

# The Beltway VAAD

Orthodox Leadership for the 21st Century

## **A Halachik Guide to Cleaning and Kashering for Pesach**

**5776 / 2016**

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The intent of this guide is to free you from unnecessary work before Pesach so that you (1) can spend more time preparing the Torah for your Seder, and (2) do not have to experience slavery until the Seder actually begins!

The main reason we clean for Pesach is to get rid of chametz that if found on Pesach we would want to keep. Things like boxes of cookies and bottles of liquor fall into this category. These items can be referred to as “Important Chametz.”

Checking for “Important Chametz” is easy to do. We are not concerned with small pieces of chametz that we do not want. One must remember that there is no obligation to destroy chametz crumbs. The prohibition is eating them on Pesach. Therefore, we must be careful to clean away any chametz that may come into contact with food. Since the kitchen is the location where most of our food is prepared, we must be very careful when preparing this room for Pesach. Crumbs that cannot get into food do not have to be cleaned away, however, obvious crumbs should be removed.

We have to keep this in mind when cleaning for Pesach and make sure not to confuse Pesach cleaning with spring cleaning. Although it is a mitzvah to clean one’s house before every *chag*, it would be a shame to approach Pesach with a sense of fear and dread, wishing that you could go to a hotel instead of staying home and cleaning.

This guide has been prepared so that one can do a 100% halachic job of cleaning for Pesach without going overboard and destroying the joy that Pesach should bring.

## KASHERING YOUR KITCHEN

The **stove** must be *kashered* if it is to be used for *Pesach*. This includes the **oven**, the **cooktop**, and the **broiler**. No part of the stove can be considered *kashered* for *Pesach* unless it is completely clean, and free from any baked-on food or grease.

### > OVEN

In a **conventional** oven, gas or electric, an oven cleaner may be necessary to remove baked-on grease. If a caustic type of oven cleaner (such as Easy-Off) was used to clean the oven and some stubborn spots remain after the caustic cleaner has been applied a second time with similar results, the remaining spots may be disregarded. Once the oven and racks have been cleaned, they may be *kashered* by turning the oven to the broil or highest setting. Once it has achieved this temperature, it must be left on for 40 minutes. In a gas oven, the broil setting will allow the flame to burn continuously. In a conventional electric oven the highest setting, broil or 550°F, *kashers* the oven. This method is also acceptable for the oven racks, since it is usual to cook food in a pan, not directly on the racks themselves.

In a **continuous cleaning** oven, one cannot assume that such an oven is clean because the manufacturer claims it to be continuously clean. A visual inspection is required. Since caustic or abrasive oven cleaners (Easy- Off) cannot be used without destroying the continuous clean properties of the oven, a non-abrasive, and non-caustic, cleaner must be used to clean the oven. Grease spots will usually disappear if the top layer of grease is cleaned with Fantastic and a nylon brush. Then the oven should be turned on to 450°F for an hour so that the continuous cleaning mechanism can work. If the spots don't disappear, the oven should be left on for a few hours to allow the continuous cleaning mechanism to deep clean, or the spots should be removed with oven cleaner or steel wool. If the spots are dark spots that crumble when scratched, they can be disregarded. In all of the above cases, the oven should then be *kashered* by turning it to the broil setting. Once it has achieved this temperature, it must be left on for 40 minutes.

In a **self- cleaning** oven, the self-cleaning cycle will clean and *kasher* the oven simultaneously.

Some ovens come with a **convection** feature. This feature allows for more uniform heat distribution by using a fan to circulate the heat. If the convection oven has the self -cleaning feature, it will be sufficient to *kasher* the fan as well. If there is no self- cleaning feature, the entire oven, including the fan, must be sprayed with a caustic cleaner e.g. Easy- Off and cleaned well. The oven should then be *kashered* by turning it on to its highest setting, and once it has achieved this temperature, it must be left on for 40 minutes.

## > COOKTOP

On a **gas range** the cast iron or metal grates upon which the pots on the range sit, may be inserted into the oven after they have been thoroughly cleaned. The grates can then be *kashered* simultaneously with the oven. Another method to *kasher* the grates is to turn the grates over and turn the burner on the highest setting for 10 minutes.

As long as the range top is not enamel, it can be kashered by cleaning it very thoroughly and then pouring boiling water over it. If it is enamel then it should be covered with a double layer of heavy duty aluminum foil which remains there during *Pesach*.

In an **electric cooktop**, one only needs to turn the burners on the high heat setting for a few minutes to *kasher* them, since the burners come to a glow in a few minutes. The drip pans should be thoroughly cleaned and need not be *kashered*. The remaining cooktop areas should be covered. The knobs with which the gas or electricity is turned on should be cleaned. No other process is necessary to *kasher* the knobs.

**Glass, Corning, Halogen or Ceran:** To *kasher* the burner area, turn on the elements until they glow. The burner area is now considered kosher for *Pesach*. The remaining area needs to be cleaned thoroughly. It is advisable not to put anything down directly on the glass.

## > BROILER & GRILLS

Since food is broiled or roasted directly on the pan or grill, they must be heated to a very high temperature to be used on *Pesach*. This can be done either by leaving it on for longer than usual or by using a blowtorch. An alternate method is to replace the broiler pan or grates of the grill. The empty broiler or grill cavity must then be *kashered* by cleaning and setting it to broil. Once it has achieved this temperature, it must be left on for 40 minutes. If one does not intend to use the broiler on *Pesach*, one may still use the oven, even without *kashering* the broiler, provided that the broiler has been thoroughly cleaned.

## > MICROWAVES

To kasher a microwave oven clean thoroughly until absolutely no debris is left. Special attention must be given to the internal vent of the microwave. After you are satisfied that there is no debris, the following steps need to be taken.

1. The glass turntable tray should be removed and replaced. Alternatively, use the microwave without the turntable for *Pesach*.
2. For the oven itself, after 24 hours of non-use with hot chametz, place a saucer of water inside and turn the microwave on and allow the microwave to be filled (5-7 minutes should be sufficient). Repeat the same procedure with the saucer in a different spot.

## > METAL UTENSILS

Metal utensils may be *kashered* by cleaning them thoroughly, and then immersing them, one by one, into a kosher for *Pesach* pot of water which has been heated and is maintaining a rolling boil when the vessel is immersed. Furthermore, utensils can only be koshered once 24 hours has elapsed since they have been last used with hot chametz.

The effect of this process is immediate – a split second. Make sure that the item is completely immersed before its coming into contact with any other items that have been immersed beforehand. You must be careful that the water is always boiling; if the water cools down and stops bubbling, you must wait for the water to bubble again before putting in the next item. The process is finalized by **immediately** rinsing the *kashered* items in cold water. If tongs are used to grip the utensil, the utensil will have to be immersed a second time with the tongs in a different position so that the boiling water will touch the initially gripped area. The entire utensil does not have to be *kashered* at once; it may be done in parts.

A non-kosher-for-*Pesach* pot may also be used for the purpose of *kashering*, provided that it is thoroughly clean and has not been used with hot chametz 24 hours. However, it is the custom to make the pot kosher for *Pesach* before using it for *kashering*. This can be accomplished by cleaning the pot, leaving it dormant for twenty-four hours, filling the pot completely with water, waiting until the water comes to a rolling boil so that the water overflows. The pot is now *kashered*.

**Extra Bonus:** After the *Pesach kashering* process has taken place, the status of these newly *kashered* utensils may be changed from *milchig* to *fleishig*, or vice versa.

## > SINKS

Sinks are generally made from either china, corian, porcelain enamel steel, stainless steel or granite.

**China or Porcelain sinks:** These items are not kasherable. To use them on *Pesach* you must keep a rack on the bottom of the sink. **If** your usual method of cleaning dishes is to fill the sink with water and letting the dishes soak, then a rack IS NOT ADEQUATE. In such a case a sink insert is required.

**Stainless Steel, Corian and Granite sinks** can be *kashered* using the following method:. *Kashering* is accomplished by pouring boiling hot water from a *Pesach* kettle/pot over every part of the stainless steel sink.

## > COUNTERTOPS

**Wood, Formica, Plastic, Corian, Granite, Marble, or Stainless Steel** can be *koshered* through pouring boiling water over them after they have been cleaned thoroughly. A steamer can also be used to Kasher these types counter tops.

## > DISHWASHERS

**Enamel Dishwashers cannot be koshered.**

**Plastic dishwashers – Make sure there are no cracks in the plastic lining of the racks.**

1. Clean the inside of the dishwasher and the racks to remove any crumbs or food that is adhering to any surface. Also, if your dishwasher has a removable filter it must be cleaned out.
2. Before koshering the dishwasher it must not be used for 24 hours.
3. Run the dishwasher on the hottest setting using soap. Keep the racks in to kasher them along with the dishwasher.

## > BBQ GRILL

1. Clean the inside of the BBQ, including the racks, as well as the inside of the hood making sure that there are no food particles adhering to the surface.
2. Turn on the BBQ to high and let it run for 1 hour. **MAKE SURE THE HOOD IS CLOSED.**
3. Kasher the racks by placing them in the self cleaning cycle of your oven, or by covering the grates with fresh coals and letting the coals burn out.
4. The briquettes must also be checked and cleaned of any pieces of food
5. New BBQ “tools” would be required.

## > WARMING DRAWERS

### **Removable Warming Drawers**

1. Do not use for 24 hours
2. Clean well
3. Remove drawer and pour boiling water over entire inside surface of the drawer.
4. Replace the drawer, and it may now be used for Pesach.
5. Cover food (no need to wrap) with tin foil while warming.

### **Non Removable Drawers**

1. Do not use for 24 hours.
2. Clean well.
3. Line the entire drawer with tin foil. Replace foil if it rips.
4. Cover food (no need to wrap) with tin foil while warming

**Alternatively, you could do the following for both types of warming drawers:**

1. Do not use for 24 hours
2. Clean well
3. Light a canned fuel source used to heat chaffing dishes in the warming drawer.  
(One 7-8 ounce size can is sufficient to get the warming drawer hot enough)
4. Make sure to leave the door of the drawer slightly ajar so that there will be enough air to allow for combustion.

## KASHERING HOUSEHOLD ITEMS FOR PESACH

**Bedrooms:** The only chametz that you have to look for in a bedroom is “Important Chametz.”

**Cars:** A car is a place where food decays quickly. It is very unlikely that food found in your car will find its way back to your kitchen. The car should be checked for IMPORTANT chametz.

Other chametz only has to be removed if you fear it will stick to your clothing and end up in your food.

**Cabinets:** Cabinets, closets etc. do not need to be kashered, lined or covered.

**Clothing:** Pockets should be checked if you plan on wearing them on Pesach.

**Dining Room:** Chametz dishes DO NOT have to be removed from a display.

**Garbage Pails:** Garbage pails do not have to be cleaned since there is no fear that you will want to eat that kind of chametz. Also, once chametz is put into your outdoor garbage pail, your bittul before works 100%.

**Toys:** The only chametz we are concerned about on toys is chametz that children may eat on Pesach. Caked on or embedded chametz need not be cleaned before Pesach. Play-dough, glue and shellacked pasta do not have to be removed, since they are designated as non-food items.

**Vacuum Bags:** Vacuum bags do not have to be emptied since there is no fear that you will want to eat that kind of chametz.

**The following is a checklist reviewing items commonly found in the kitchen and how to prepare them for *Pesach*.**

**Baby Bottle** - Ideally, new ones should be purchased, but some opinions permit plastic baby bottles to be *kashered* by immersing them in boiling water.

**Baby High Chair** - Thoroughly clean. Preferable to cover the tray with contact paper.

**Blender/Food Processor/Smoothie Machine** - New receptacle (plus anything that food makes direct contact with) is recommended, although the blade can be treated like any knife *kashered* through dipping in boiling water. Some opinions do permit the receptacles to be *kashered* by immersing them in boiling water after non-use with hot chametz for 24 hours and a thorough cleaning.

**Can Opener** - Manual or Electric - Clean thoroughly.

**Candlesticks/Tray** - Clean thoroughly.

**Coffeemakers** - Coffeemakers that have brewed only unflavored pure coffee: Clean thoroughly. Replace with new glass carafe and new filters.

Coffeemakers that have brewed flavored coffee should be cleaned thoroughly. Do not use for 24 hours. Pour one cup of water into chamber. Water should be heated in unit and allowed to drip over exposed metal base. Kasher the glass carafe and plastic filter holder by pouring boiling water all over the inside and outside of them making sure to wet every spot.

NOTE: You may want to consider tempering the carafe before pouring the boiling water on it.

**Dentures, Bite Plates, Braces** - Clean thoroughly after finishing eating *chometz*.

**Electric Burner Drip Pans** - Clean thoroughly.

**Metal Wine Goblets** – Pour boiling water over the inside and outside.

**Pump Pot/water urn** - If only used for water and not brought to table, clean thoroughly.

Otherwise, kosher or purchase a new one.

**Refrigerator, Freezer** - Thoroughly clean OR line shelves.

**Rings, Napkin** – Clean.

**Shabbat Blech** – Cover or use one that is especially set aside for Passover use.

**Tables** – Clean by wiping them down or using your regular polish. They need not be covered with anything special for Pesach use.

**Towels, Tablecloths, etc.** - Those used during the year with *chometz* may be used on *Pesach* if they have been laundered.

**Water Filters** - Water filters that are connected to the faucet need not be removed. They should be thoroughly cleaned and may be used on *Pesach* without changing the filters.

**The following is a list of items commonly found in the kitchen that generally cannot be *kashered*:**

Bread Machine

Crockpot

China

Pasta Maker

Porcelain (Enamel) Utensils

Sandwich Maker

Silverstone

Stoneware

Teflon

Toaster oven

Waffle Iron

NOTE: Items that you are putting away for Pesach such as toaster ovens, breadbaskets, mixers, etc. DO NOT HAVE TO BE CLEANED. Even if they are full of crumbs, the mental declaration (*bittul*) is sufficient to resolve any concern.



## **MEDICINES – COSMETICS and TOILETRIES FOR PESACH**

### **> MEDICINES**

1. All pill medication (with or without chametz) that one swallows is permitted without special hashgacha (including Lactaid pills). Vitamins and food supplements do not necessarily fall into this category.
2. Liquid and chewable medications that may contain *chametz* should only be used under the direction of a Doctor and Rabbi, who will judge the severity of the illness, the likelihood that the medicine contains *chametz*, and the possibility of substituting a swallowable pill. Liquid and chewable medications that contain *kitnios* may be consumed by someone who is ill. Important: Do not discontinue use of liquid, chewable or any other medicine without consulting with your Doctor and Rabbi.
3. Liquid and chewable medications that contain *kitniyot* may be consumed by someone who is ill. An otherwise healthy person, who would like to consume a liquid or chewable medicine to relieve a minor discomfort, should only do so if the product is known to be free of *kitniyot*.

### **> COSMETICS AND TOILETRIES**

1. All varieties of blush, body soaps, conditioners, creams, eye shadow, eyeliner, face powder, foot powder, foundations, ink, lotions, mascara, nail polish, ointments, paint, shampoo, and stick deodorants are permitted for use on Pesach regardless of its ingredients.  
So too all colognes, perfumes, hairspray, shaving lotions, toothpastes, and deodorants are not edible and therefore can be used on Pesach

## POST-PESACH PURCHASING

In our opinion it is permitted to shop in all the major supermarkets immediately after Pesach. This includes Giant, Safeway, Target, Walmart, and Costco.

The Shulchan Aruch rules that chametz that is owned by a Jew over Pesach may not be eaten after Pesach (Orach Chaim, 448:3). This is a rabbinic prohibition intended to encourage Jews not to violate Pesach. However, it is permitted for a Jew to eat chametz that was owned on Pesach by someone who is not Jewish (448:1). This rabbinic decree does not apply to kitniot (e.g. corn based products, legumes, corn flour, and corn syrup).

Some are concerned that the suppliers of the supermarket are Jewish and therefore the chametz in the supermarket may have been owned by a supplier on Pesach. Hence, they argue that one should not shop in these stores following Pesach.

We argue that we can be lenient in this case because:

- 1) Many of the suppliers do indeed sell their chametz and so the chametz may have been sold to a non-Jew before Pesach.
- 2) The chametz may have been purchased by the supplier after Pesach. This is not a problem since only chametz owned by a Jew on Pesach is problematic.
- 3) When one purchases something in a store after Pesach we do not know who owned it over Pesach. It is not something that is easily ascertained.
- 4) Furthermore, this is a rabbinic decree with many ambiguities (sefeikot). There is a principle in Jewish law that when there is a doubt about a rabbinic law we may be lenient.
- 5) Indeed, as a communal policy, there are problems that arise from being stringent in this area;
  - a) Cost: if people on a tight budget are being forced to shop in a store that is not the most cost effective, then this is an unfair burden to place upon them.
  - b) Many of the local supermarkets go out of their way to stock kosher items. If we discourage our community from shopping there, then we are not only hurting the stores who act with us in good faith, but we also hurt their suppliers who sell them kosher products and who do sell their chametz over pesach.

Thus, we believe it is appropriate to shop in the major supermarkets after Pesach.

חג כשר ושמח!

Have a happy and healthy Pesach!

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