

# First Time Making Pesach

## A Cheat Sheet for the Rest of Us

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Preparing for Pesach takes effort, but with a bit of planning and focus it is possible to succeed and welcome Yom Tov positively. This article's goal is not to provide details and instructions, but rather to provide a framework of what must be done and issues to consider, and guidance on how to learn more about those topics. This article is written specifically for those who have never made Pesach at home or have not done so for many years, but also may be a good overview for those who have more experience.

### A) SCHEDULE

Finding ways to be organized and scheduled goes a long way towards having a successful preparatory Pesach season. Many find it helpful to work backwards, thinking which jobs should or must happen on Erev Pesach, which in the days before that, etc. so that they roughly plan when each item will get taken care of.

In this context it is worth noting that many Pesach tasks can be performed well in advance of Yom Tov. For example, one can buy clothes and have them tailored and checked for *shatnez*, and paper goods can be purchased and put away. Any job that can be taken care of early is one less thing to do in the hectic days just before Pesach.

It may be difficult for one person to perform all the steps needed to prepare for Pesach. Of course, there are tasks that family members, even small children, can help to accomplish, but those who can afford extra help in the house should take advantage of that opportunity.

### B) CLEAN THE HOUSE

We can avoid owning *chametz* on Pesach by selling our *chametz* to someone who is not Jewish; this is known as *mechiras chametz* and can be arranged with your local Rabbi. But

if we will be home on Pesach, then we must also clean our houses to ensure we do not accidentally eat any *chametz* on Pesach. We identify all *chametz*, and either destroy it or put it into a closet, cabinet, or room that will be closed for Yom Tov and sold to a non-Jew.<sup>1</sup>

Which foods are *chametz* and must be removed? The letter of the law is that only items which meet these three requirements must be removed:

#### 1. It is *chametz*

*Chametz* includes just about everything made with wheat, barley, rye, oats, or spelt.

Ashkenazim do not eat *kitnios* (corn, rice, soy, beans, et al) on Pesach, but do **not** have to remove them from their homes.

Many medicines, cosmetics and toiletries are free of *chametz* or deemed inedible and therefore “not *chametz*”. Others should only be kept if they are known to be *chametz*-free. Similar rules apply to cleaning products and certain other non-foods.

### All Are Acceptable

All varieties of these items are acceptable for Pesach:

Ammonia, baby oil, bleach, blush, body wash, candles, contact lens solution, detergent, dishwashing soap, eye drops, eye liner, eye shadow, furniture polish, hair gel, hairspray, isopropyl alcohol, liquid dish soap, lotions, mascara, mineral oil, nail polish, nail polish remover, ointments, oven cleaner, petroleum jelly, sanitizers (e.g. Purell), shampoo, shaving lotion, silver polish, soaps, sponges

Further listings are available at [www.ASKcRc.org](http://www.ASKcRc.org)

Pet foods are considered edible, and if they contain *chametz* they (a) cannot be served to pets on Pesach, and (b) must be put aside with the “sold” *chametz*.

### 2. It is either larger than an olive (*kezayis*) or in a form that someone might eat it

For example, there is no need to get rid of one solitary Cheerio or *chametz* crumbs (because they are smaller than an olive), or a dirty pretzel underneath a bed (since no one would eat that, even if it is technically edible).<sup>2</sup>

### 3. It is reasonably accessible

For example, you must remove *chametz* which is in the folds of a couch, under a bed or dresser, or in one’s office, but not if it is behind a refrigerator or underneath the washing machine.

**The above reflects the letter of the law and is appropriate for situations when one has no other choice. But the longstanding *minhag* is to thoroughly clean one’s home and remove even the smallest bits of *chametz*.** Those who have questions as to how this applies to their situation should discuss their family dynamics with their local Rabbi.

### Basic Cleaning Guide

- Sweep, vacuum, or mop the entire house, and empty vacuum cleaner bags
- Collect all *chametz* into 1 or 2 places
- Empty and wipe all areas that hold food, such as pantries, shelves, refrigerators, freezers
- Thoroughly clean all parts of the kitchen, dining room, family room, and other rooms where food is eaten
- Vacuum all parts of the car and couches, including in “folds” of the seats, and check the trunk and glove compartment

- Empty and wipe all purses, briefcases, knapsacks, and school bags, and check pockets
- Check/clean drawers (especially in children’s rooms) at home and in the office
- Check medicine cabinet for sprays, toiletries, and cosmetics that are not recommended for Pesach
- Thoroughly clean and wash Pack ‘N Play, including padding, and highchair, crib, stroller, and toy boxes

## C) SHOPPING

A second part of preparing for Pesach is shopping for an entire pantry worth of food. The simplest reason for that is that many foods require special *hashgachah* for Pesach. But the truth is that even if a particular product does not need special *hashgachah*, it is prudent to purchase a new package or container to ensure that there are no crumbs or other residue of *chametz* in the package which was used before Pesach.

Meat, poultry, fish, wine, and grape juice are typically available as kosher for Pesach well before Yom Tov. After Purim, one can also purchase most dry goods, spices, frozen foods beverages, Pesach *matzah*, and many other staples. If those are bought in advance, the only shopping needed just before Pesach will be fresh fruits and vegetables, and (fresh) prepared foods.

While shopping for food, keep in mind the needs of infants, children, pets, and those who are ill. Which type of formula, pet food, nutritional supplement, and medicinal items might be needed? What about toothpaste, mouthwash, and other toiletries for the rest of the family? Which ones are suitable for Pesach, and if the regular choice is not acceptable, which substitute is available? Getting answers to these questions early will avoid a last-minute emergency.

A related issue is to consider other Yom Tov shopping needs such as clothing, shoes, *shaitels* (and haircuts), paper goods, presents, and *hagaddos*, and plan for them accordingly.



## D) KASHERING

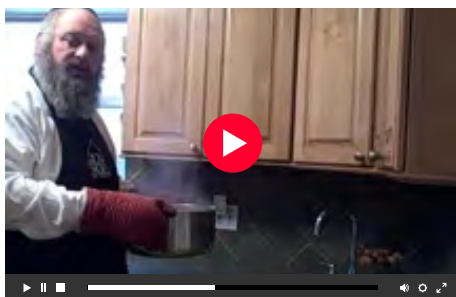
Whenever hot food comes into contact with a pot, dish, counter, sink, oven, dishwasher, piece of silverware, or anything else, some of the food’s taste/flavor is absorbed into it.

Accordingly, if these items were used with *chametz* during the year, we cannot use them for Pesach unless they undergo a process known as *hechsher keilim* or “*kashering*”.

Items made of ceramic or glass cannot be *kashered*, and for this reason China, Corelle, mugs, and drinking glasses must be replaced for Pesach. In addition, dishwashers, colanders, and other items with small crevices or holes where food might be trapped, also cannot be *kashered*. One other basic rule of *kashering* is that nothing can be *kashered* unless it first is left unused for 24 consecutive hours. Lastly, as a rule, *kashering* cannot be performed on Pesach. Based on these considerations, most people will:

- *Kasher* their oven, stovetop, and kitchen sink a few days before Pesach. [See below in Section E.] Countertops are either *kashered* and/or covered depending on whether they are made of a material which is suitable for *kashering*.
- Purchase pots, pans, oven mitts and sponges for Pesach, and never use them during the year.
- *Kasher* tablecloths and dishtowels.
- In general, flatware generally can be *kashered*, but dishes cannot be. Accordingly, many have silverware and dishes which are used only on Pesach, and others use disposables.

Details of how to *kasher* the kitchen can be found in the cRc Pesach Guide and are demonstrated in a video available at <https://kshr.us/KasherKitchen>.



Those who will be purchasing new pots, dishes, flatware, peelers, and other kitchen utensils for Pesach should remember that generally, they must undergo *tevillah* before they are used.

## E) SWITCHING OVER

In the final days leading up to Pesach, the house must be converted from one where people are eating and using *chametz*, to one which is going to be used for Pesach. Most people want to be able to eat *chametz* till the “last minute”, but at the same time the house must be cleaned, the kitchen *kashered*, and cooking must begin so there will be something to eat once *Yom Tov* starts.

There are different ways to deal with this logistical issue. Some pointers include:

## KITNIOS

One may own *kitnios* on Pesach, such that even after a room has been cleaned for Pesach it is perfectly fine to eat rice, corn, beans or other *kitnios* foods there. The same applies to “egg *matzah*”; *Ashkenazim* do not eat egg *matzah* on Pesach, but it is permitted to own it. Therefore, it may be eaten in a room after it has been cleaned for Pesach.

## TIMING THE KASHERING

The choice of when to *kasher* the kitchen is a balance between people wanting to continue eating *chametz* as long as possible, the need to cook food for Pesach in advance, and technical issues such as that one can only *kasher* if the item has not been used for the previous 24 hours. One way to resolve this issue is to *kasher* one part of the kitchen (e.g. the meat side) a few days before the rest.

*Erev* Pesach can occur on four days of the week – Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and *Shabbos* – and the day to *kasher* depends somewhat on that.

When *Erev* Pesach is on Monday, most families will *kasher* their kitchen some time before *Shabbos Hagadol* (e.g., Wednesday night), and basically eat Pesach food for that *Shabbos*. Any *chametz* food, such as *challah*, will be carefully controlled and kept away from Pesach pots, dishes, etc.

In contrast, when *Erev* Pesach is on Friday or *Shabbos*, most families will eat *chametz* food for the *Shabbos* before Pesach, and then *kasher* after *Shabbos*. An advantage to *kashering* just after *Shabbos* is that no one cooks etc. on *Shabbos* such that (just about) everything has not been used for 24 hours and is ready for *kashering*.



When *Erev* Pesach is on Wednesday, some will *kasher* before *Shabbos* and others will wait until afterwards.

## F) EREV PESACH

On the night before Pesach, or this year, the Thursday before, we must search for *chametz* in all parts of the house where food is ever brought. The *mitzvah*, called *bedikas chametz*, is to use a candle or flashlight to look for the types of *chametz* which one cannot own on Pesach, as defined above in Section B. The *halacha* states that this must be (a) performed in homes, offices, dormitory rooms, summer homes, and all areas where *chametz* might have been eaten, and (b) a thorough check of all “cracks and crevices”, which would include under beds, the folds of a couch, clothing pockets, pantry shelves,



etc. There is a difference of opinion as to whether this type of “full” *bedikas chametz* is required if the house has already been thoroughly cleaned, and one should consult with a Rabbi on this issue.

Bear in mind that when *Erev Pesach* is on Wednesday, one must create an *Eruv Tavshilin* on *Erev Pesach*. When *Erev Pesach* is on Friday, an *Eruv Tavshilin* is needed on Thursday of *Chol HaMoed* (the day before the second days of *Yom Tov*).

On the morning of *Erev Pesach*, one may only eat *chametz* (and *kitnios* and egg *matzos*) until a given time called *sof zman achilas chametz*, and all *chametz* must be destroyed/burned or sold by a somewhat later time. These times vary based on the date and location.

## G) SEDER PREPARATIONS

There are many items to purchase and prepare for the *Seder*. Some of these tasks can be taken care of a few days before *Pesach*, and others will have to happen on *Erev Pesach*, as follows:

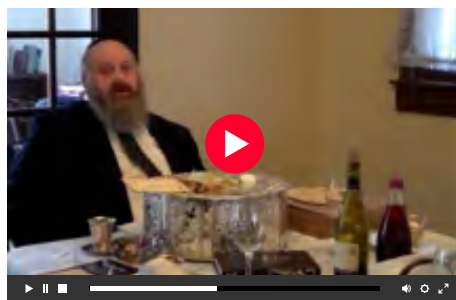
### HAVE AVAILABLE

- Wine, grape juice, *shemurah matzah*, *marror*, and *karpas* vegetable for each participant.
- *Haggadah*, *kos* (cup), and pillow for each participant.
- *Kittel* and *k'arah* (*Seder* plate) for leader of the *Seder*.

### PREPARE

- If using romaine lettuce for *marror*, check it for infestation (or buy pre-checked lettuce). If using horseradish, grate before *Yom Tov*.
- Saltwater for *karpas* (and for beginning of festive meal)
- *Zeroah* (meat on bone), *beitzah* (egg), and *charoses* for *Seder* plate.

Details of how to prepare the *Seder* plate can be found in the cRc *Pesach* Guide and are demonstrated in a video available at <https://kshr.us/SederPlate>.



In addition to the physical items needed for the *Seder*, it is important that everyone be well-rested and that the participants give thought to the ideas and ideals they will share at this important time.

## H) CHAMETZ AFTER PESACH

*Chametz* which was owned by a Jewish person over *Pesach*, may not be eaten or used by anyone even after *Pesach* ends. Towards this end one must ascertain that any Jewish-owned grocers have sold their *chametz*.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 There are two reasons one must clean their home for *Pesach*: Firstly, the Torah forbids us from owning *chametz* on *Pesach*. Secondly, we are accustomed to eating *chametz* all year round and getting rid of it ensures no one will mistakenly eat it on *Pesach*. We can satisfy the first reason by selling our *chametz*, but that will not help for the second one.
- 2 It is forbidden to eat even the tiniest bit of *chametz*, but assuming one performs *bitul chametz* (recited after “*bedikas chametz*”), they may keep it in their possession as long as it is very small or so undesirable that no one would want to eat it.

To learn more about any topic covered in this article, check out this year's cRc *Pesach* Guide, search by keyword at [www.ASKcRc.org](http://www.ASKcRc.org), or visit our website!

