

Basics of Keeping Kosher



Kosher foods conform to the regulations of *kashrut* (Jewish dietary law). Food consumed according to *halakha* (Jewish law) is considered kosher, meaning “fit.”

Rabbis or other religious officials do not “bless” food to make it kosher. Jews recite blessings over food before eating, but the blessings do not make the food kosher.

There is no such thing as “kosher-style” food. Kosher is not a style of cooking. Most food can be kosher if it is prepared in accordance with Jewish law. When a restaurant calls itself “kosher-style,” it usually means the restaurant serves traditional Jewish foods, but that does not mean the food is kosher.

Kosher Food

Kosher food is marked by a *kosher hechsher* (symbol). The small symbol is on the label of most kosher food. Here are some common kosher symbols:



There Are Three Categories of Kosher Food:

Meat:

- Can't be eaten with dairy.
- Animals must have cloven hooves and chew its cud.
 - Kosher animals: cattle, sheep, goats, deer and bison.
 - Non-kosher animals: pig.
- Fish must have fins and scales.
 - Kosher fish: tuna, salmon and herring.
 - Non-kosher fish: lobsters, oysters, shrimp, clams and crabs.

- Most birds and mammals can be eaten, but must be killed in accordance with Jewish law.
 - Kosher requires waiting a specified period of time between eating meat and dairy.
 - Standard wait time is three to six hours.

Dairy:

- Must come from a kosher animal.
- Ingredients must be kosher and free of meat products.
- Dairy must be processed by kosher equipment.
- After eating dairy and before eating meat, kosher requires eating something *parve*, meaning “does not stick to the palate.” Then you must rinse your mouth or take a drink, followed by washing your hands.

Parve or Pareve:

- Foods that aren't meat or dairy.
- Can be cooked and eaten with meat or dairy:
 - Eggs
 - Rice
 - Breads
 - Olive oil
 - Vegetables
 - Fruits: must be inspected for bugs which can't be eaten.
 - Fish: for many cultures except Orthodox Jews.
- If parve food is cooked or mixed together with meat or dairy products, it is considered meat or dairy. All laws pertaining to meat and dairy now apply, including the required waiting times.
- If parve food touches meat or dairy, wash the food to keep it parve. If washing is not an option, cut off the affected area.

Basics of Keeping Kosher (Part 2)

Kosher Kitchen

Dishes and silverware are stored separately in the kitchen, and are designated for meat and dairy use. They should NEVER be mixed. Most kitchens are marked and/or color coded to make it easier:

- **Red** is typically used for meat.
- **Blue** is often used for dairy.
- **Green** is generally used for parve.

Cookware is also stored separately. If space allows people often have separate dishwashers, sinks, refrigerators, etc. Utensils are also stored separately. If a knife is used to cut a non-kosher food, and then used to cut a kosher food, the kosher food will become non-kosher. This applies to all utensils.

Glassware is parve, it must be cleaned at a high temperature in the dishwasher before using.

Your Role as a Care Pro:

- Always ask the client or client's family about your role when caring for a client following kosher laws.
- If you are unsure about something, ask the client or a family member.
- Ask the client before you bring food into the home.
- Read the labels of all foods in the house, the ingredients in some processed food might surprise you.
 - For example, some popsicles are made with gelatin. Gelatin is made with rendered pig which is not kosher.
- Being kosher is a lifestyle for many people. When caring for those who are kosher, it is important to always help them follow the kosher laws.