

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*. This is 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*.

Buy Before Pesach

Q. I see that you recommend certain items for Pesach but say they should be bought before *Yom Tov*. If they do not contain any *chametz*, why can’t I also buy them on *Chol HaMoed*?

A. First a bit of background - the prohibition against eating *chametz* on Pesach is so strict that if the tiniest amount of *chametz* is mixed into food on Pesach, the food cannot be eaten. In other words, the standard rules of *bitul b’shishim* do not apply. But that

is only true if the *chametz* was mixed in on Pesach; if it happened before Pesach, the food is permitted assuming the *chametz* was *batel b’shishim*.

There are a handful of items – milk, eggs (in the shell), bagged salads, baby carrots – where (a) additives are used which might be *chametz* (although they likely are not), (b) the additives are in such small proportions that they are surely *batel b’shishim*, but (c) these foods arrive at stores very soon after they are prepared. Raw eggs have an additional concern, due to the slight chance that there was *chametz* in the ink used to mark the eggs or as an additive to the water used to wash the eggs. As a result, the milk, eggs, etc. which you buy on *Chol HaMoed* might have been produced on Pesach with a *chametz* additive which cannot be *batel* (since it was added on Pesach). Accordingly, we recommend that if these items are not available with Pesach certification, one should purchase them before *Yom Tov* to avoid these concerns.

Seltzer

Q. Why does the cRc require a Pesach *hechsher* on unflavored seltzer?

A. There are several ways to collect carbon dioxide used to create seltzer, and one of them is as a byproduct of the production of beer or whisky. Of course, beer and (just about all) whisky is *chametz*, and there is a difference of Rabbinic opinion as to whether the *chametz* status transfers to the carbon dioxide gas. Some are of the opinion that since carbon dioxide is a gas, and it is “scrubbed” of all *chametz* taste, it is permitted on Pesach, even though it comes from a *chametz* source. The cRc follows the stricter opinion that treats the gas as *chametz*, since it is direct result of the beer or whisky production.

Tonic Water

Q. Does tonic water require special Pesach certification?

A. Yes. The carbonation might be derived from beer or whisky (see “Seltzer” above) and the flavor may contain *chametz* or *kitnios* components. Depending on the brand, the tonic water might also contain other ingredients, such as citric acid, which are Pesach-sensitive.

Vanilla Beans

Q. Are vanilla beans *kitnios*?

A. No

.Answered

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.

KITNIOS

Dill and Coriander (Anise)

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 primary 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.

Sorghum

Q. I see you consider sorghum *kitnios*, but yet you approved of the certified sorghum whisky. How can it be approved if it is *kitnios*?

A. As with other forms of *kitnios*, only the “grain” or seed is forbidden, but the stalk and other plant material are permitted. Whisky is made from the sorghum stalk and, therefore, although we cannot eat sorghum grain on *Pesach*, we can drink sorghum-based whisky, if it is certified as kosher for *Pesach*.

MEDICAL

Hand Sanitizer

Q. Do alcohol-based sanitizers require Pesach certification?

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 sanitizers and said that they are 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.)

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://bit.ly/KasherGrill> for a short video on this process.] 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. 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.



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.

Hag'alah Kashering Time

Q. How long does the silverware have to stay in the boiling water of *hag'alah*? How about if I'm *kashering* a pot?

A. The *hag'alah* water should be boiling before you put the silverware or pot into it, and once you put it in the *kashering* is “instant”. One exception is that if the item is so heavy – such as something made of cast iron – that it cools the water considerably. In that case you should leave the item in the water until the water once again reaches a boil.

Iron for Kashering

Q. My son suggested we *kasher* our countertops by running a hot iron over them. Would this work?

A. One cannot *kasher* a counter with a clothing iron without any water present. [The exact details as to why are beyond the scope of this Guide.] Theoretically, hot water could be put onto the counter, and then the iron could be used to bring that water to a boil, but it would be too difficult to know if every spot came into contact with boiling water (or if, instead, the water only hit certain spots), so we would not recommend it.

Pot Used for Kashering

Q. Is it necessary to *kasher* meat utensils in a meat pot, or dairy utensils in a dairy pot?

A. The only requirements for the *kashering* pot are that it be clean and not have been used for 24 hours. Once those requirements have been met, you may *kasher* any dishes in it, regardless of whether they or the pot were previously used for kosher, non-kosher, dairy, meat, *chametz*, or Pesach. Some have a *minhag* to have a designated “*kashering* pot” which is used for nothing else but *kashering*; families with this custom should continue to follow it.

Steamers

Q. Can I *kasher* my countertops with a steamer?

A. The general rule (as per *Iggeros Moshe* YD 1:60) is that one must *kasher* with water which is in liquid form and cannot *kasher* with steam. Accordingly, a steamer can only be used for *kashering* if two conditions are met. First, the steam must condense to the point that the whole area being *kashered* is covered with water, and second, that water must be at approximately the boiling point (212°F). Most steamers sold for cleaning purposes do not meet these criteria and cannot be used for *kashering*.

Urn

Q. I have an electric urn which I use all year for heating hot water. Do I have to *kasher* it before I use it for Pesach?

A. If an electric hot water urn remains on the counter during the year, it must be *kashered* in order to use it on *Pesach*. This is because during the year someone might have warmed up a *challah* on it or poured water directly from the urn into an oatmeal or instant noodle soup. Even if no one remembers doing this, one must be concerned that it may have happened at some point.

In this context, Rav Gedalia Dov Schwartz zt"l ruled that if it is the type of urn which is not brought to the table, is not washed with *chametz* items, and the family is 100% sure that they (and their children and guests) never used it for anything but heating hot water, and there was no inadvertent hot *chametz* contact (e.g., being accidentally splashed with *chametz*), it may be used for *Pesach* without *kashering*. Most homes are not disciplined enough to reach this level of confidence and should, therefore, *kasher* the urn.

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!

**Wishing you
a
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