

The Beltway VAAD

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A Halakhic Guide to Cleaning and Kashering for Pesach

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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 Torah obligation to remove chametz from our homes is fulfilled by the “nullification” or “bitul” that we recite before Pesach. We nonetheless remove chametz from our homes to get rid of chametz that if found on Pesach we might want to keep, thereby undoing the nullification. 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% halakhic 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, cooktop, and broiler**. It **must be cleaned and left unused for 24 hours before kashering**, as outlined below:

> OVEN

In a **conventional** oven, gas or electric, first ensure that it is clean of food residue. Remaining spots may be disregarded. Once the oven and racks have been cleaned, they may be *kashered* by turning the oven to the highest setting. Once it has achieved this temperature, it must be left on for an hour. 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 should be used to clean the oven. Then the oven should be turned on to 450°F for an hour so that the continuous cleaning mechanism can work. The oven should then be *kashered* by turning it to the highest/broil setting. Once it has achieved this temperature, it should be left on for an hour.

In a **self-cleaning** oven, the self-cleaning cycle will clean and *kasher* the oven simultaneously. **However, the self-cleaning cycle causes the oven to get dangerously hot, and has been known to cause fires. As a result, it is not recommended to use the self-cleaning cycle.** Let it be noted that it is **not necessary** to *kasher* the oven by utilizing this feature. Instead, as was noted above, one may *kasher* the oven by first cleaning it and then turning it onto the highest setting. Once it has achieved this temperature, it should be left on for an hour.

Some ovens come with a **convection** feature. This feature allows for more uniform heat distribution by using a fan to circulate the heat. The entire oven, including the fan, should be sprayed with a caustic cleaner and cleaned well. The oven should then be *kashered* by turning it on to its highest setting. Once it has achieved this temperature, it should be left on for an hour.

> 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 burner on the highest setting for 10 minutes. Then, turn the grates over and repeat. Be sure to check if your grates have rubber feet, and any other notes in the owner's manual, as this may affect your method of kashering.

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 difficult to pour boiling water, one should be careful not to eat food that falls onto those surfaces while cooking. If it is enamel then it should be covered with a double layer of heavy duty aluminum foil which remains there during *Pesach*.

With 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 cleaned and need not be *kashered*. The remaining cooktop areas should be covered. If it is difficult to cover them, one should make sure they are cleaned well and be mindful not to eat food that falls onto those surfaces while cooking. 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 hot food/pans down directly on this remaining area on *Pesach*.

With an **induction cooktop**, the entire surface area should be cleaned thoroughly. The burners should be turned on for 10 minutes with a pot of water that has not been used in 24 hours. The burner area is now considered kosher for *Pesach*.

An alternative to all glass cooktops is not to kasher them at all, but to purchase metal disks (specifically ferromagnetic discs or entire coverings such as www.thecooktopmat.com for induction surfaces), to place between the pots and the surface.

> 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 requires a form of kashering known as libun gamur. One can use a blowtorch on grill grates; cover them below and above with coals; or loosely cover with tinfoil above the grates - and in all cases, heat for 40 minutes. An alternate method is to replace the broiler pan or grates of the grill. In this case, 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 cleaned.

> MICROWAVES

Clean thoroughly to remove all food residue, and then, the following steps should be taken.

1. The glass turntable tray should be removed or replaced.
2. For the oven itself, after 24 hours have elapsed since the last use with hot hametz, place a cup of water inside and turn the microwave on to allow the microwave to fill with steam (5-7 min. should be sufficient). Repeat the same procedure with the cup in a different spot. It is advisable to place a wooden spoon of sorts in the cup while boiling to prevent eruptions.

> METAL UTENSILS

Once 24 hours have elapsed since their last use with hot chametz, metal utensils may be *kashered* by cleaning them thoroughly, and then immersing them into a kosher-for-*Pesach* pot of water which has been heated and is maintaining a rolling boil when the vessel is immersed.

The effect of this process is immediate – a split second. Make sure that the item is completely immersed before coming into contact with any other items that have been immersed beforehand. Take care to ensure that the water maintains a rolling boil; if the water cools down and stops bubbling, one 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 for 24 hours. However, it is the custom to make the pot kosher for *Pesach* before using it for *kashering*. This can be accomplished by (1) cleaning a pot that has not been used for at least 24 hours, (2) filling the pot completely with water, and (3) bringing the water 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

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 let the dishes soak, then a rack would not be adequate. In such a case, a sink insert would be required.

Stainless Steel, Corian and Granite sinks can be *kashered* by pouring boiling hot water over every part of the sink from a kettle/pot that has not been used in 24 hours, provided that the sink is thoroughly clean and has not been used with hot chametz for 24 hours.

> COUNTERTOPS

Wood, Formica, Plastic, Corian, Granite, Marble, Quartz, or Stainless Steel can be *kashered* through pouring boiling water over them after they have been cleaned thoroughly, and have not been used with hot chametz for 24 hours. A steamer/iron can also be used to Kasher certain countertops - please consult your rabbi for guidance as well as the countertop manufacturer.

> 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, your dishwasher's filter should be cleaned out.
2. Before kashering 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 clean them along with the dishwasher.

> BBQ GRILL

1. Clean the inside of the BBQ, including the racks and pit, as well as the inside of the hood, making sure that there are no food particles adhering to the surface.
2. You may then replace the racks with new ones, or put temporary racks on top of the current racks that are supported with something such as stones.
3. If you will not be replacing the racks, or using temporary racks, you can kasher them by covering the grates with fresh coals and letting the coals burn out, or by creating a tinfoil "rainbow shield" over the grates to trap the heat sufficiently during the kashering process.
4. Turn on the BBQ and let it run for one hour with the hood closed.
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. Then clean well.
2. Line the entire drawer with tin foil. Replace foil if it rips.
3. 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. Then 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

Backpacks, Briefcases, and Work Totes: It is advisable to check these items, so that chametz is not left there until after Pesach, and then inadvertently eaten after chag back at school/work.

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

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

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.

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

Dishes: Chametz dishes DO NOT have to be removed from display.

Garbage Pails: These 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 bins, you do not have to be concerned that you still own that chametz if garbage pickup day is after chag begins.

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 Bottles - These do not need to be kashered, but they should not be washed with Pesach dishes. Many have the practice of setting up a bottle washing area in a nearby bathroom sink.

Baby High Chair - Does not need to be kashered, but should be cleaned, and should not be washed with Pesach dishes.

Blender/Food Processor/Smoothie Machine - While it is recommended to purchase a new receptacle (plus anything that food makes direct contact with), it is permissible to *kasher* these receptacles by immersing them in boiling water after non-use with hot chametz for 24 hours and a thorough cleaning. The blade can also be *kashered* with boiling water.

Can Opener - Manual or Electric - Clean.

Coffee Makers - If they have brewed only unflavored pure coffee: clean thoroughly. Replacing with new glass carafe is recommended, along with new filters.

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

Electric Burner Drip Pans - Clean.

Kiddush cups – Pour boiling water over the inside and outside.

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

Refrigerator, Freezer - Thoroughly clean or line shelves.

Rings for Napkins – Clean.

Shabbat Hot Plate – Clean well with soap. It is recommended to place aluminum foil between

the pot in use and the hot plate. Be careful not to wrap the foil around the hot plate tightly.

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.

NOTE TO DOG OWNERS:

There is a common practice is to sell one's pets along with other chametz (you should indicate this specifically on the Sale of Chametz form). The reason for this practice is because one is not allowed to receive any benefit from chametz - and the ability to feed your pet chametz food is classified as "receiving benefit." But if the pet is "sold", then the only technical benefit is to the new, non-Jewish owner, and one could still keep the pet and its food on their property, just like their other sold chametz. This avoids having to change the pet's diet for chag.

If one is simply dog-sitting for the weekend, then such a "sale" is unnecessary, although there may be a problem bringing chametz pet food into your home.

This is all assuming that the pet food is chametz. One should check to see if there are any classic chametz ingredients in the pet food. This would include any of the five chametz grains – wheat, barley, rye, oats, and spelt, as well as brewer's yeast, malt, pasta, xanthan gum, or flour/starch.

If there is no obvious chametz, it is still possible that there is a small amount of chametz mixed into the food. In such a case, it is preferable to purchase the pet food before Pesach, when it can be considered as though the chametz is nullified in the greater mixture, and irrelevant as chametz. However, proper due diligence should be done to ascertain these percentages.

A final note: Whether or not the pet food has obvious chametz, it is likely still kitniyot, and one should have a designated space/sink available to wash the food bowls so that any residue does not mix with other dishes.

MEDICINES, VITAMINS, COSMETICS and TOILETRIES FOR PESACH

> MEDICINES & VITAMINS

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 *kitniyot* 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*.
4. Many vitamin and food supplement products are devoid of actual *chametz* due to gluten allergen concerns. Therefore, one should carefully check product ingredients, and vitamin/supplements that do not contain *chametz*, or only contain *kitniyot*, may be consumed if they are taken for a specific health need and/or nutritional deficiency.

> COSMETICS AND TOILETRIES

1. All varieties of blush, body soaps, conditioners, creams, eye shadow, eyeliner, lipstick, chapstick, 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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