

Kashering the Kitchen

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Introduction

Dishes, utensils, kitchen appliances, countertops, and anything else used with non-kosher food, cannot be used for kosher food unless it goes through a process known as “*kashering*” or “*hechsher keilim*”. For a few items *kashering* just involves thoroughly cleaning the item, but for most items *kashering* also requires submerging the item in boiling water or a similar hot process. The laws of *kashering* are quite complex, and this article will present the most practical points for the average consumer; readers are encouraged to discuss any questions not covered in this article with their local Orthodox Rabbi. [The article focuses on *kashering* between non-kosher and kosher, as opposed to *kashering* for *Pesach* where certain differences apply.]

The following items **cannot** be *kashered*:

- China, pottery, earthenware, cement/concrete and enameled pots **cannot** be *kashered*. The Ashkenazic custom is to not *kasher* **glass**, with the exception of glass stovetops discussed below. There is a difference of opinion as to whether **plastic** and other synthetic materials are included in this rule, and the cRc position is that those materials can be *kashered*.
- Utensils and appliances which cannot be thoroughly cleaned such as those having crevices in which food may accumulate **cannot** be *kashered*. Some examples of this are dishwashers, sieves, graters, utensils with loose-fitting handles, and bottles with narrow necks.
- Materials which might get ruined during the *kashering* process **cannot** be *kashered* as the Rabbis were concerned that the person would not *kasher* properly for fear of ruining the utensil or appliance.

We now turn to the parts of the kitchen which can be *kashered*.

Flatware

Silver, stainless steel, and plastic flatware may be *kashered*. The process begins with a thorough cleaning, after which the utensil should not be used for 24 hours. A pot of water is brought to a rolling boil, and the pieces of flatware are dropped into the water one at a time. If the water stops boiling at any point, one must wait until it returns to a boil before putting in any more flatware. The custom is to rinse the flatware with cold water after *kashering*.

Some have the custom to *kasher* in a dedicated “*kashering* pot” which is not used for anything else, but most *kasher* in any pot which is clean and has not been used for 24 hours.

Pots and Pans

Standard metal pots are *kashered* in the same manner as flatware. See our video at <http://kshr.us/LargePot> for a demonstration of how to *kasher* a pot which is too large to fit into any other pot of boiling water. **Enameled pots (e.g., Fiesta Ware, Le Creuset) and glass pots (e.g. Pyrex)** cannot be *kashered*. The **Instant Pot** and its cover cannot be *kashered* because they have too many nooks and crannies which cannot be cleaned properly, and into which the *kashering* water might not penetrate.

In general, **baking, roasting and frying pans** cannot be *kashered* unless they are always used with generous amounts of oil or other grease when cooking. If that is the case, they can be *kashered* through *libun kal*, which involves cleaning the pans well, not using them for 24 hours, and then putting them upside-down on an open flame until both the inside and outside of the pan are hot enough to singe paper.

Drinking Glasses

The Ashkenazic custom is that drinking glasses made of **glass** cannot be *kashered* if they were ever used for hot beverages or washed with hot water, such as in a dishwasher. If they were never used or washed hot, fill the glasses with water and leave the water in the glasses for at least 24 hours; repeat this procedure two additional times with fresh water. Drinking glasses made of **plastic** can be *kashered* in the same manner as flatware outlined above, and drinking glasses (or anything else) made of **ceramic or china** cannot be *kashered*.

Tablecloths

Fabric tablecloths can be *kashered* by simply laundering them, but **vinyl tablecloths** cannot be *kashered*.

Electric Mixers, Food Processors and Blenders

The motor area of small electric appliances (e.g. mixers, food processor, blenders) is often exposed to **food** and is very difficult to clean; it is therefore recommended that they not be *kashered* (and used) if they were used for non-kosher. Food processors and blenders whose motor area is truly sealed (i.e. they cannot be unscrewed or opened by consumers) are not affected by this issue and may be used after separate bowls and blades are purchased.

Sinks

Stainless steel or Corian sinks can be *kashered* using the following method. Clean thoroughly, leave unused for 24 hours, boil a kettle of water, and carefully pour that water over all surfaces of the sink and faucet. Preferably, the sink should be rinsed with cold water after *kashering* is completed. The strainer covering the sink's drain should be replaced.

Porcelain sinks cannot be *kashered*.

Kosher dishes and other utensils cannot be placed in a sink which was not *kashered*; rather, an insert or basin must be placed in the sink, and all dishes should be put into that insert.

Stovetops and Ovens

Stovetops (ranges) and ovens can be *kashered*, and the process for doing so is as follows:

Stovetops

The most common type of stovetop is a metal grate over an open flame, which is situated on a porcelain surface. Others have electric coils in the place of an open flame or have a **glass** surface covering electric coils, and the most popular brands for this type of stovetop are **Corning** and **Ceran**.

The *kashering* of stovetops – including glass ones – is done as follows: All parts of the stovetop should be thoroughly cleaned, including scraping residual food from the surface and catch-tray, and not used for 24 hours. Then the fire or coil should be turned to its maximum temperature for at least 30 minutes. [For electric stovetops with exposed coils (i.e., not covered with glass), leave the coils on for just 15 minutes. It is acceptable to *kasher* burners one at a time.] An alternative for a glass stovetop is to not *kasher* it at all, and instead place all pots onto metal discs so that the pots have no contact with the stovetop.

If there is food residue on the underside of the stove's hood, it should be thoroughly cleaned as part of the *kashering* process.

Non self-cleaning oven

The interior and exterior surfaces of the oven must be thoroughly cleaned, the oven should not be used for a full 24 hours, and then turn it should be turned on to 500-550° F for one hour.

Self-cleaning oven

A complete self-clean cycle should be run with the racks inside the oven, and then the oven may be used without covering the racks. This *kashering* may be done even if the oven was not left unused for 24 hours. If the racks are not inside the oven while the self-clean cycle is run, the racks should be *kashered* separately.

Note: Low-temperature self-clean cycles (e.g., **AquaLift, Steam Clean**) do not qualify as *kashering*.

Warming drawer

Light one can of chafing-dish fuel (e.g., Sterno can) in the warming drawer, being sure to use a can fueled with ethanol or methanol. [Wicked cans that use diethylene glycol as a fuel should not be used for *kashering*.] Make sure to leave the door of the warming drawer slightly ajar, so that there will be enough air to allow for combustion and allow the can to burn for two hours. As with all *kashering*, before you begin, the warming drawer must be thoroughly cleaned and not used for 24 hours.

Microwave oven

The microwave's **glass plate cannot be *kashered* (or used)** and should be removed before *kashering* begins. Some microwaves have a porcelain enamel interior; these **cannot** be *kashered*.

To *kasher* the appliance itself, the microwave must be thoroughly cleaned and not used for 24 hours. Then, a cup of water should be boiled in the chamber for an extended amount of time, until the chamber fills with steam and the water overflows from the cup. If a microwave has a metal grate, it should be *kashered* in a pot of hot water as described in the Flatware section above.

For **convection microwave ovens**, the same *kashering* process as a conventional oven should be followed, paying particular attention to cleaning out the chamber and fan assembly.

Barbecue Grill

See <http://kshr.us/BBQGrill> for a video on *kashering* a barbecue grill.

Refrigerators and Freezers

All parts of refrigerators and freezers must be thoroughly cleaned and washed, including storage bins.

Countertops

In any situation where the countertop cannot or will not be *kashered*, it may only be used after being covered with a non-porous material which will not easily rip or tear.

The procedure for *kashering* a countertop is to clean it thoroughly, not use it for 24 hours, and then carefully pour boiling water on all surfaces. Once the countertop is *kashered*, it may be used without being covered. As noted at the beginning of this article, one cannot *kasher* utensils made of certain materials (ceramic, cement, glass), materials which are not robust enough to withstand *kashering*, and any utensil that has cracks, nicks or scratches where pieces of food might get stuck. These same restrictions apply to countertops.

Practical examples of counters which can and cannot be *kashered* are detailed below.

Plastic laminate (Formica) is manufactured by laminating a plastic material onto a thin piece of wood. In some cases, there are seams where two pieces of laminate meet, creating the potential for *chametz* collecting in that area during the year, and special attention should be paid to cleaning those seams.

Many kitchens use natural stone such as **granite, marble, limestone, quartzite, soapstone, slate, and onyx** for countertops. These can be *kashered* regardless of which sealant is used.

Another material used for countertops is **quartz resin**, a man-made material made to look like granite or marble. Some common brands are **Cambria, Caesar Stone, Silestone, QStone, and Zodiaq**. These may be *kashered*. Similarly, countertops made of **acrylic** or **polyester** look like stone. Some popular brands are **Avonite, Corian, Gibraltar, Hi-Macs, Meganite, Staron, Surrell, and Swanstone**. These materials can be *kashered* if they do not contain any scratches or stains; otherwise, they must be covered.

Others create counters from **butcher block** or **wood**. In general, wood may be *kashered* only if it contains no cracks where food might become trapped. If there are cracks and the countertop can be sanded, or if the countertop contains no cracks, the countertop can be *kashered*; otherwise, the wooden countertop should be covered.

There are also **glass, ceramic, cement, and porcelain** countertops available. These countertops cannot be *kashered* and must be covered.

Stainless steel, copper, and zinc countertops are also available, and they **can** be *kashered*.

There can always be unique situations that might arise in one's own home. When in doubt, contact your local Orthodox Rabbi. Special thanks to Rick Glickman of "Dream Kitchens" for his assistance with our countertop research.

A summary of the information about countertops is included in the chart on the following page.

Countertops

The following is a summary of the countertop information presented in the preceding article.

Brand Name or Material	Can it be <i>kashered</i> ?	Comment
Acrylic	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Avonite	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Blue Louise	Yes	
Buddy Rhodes	No	
Butcher Block	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Caesar Stone	Yes	
Cambria	Yes	
Cement	No	
Ceramic tile	No	
Cheng Design	No	
Concrete	No	
Copper	Yes	
Corian	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Cosmos	Yes	
Craftart	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Curava	No	
Dekton	No	
Fireclay Tiles	No	
Formica	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Gibraltar	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Glass tile	No	
Granite	Yes	
HanStone	Yes	
Hi-Macs	Yes	
John Boos	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Laminam	No	
Laminate (plastic)	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Limestone	Yes	
Marble	Yes	
Marmoglass	No	
Meganite	Yes	
Monestone	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Nanoglass	No	
Neolith	No	
Nevamar	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Pionite	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Plastic Laminate	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Porcelain	No	
Pyrolave	No	
QStone	Yes	
Quartz Resin	Yes	
Quartzite	Yes	
Silestone	Yes	
Silgranit	Yes	
Slate	Yes	
Soapstone	Yes	

Brand Name or Material	Can it be <i>kashered</i> ?	Comment
Spekva	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Stainless Steel	Yes	
Staron	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Surrell	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Swanstone	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Wood	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Zinc	Yes	
Zodiaq	Yes	