbed material where bits of food can get trapped and then fall out into the Pesach food. Accordingly, any faucet with this type of hose cannot be *kashered* for Pesach.

The good news is that the only concern is if the faucet is pulled out, thereby exposing the ribbed portion of the hose. Therefore, one may use the faucet on Pesach if (a) the hose is not pulled out, and (b) the rest of the faucet is *kashered* in the typical manner as described in our Pesach Guide and website.

Mouth Guard

Q. I wear a mouth guard (e.g., nocturnal bite plate) at night to keep me from grinding my teeth, and my son wears something similar when he plays ice hockey. Can we also use them on Pesach?

A. Yes, they should be thoroughly cleaned with a brush and soap, and then you can use them on Pesach.

SHABBOS & YOM TOV

Urns

Q. Can I put cold water into my electric urn on *Yom Tov*?

A. On *Yom Tov* it is permitted to cook food. Therefore, one may put a kettle onto the fire on *Yom Tov* to heat up water. But it is forbidden to start a new fire or an electrical device, and, therefore, one may not light a new fire.

Q. What about putting cold water into an electric urn that is already plugged in and running? Is that like putting a kettle filled with water onto the fire?

A. It turns out that most urns (and pump pots) operate with a thermostat, which turns the urn’s electric coil on and off, depending on how hot the water in the urn is. Most of the time, the coil is off, and only when the water temperature drops a few degrees does the coil go on. That is exactly what happens when water from the tap is added to the urn. The ambient temperature water cools off the water already in the urn, and the thermostat senses this and turns on the urn’s electric coil to heat up the water.

Thus, although the person is adding water to an urn which is plugged in and “on”, in truth, when he adds water he is directly

causing the coil to ignite and get hot. After considering different aspects of this issue, Rav Reiss ruled that one may not do this on *Yom Tov*.

To address this issue, there are companies that market urns to the Jewish community, claiming that theirs are designed in a manner that allows the addition of cold water on *Yom Tov*. In our investigations of these claims, we found that some had merit and were ingeniously designed to avoid concern, but others were not as effective even if they had special “*Shabbos/Yom Tov* modes”. For most consumers, it is too difficult to test their urn to determine which category their urn fits into, and we, therefore, recommend that they only add water which was already heated in a pot or urn that they placed onto an existing flame.

MISCELLANEOUS

Disposable Gloves

Q. Is there anything wrong with using disposable gloves on Pesach?

A. Disposable gloves do not pose an inherent issue for Pesach, but some are coated with a powder to prevent the gloves from sticking. The powder is likely made from *kitnios* or an innocuous material, but it is possible that it will be *chametz*. For example, a company recently began marketing disposable gloves which are dusted with colloidal oatmeal to help hydrate the skin they come in contact with. Accordingly, we recommend that people only use powder-free gloves, or ones that are otherwise known to be free of concern.

Selling Liquor for Pesach

Q. How can one sell liquor and prescription medicines to a non-Jew as part of *mechiras chametz*, if the Illinois law is that the sale of those items requires a special license?

A. The *Poskim* understand that local governments do not restrict small private sales of this sort, especially if they are done for religious purposes.

Do you have a question you'd like to see answered here next year? We'd love to hear from you at info@cRcKosher.org!

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