

# Use of the Etz Hayim Kitchen – Kashrut Rules

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Kashrut Supervision at Congregation Etz Hayim
  - a. Mashgichim and Authorized Users
3. Kosher Foods and Bringing Them into Congregation Etz Hayim
  - a. Potluck
  - b. Foods allowed without a heksher
4. Kitchen Use and Food Preparation
  - a. Common hazards
  - b. Equipment and storage
  - c. Eggs and vegetables
  - d. Dishwashing
5. Using the Kitchen During Shabbat
  - a. Carrying
  - b. Extinguishing and lighting a flame
  - c. Sorting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking
  - d. Other considerations regarding the use of the kitchen on Shabbat
6. Personal Food and Other Topics
  - a. Food brought in for personal use
  - b. Other Kosher activities in the synagogue family (off-site events, etc)
7. Appendix: Allowable Heksher Marks

## Welcome

This Guide is addressed to all people who work or volunteer in the food services at Congregation Etz Hayim. Its purpose is to acquaint everyone with how the laws of kashrut are interpreted at Congregation Etz Hayim to provide our congregation with a kosher food service that the entire Jewish community will feel comfortable using. Only persons who are appointed by the Rabbi are approved to supervise Kashrut at Congregation Etz Hayim. Therefore this Guide is not intended to be a comprehensive or exhaustive study of kashrut, but a reference manual for maintaining a high standard of kashrut in our synagogue. As with every matter of Jewish law in the synagogue, the rabbi is our *Marei d'Atra* (halakhic authority) for all questions involving kashrut.

The Rabbi shall have sole authority for appointing *mashgichim*, other authorized supervisors or those allowed to work in the kitchen independently.

## KASHRUT SUPERVISION AT CONGREGATION ETZ HAYIM

The rabbi is the ultimate halachic authority to rule on any issue that arises in kashrut supervision. In general, Congregation Etz Hayim follows the kashrut guidelines of the Conservative Movement. However, not all of the leniencies of the Movement are permitted in the synagogue kitchen, in order to ensure that more traditional members of the community will feel comfortable attending functions held at Congregation Etz Hayim.

### *Mashgichim* and Authorized Users

Kashrut for the synagogue is supervised by *mashgichim*, or authorized supervisors, appointed by and under the authority of the rabbi. **These supervisors are the only persons authorized to work without direct supervision in the kitchens.** However, if an authorized supervisor is engaged in food preparation, it is desirable to have another *mashgiach* functioning as supervisor. Whenever possible the *mashgiach* should not supervise her/himself. **A *mashgiach* must be present for all phases of food preparation in the synagogue**, including (1) bringing food into the synagogue, (2) all food preparation and cleanup in the synagogue, and (3) all cleaning activities that occur for the purpose of kashering kitchen equipment.

## KOSHER FOODS AND BRINGING THEM INTO CONGREGATION ETZ HAYIM

Congregation Etz Hayim allows only kosher food to be brought into the synagogue (with the exception of foods brought in for personal use by the non-Jewish synagogue staff, and which may only be eaten in designated areas of the office). All packaged food must bear a *heksher*. All food and kitchen equipment that enters the synagogue must be inspected by an authorized *mashgiach*. Call the synagogue office at (703) 979-4466 to arrange for a *mashgiach* to be present when bringing food into the synagogue. Hekshered foods must be sealed when brought to Congregation Etz Hayim. Kosher packaging may not be opened before inspection by the *mashgiach* in the synagogue. All food served at Congregation Etz Hayim must be prepared at Congregation Etz Hayim or at another kosher facility. Food

cooked at other kosher sites should be sealed under the supervision of a recognized *mashgiach*, marked, and then inspected by our *mashgiach* when brought into Congregation Etz Hayim.

**Because we cannot be certain of the level of kashrut at an individual's house, no food cooked in a private home may be brought into the Congregation Etz Hayim kitchen or used at any Congregation Etz Hayim function. Only foods made in the kitchen may be stored in the kitchen, refrigerator, freezer or stove.**

### Potluck

The sole exception is for Potluck night, the first Friday of every month. At this event, food may be brought from individuals' homes but may not be brought into the kitchen. This food must be dairy or vegetarian and come in a disposable container. Specifically designated serving utensils will be used and will be taken home by a designee to be washed after the event. These utensils are then returned to the custodian for storage.

### Foods Allowed without *Heksher*

Fresh foods that have not been processed in any way may be brought in without a *heksher*. Fruits and vegetables brought into the kitchen must be whole and not pre-cut; only whole fruits and vegetables are allowed into the kitchen. This rule includes packages of frozen vegetables and fruit with no added ingredients: frozen fruits and veggies must be whole, or have a *heksher* mark on the packaging if they are cut or pre-prepared. Check with the *mashgiach* if there is any doubt.

Most soft drinks are kosher. All Coca-Cola products, all Pepsi products, Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Dr. Pepper, and all 7-Up products other than Cherry 7-Up are certified kosher. Any flavored waters or iced teas need to have a visible *heksher*.

Prepackaged cheeses which do not contain meat, which are made in the United States and served cold do not need to be *hekshered*.

## KITCHEN USE AND FOOD PREPARATION

**In order to ensure strict adherence to our standards of kashrut, the Congregation Etz Hayim kitchen cannot be used without prior permission from the synagogue office or rabbi under any circumstances.** All food preparation in the Congregation Etz Hayim kitchen must conform to the practices outlined in this manual. The *mashgiach* may stop any or all kitchen operations to prevent a violation. A big part of keeping our synagogue food services kosher is the proper use of the kitchen and careful food preparation.

**A *mashgiach* must be present for all food preparation in the kitchen.** If necessary, the synagogue office can assist in providing for the presence of a *mashgiach*. Congregation Etz Hayim's kitchen is provided with separate dishes, pots, pans, utensils, serving trays, preparation areas, and sinks for meat and dairy. Mixing of meat and dairy kitchen equipment is absolutely forbidden. Meat and dairy foods are not to be prepared at the same time in the kitchen facilities. **To avoid setting off the sprinkler system, fans in the hoods over the stoves must be turned on before using the stoves. Nothing can be reheated**

**in the microwave, stove or oven unless it complies with the above rules.**

The only parve materials are the challah board, knife, Kiddush cups, and handwashing cups/bowls. They may not be washed with, or stored with any other items.

Congregation Etz Hayim does not have any parve cooking utensils or cookware. Everything prepared in the kitchen becomes meat or dairy.

### **Common Hazards**

**There are several common hazards that should be avoided to maintain the integrity of the Congregation Etz Hayim kitchen.**

- **Make sure non-dairy creamers are served for coffee with a meat meal. Check the *heksher* carefully; not all “non-dairy” creamers are truly *hekshered* as parve. When storing such creamers in the kitchen, make sure they are separate from the dairy creamers and clearly marked.**
- **Butter is always dairy. Parve margarine may be used with any meat meal.**
- **Pay attention to the dessert planned for a meat meal; many desserts and candy are dairy by nature.**
- **Meat and Dairy cannot be cooked in the same oven at the same time. Drippings must be wiped up immediately to ensure that other materials don’t contaminate the cooking process.**
- **Meat and Dairy cooking pots may not be on the stove top at the same time. Pots may not rest on the stove top or in the oven while something else is cooking.**

### **Equipment and Storage**

Kitchen equipment is color coded. Red and Black items are meat. Blue and White items are dairy. The Kiddush cups, challah bread board and knife, handwashing cups, and wine glasses are parve. Each category has corresponding shelves. Dairy shelves are denoted by blue painter’s tape on the shelf supports. Meat shelves are designated by red painters tape and parve shelves are designated by green painter’s tape.

Non-colored items, such as pots and pans, shall be clearly marked by paint, marker, tape or other indelible method. Look for these markings on the bottom, sides and/or handles.

Any new equipment brought into the kitchen must be inspected by the *mashgiach*, determined if it will be used for meat, or dairy, and marked appropriately.

Minimal food storage is available and is color coded. Food must be stored in containers corresponding to the meal for which it was prepared and may only be used for the same type of meal. For instance, food left over from a dairy meal must be stored in dairy (blue or white) storage containers and may be used with dairy meals only. Food stored in meat containers is to be used with meat only.

### **Eggs and Vegetables**

Eggs that contain a drop of blood are considered *treife* (non-kosher). To keep a single egg

from ruining an entire dish, each raw egg should be broken separately in a small cup or bowl, inspected for blood, and then added to the main dish. Eggs boiled in the shell are allowed without individual inspection.

Many leafy vegetables may contain insects, and insects are not kosher. To prepare these vegetables, they must be soaked in a vinegar/water solution and then rinsed with clear cold water. "Leafy vegetables" include (but are not limited to) asparagus, cauliflower, broccoli, parsley, lettuce, kale, scallions, and any other densely packed leafy vegetable. If you have any questions on a particular vegetable you are using, contact the *mashgiach* or rabbi.

When storing leftovers, clearly mark the container with any restrictions (e.g. meat, dairy, parve) and store the container in the appropriate kitchen area. Disposable gloves are provided in the kitchen and should be used during food preparation.

### **Dishwashing**

Each side of the kitchen also contains its own dishwasher. However, care must be taken not to mix or confuse the racks. Blue racks belong to the dairy dishwasher and green racks belong to the meat dishwasher. The soap and rinse products used for dishwashing must bear a heksher.

## **REGARDING USE OF THE KITCHEN DURING SHABBAT**

On Shabbat, we are not allowed to do any *melachah*. I purposely use the word *melachah* because not every kind of work is forbidden on Shabbat. *Melachah* is a very specific kind of work. The Rabbis in the Mishnah (Shabbat 7:2) enumerated 39 kinds of work, called *Avot Melachah*, which are not to be performed on Shabbat. These *melachot* (plural of *melachah*) are understood as the kinds of work needed to create the Tabernacle, the moving structure that was built by and accompanied the Israelites while they were in the desert for 40 years. From these categories the rabbis derived other kinds of work that are not to be performed on Shabbat. To this day, we continue to shape our modern lives by reinterpreting these *melachot*.

Part of the 39 *melachot* relate specifically to cooking. For example, sorting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, extinguishing a flame, lighting a flame, and carrying from one domain to the other are forbidden. From these *melachot* we derive the rules for our kitchen during Shabbat.

These rules are not exhaustive, and questions may arise about the use of our kitchen. Please do not hesitate to ask the Rabbi about any clarification you might need to be able to use our kitchen.

### **Carrying**

We are not allowed to bring in or take away anything from our Synagogue on Shabbat. That means that during Shabbat, no one is to bring in something they forgot to bring in before Shabbat for Kiddush, or alternatively, take home (or anywhere else) leftovers from Kiddush. Even if you plan to bring Kiddush leftovers to a shelter, that must be done after Shabbat is over.

### **Extinguishing and lighting a flame**

For the purposes of our kitchen, no one should be lighting or turning off the ovens. Foods may be warmed in our kitchen for Shabbat, in an oven that has been kept at a low temperature, lit before Shabbat started. The temperature of the oven should not exceed 200 degrees Fahrenheit during Shabbat. There is a Jewish legal fiction that allows a person of another faith to turn on and off an oven, if it is for their own benefit. In our Congregation, only our custodian is allowed to light or extinguish a fire, since we believe that this action will be done solely for their benefit and enjoyment. **To be clear, no person other than our custodian may turn on or off the ovens during Shabbat.**

### **Sorting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking**

All of these activities transform grain into baked goods and are forbidden on Shabbat. For this reason, any activity in the kitchen that changes a food from inedible to edible through the use of heat is not acceptable on Shabbat. In other words, we cannot cook pasta, or bake, or even finish off a dish that is not at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  ready on Shabbat. We can, however, cut vegetables, plate food that was previously prepared, and open packages and cans on Shabbat. Those activities are not considered *melachot*, and they can be performed on Shabbat without a question.

### **Other considerations regarding the use of the kitchen on Shabbat**

We are not allowed to write or erase on Shabbat, or to permanently glue things on Shabbat. For this reason, we cannot write labels to be put on leftovers during Shabbat, or write an explanation of the food to be served. Pre-written sticky labels may be used, as long as they do not permanently seal any package.

## **PERSONAL FOOD AND OTHER TOPICS**

### **Food Brought In for Personal Use**

**The only non-kosher food that may be brought into the synagogue is the food intended for the personal use of non-Jewish synagogue personnel. Such food may only be eaten in the designated area of the office. Any food brought into the synagogue for personal use of Jewish staff or congregants must be dairy or parve, in new unopened packages with acceptable kosher certification or directly from approved vendors. No meat prepared in one's home or any non-kosher facility may be brought to the synagogue. No food brought into the synagogue for personal use may be carried into the kitchen of the synagogue. Utensils from the kitchen are not to be used with such food.**

**Nothing can be reheated in the microwave, stove or oven unless it complies with the above rules.**

### **Other Kosher activities in the Synagogue Family**

The laws of Kashrut are observed in all activities of the congregation that are held outside the building. So, for example, if Congregation Etz Hayim holds a picnic, or a Shabbat service at a congregant's home, the food provided would follow the rules outlined in this manual. See the *mashgiach* or rabbi for exact details on any situation that you may encounter.

## Appendix: Table of Allowable Hekshers

There are well over 800 different heksher marks used worldwide, and it is impossible to list them all here. There are also changes going on at any given time; not all hekshers are trusted at all times. If you are in any doubt, contact Rabbi Bass. A list of acceptable hekshers is attached to this Guide. Some of the more common hekshers used at Congregation Etz Hayim include:

The Union of Orthodox Rabbi		United Mehadrin Kosher, U.S.A.	
Kof-K from the Kof-K organization		Chicago Rabbinical Council, U.S.A.	
"Tablet K" from Rabbi Saffra of New York		Kashrut Council of Canada - COR	
Circle K from OK Kosher, USA		Kosher Supervision of America	
KAJ - Kehilla Adat Yeshurun			

The mark of a simple "K" is not considered a trustworthy heksher. Because there is no trademark on a "K" (a single letter cannot be trademarked) there is no way of knowing what authority stands behind this mark. Products marked only with a K cannot be brought into Congregation Etz Hayim unless the specific product has been verified by the rabbi as kosher. (Such verification cannot be done at the last minute, so in general the use of such products should be discouraged.)