

GENERAL INFORMATION ON KOSHER

The word *kosher*, is generally understood to mean “clean” or “pure,” **refers to food that has been ritually prepared so it can be eaten by religious Jews**. It comes from the Hebrew word *kasher*, meaning "connected (to God)" and became common in English in the mid-19th Century. It can be used as an adjective, for example, "kosher meat." In the mid-1920's, the word took on a more general meaning, used to refer to anything that was acceptable.

With its roots in the Hebrew Bible, the system of defining which foods are kosher was developed by the rabbis of late antiquity. Its application to changing realities, such as technological advances, has been the work of subsequent generations, including our own.

According to the Torah, **only certain kinds of animals** are considered inherently kosher:

- For land animals, any creature that both chews its cud and has split hooves is kosher.
- For sea creatures, any fish that has both fins and scales is acceptable
- For birds, only those birds approved by the Torah (list that excludes scavengers and birds of prey).

In order to consume kosher land animals and birds, it is necessary to slaughter them in a prescribed way, in a manner that has been described as a more humane method than is practiced commercially.

In addition, it is repeated three times in the Torah that it is forbidden to cook a baby goat in its own mother's milk. This prohibition of cooking a baby goat in its own mother's milk is the basis for the complete, physical, hermetic **separation of all milk and meat products**.

These are the 3 categories of Kosher Food

Dairy - Often described with the Yiddish word *milchig*, and in the Hebrew as *chalvei*. These are foods, such as cheese, milk, yogurt, ice cream, extracts such as milk protein, whey and any food that contains any amount of dairy

Meat - Often referred to with the Yiddish word *fleischig*, and the Hebrew word, *basrei*. This includes all kosher animals and fowl slaughtered in the prescribed manner, and their derivative products.

Pareve -A Hebrew and Yiddish word, meaning “neutral,” this describes foods that are neither dairy nor meat, such as eggs and fish, tofu, nuts, seeds, fruits and vegetables, and the like, provided they are not prepared with any milk or meat products.

In keeping kosher, it is necessary to keep all dairy and meat foods completely separate. Pareve foods, however, may be mixed in and served with either category of food since these foods are neither milk nor meat. Once the parve foods are mixed into milk or meat foods they become milk or meat as well.

In order to ensure a greater separation between milk and meat foods, the use of different sets of dishes, pots and pans and utensils was developed. This is also the basis of waiting several hours after eating a meat dish before eating a dairy product, so that the two types of food shouldn't even mix together in the stomach!

Whether a particular food is considered kosher or not usually has to do with whether any substance or product used in its manufacture was derived from a non-kosher animal or even an animal that is kosher but was not slaughtered in the prescribed manner. Rabbinic supervision of the production of food enables it to carry a “seal of approval” (but no, it is not “blessed by a rabbi”)

All the above are the fundamental elements of kashrut.

KOSHER CHEESE

A cheese can be considered to be a Kosher Cheese if it meets the dietary requirements of the Jewish religion's laws. **In general, a cheese is considered to be a Kosher Cheese if its milk was**

taken from a kosher animal, (cow, sheep, goat, buffalo) it was made with kosher equipment, and the cheese was produced under rabbinical supervision. Cheese is certified to be a Kosher Cheese by agencies that supervise the production process as well as inspect the cheese production facilities to make sure that kosher standards are upheld.

The classification of Kosher Cheese is largely affected by whether or not the cheese is made with rennet, an enzyme found in animals that causes milk to separate into curds and whey. Kosher Cheese must be made with rennet from vegetarian sources, such as rennet derived from plants, usually thistle, microbial rennet, or rennet from kosher animals. It can also be made using an acid, such as kosher vinegar as the coagulant. This is commonly done in making Ricotta and Paneer. Many softer cheeses, such as cream cheese and cottage cheese are not made with rennet but rather have bacterial cultures added to its milk, while many harder cheeses, such as Cheddar, Parmesan and Swiss are made with rennet.

Kashrut laws also dictate the way Kosher Cheese is consumed. The Torah prohibits cooking, eating or deriving any benefit from the mixture of meat and milk. Although rennet used to make cheese may be derived from a kosher animal source, the rennet itself is an enzyme and is not considered a meat product so it may be used to make a Kosher Cheese. Currently, all kosher cheese is made using kosher certified microbial rennet.

CHOLOV YISROEL (also pronounced HALAV YISRAEL) KOSHER (also mentioned as Super Kosher)

Jewish law requires that in the production of dairy products, a mashgiach or Jewish supervisor **must be present from the beginning of the milking to the end of processing** to ensure that only milk from kosher animals is used. Where supervised milk is unavailable, some Rabbinic authorities permit government inspection as sufficient assurance (although not in all countries). Milk with such supervision is known as Chalav Yisrael ("Jewish milk"), as opposed to milk without supervision that is called Chalav Stam or Chalav Nochri.

Chalav stam is a classification literally translating to "plain milk," which is given to milk produced in a country where government regulations make it reasonable to assume that milk is 100% what it is labeled as (i.e. anything labeled as "milk" is 100% cow's milk, goat's milk must be 100% goats milk and labeled as such, etc.).

Kosher certifications in such countries usually mark "*chalav yisrael*" in either English or Hebrew next to their kosher symbol, if there was supervision on milking process. In Israel, kosher certifiers don't usually mark "*chalav yisrael*" since it is the standard there—in fact, kosher dairy products in Israel that are **not** *chalav Yisrael* are not allowed to be imported or marketed as kosher.

Chalav Yisrael dairy (milk and cheese) is a growing market as it is preferred mainly by the growing population of Ultra-Orthodox Jews. Apart from Israel, where it is the norm if you wish to import dairy products, many retailers in other countries (US and France) have a distinguishable range of Chalav Yisrael dairy, often referred to as super kosher dairy.

KOSHER FOR PASSOVER

Jews celebrate Passover as a commemoration of their liberation by God from slavery in ancient Egypt and their freedom as a nation under the leadership of Moses. When the Pharaoh freed the Israelites, it is said that they left in such a hurry that they could not wait for bread dough to rise (leaven). In commemoration, **for the duration of Passover no leavened bread is eaten**, for which reason Passover was called the feast of unleavened bread in the Torah or Old Testament. Thus matzo (flat unleavened bread) is eaten during Passover and it is a tradition of the holiday.

In addition to the regular kosher laws, the Passover holiday has some special restrictions. There are two major Jewish groups in the world, Ashkenazi and Sephardi. When it comes to Passover (Pesach or Pesah), Ashkenazi Jews and Sephardic Jews have very different food traditions. All Jews, both Sephardic and Ashkenazi, prohibit the eating of chametz during Passover as directed in the Torah. Chametz includes any food product or recipe made with the following grains:

- Wheat
- Oats
- Rye
- Barley
- Spelt

These grains are prohibited if they've had contact with water/moisture for longer than 18 minutes, which leads to rising or "leavening." Leavening agents, like yeast and sourdough, are also considered chametz. The most important thing you need to remember is that grain-based products... even beer!... are generally not considered kosher for Passover. Specially prepared matzo, matzo meal, and matzo cake meal are used as substitutes for bread, bread crumbs, and cake flour, respectively. Many Jews do not use any products made with matzo meal or matzo cake meal. Potato or tapioca starch have become common replacement in creating Passover pastries, breakfast cereal, pasta, etc.

In addition to chametz, Ashkenazi Jews traditionally prohibit the consumption of *kitniyot* during Passover. These items, known commonly as rice, corn, millet and legumes, have been banned for centuries by Ashkenazi Jews.

Sephardic Jews do consume kitniyot during Passover. They are, however, careful about ingredients co-mingling. In the Middle East, it's not uncommon to see Sephardic women sifting through bags of rice and lentils repeatedly, going through grain by grain to ensure no chametz is mixed in.

Most Jews in America do not consume kitniyot during Passover. So, unless you're absolutely sure that the people at your Seder observe Sephardic traditions, it's safest to avoid cooking any kitniyot items during the Passover holiday.

Interesting videos on youtube:

[What is kosher? By getkosher.com](#)

[My speech in 5th Export Summit on halal & kosher \(greek\)](#)

[Keeping it Kosher in LA's Kosher Corridor: Soul Food](#)

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