

Pesach Preparations: Guidelines for Kitchen (and Home)

Prepared by Rabbi Rashi Simon based on material compiled by Rabbi Raphael Goldblatt. Adapted and circulated with permission. Updated Pesach 5782.

The Kitchen

1. Preparing the kitchen is more vital than other parts of the house. We endeavour to be as certain as reasonably possible that no chametz will find its way into our food. Therefore, the food preparation areas are the main focus of Pesach cleaning.

2. The essential requirement is that even in the kitchen one only needs to expunge any chametz that could genuinely get into the food chain. Crumbs of chametz that are in crevices in the cupboards, which will not enter circulation and come into contact with any Pesach food, do not need cleaning. Even if something is accessible, it is sufficient to just spray it with any normal inedible cleaning product. This renders it אינו ראוי ללב, not fit for the consumption of a dog, which is not defined as chametz anymore.

3. Even in the kitchen, one only needs to expunge the same types of chametz that have to be removed wherever they are in the house, ie loose pieces, pieces larger than a *kezayis* (ie, the size of an olive, or about 30cc), or pieces that are fit for normal human consumption, such that someone who finds them could conceivably eat them.

4. The widespread *minhag* is to be rather more scrupulous (*machmir*) than this, particularly in the kitchen and eating areas. IMO, although it may be meritorious to follow these praiseworthy *minhagim*, in a case of difficulty all such additional stringencies **may be relinquished**.

5. Cupboards, shelves, fridge and freezer, and other areas which are only ever exposed to cold food only need cleaning. Nevertheless, many are accustomed to covering such areas as well. This is a *chumrah* (stringency). Some cover any surface on which food is ever put during the year, even if it will hardly be used over Pesach.

6. The basis of the above: This *minhag* is based on the Maharil (14th c. Germany) who writes that it is not sufficient to kasher the table, as it will often have cracks which will contain food and cannot be cleaned. However, he was writing about a scenario in which hot Pesach food will be placed directly on the cracks, and therefore there was a realistic concern of chametz-contamination of one's Pesach food. Our situation is not like this, and covering these areas is only a *chumrah*.

7. Kitchen counters are slightly different. They often are exposed to hot food, whether pots or dishes put directly onto them, as well as spillages (perish the thought). Although strictly speaking it is sufficient just to clean them well, and then be careful that no hot Pesach utensils or food comes into direct contact with them, this is very difficult to control. Therefore, it is recommended that counters should be covered, eg with a plastic tablecloth or thick foil, as long as it is secure and will not tear.

8. Many people "go the extra mile" and *kasher* the surfaces. You may choose to do this (in addition to or instead of covering them), if you like. (See #10 below.) Even surfaces made from plastic composites, eg Formica or any type of counter that is a substance held together with glue, which usually we are *machmir* not to *kasher*, in this circumstance is acceptable, since it is not clear that it is absolutely necessary to *kasher* it altogether. Note, however, that it is both easier and perhaps halakhically preferable to cover them rather than *kasher*. The choice is yours.

9. One who prefers to *kasher* the surfaces must clean them thoroughly, then pour hot water over them from an electric kettle with a rolling boil. It can be a Pesach kettle, or a chametz one that is completely clean and

has not been used for 24 hours. The flow must hit every area directly from the kettle. Depending on the extent of your counters, you will need to fill the kettle more than once. Keep towels at the ready to clean up the water.

10. If covering the counters, there is no evident halakhic reason also to kasher them. I know many people do this, but the explanation for it remains elusive. The only possibility that this could be even a worthwhile chumrah is in areas right next to the hob or the oven, where the counter itself could get quite hot.

11. The splashback, and underneath cupboards etc, should be covered in the cooking area, where steam could circulate and come into contact with the walls and the food. Ideally, this should include the extractor, which can be difficult to clean properly.

12. As per #6 above, tables do not need any cover other than the tablecloth. If cloth will be removed you may want to cover table first with a plastic covering. Tables and chairs should be cleaned well from any accessible, loose chametz, even crumbs, if it is possible that they will get onto people's hands during the meal.

Sinks

13. Sinks are exposed to hot chametz and should be kashered. First, they must be cleaned, and left unused for 24 hours. Bleach or other inedible cleansing agent should be poured down the drain, which will definitely have food in it. It can then be kashered.

14. It has been suggested that the best method of kashering a metal sink is to fill it with hot water, and then put a plug-in immersion heater until the water boils. The part above the overflow, and the spout, will still need kashering using the standard method (see below). (Note that I have never done this, but if it is practical for you, more power to you.)

15. The standard method: Use a Pesach kettle, or a chametz kettle that is clean and has not been used for 24 hours. Water at a rolling boil must be poured directly from the kettle onto every area of the sink. Care must be taken that the water is boiling as it is poured, and that it comes directly from the kettle rather than spreading over the sink as it is poured. It should also be poured onto a dry area, not one that is already quite wet, as this will cool the water as it hits.

16. As we have said, one must pour the water from the kettle while it is at a rolling boil. This does not last long (for reasons of physics and design safety). The easiest way to do this, which also makes the kashering more reliable, is to pour from the kettle while the button is held down, so the water continues to boil. This still allows only a number of seconds while the water continues to boil.

17. Metal sinks can be kashered using this method. Some nevertheless also use a washing up bowl or insert. Sinks made of other substances should not be used without a bowl or insert.

18. The spout, and any part of it which steam may hit if a pot is held under the tap, must be kashered as above. Since it is difficult to pour from the kettle onto the underside of the tap, some suggest that the water should be running hot while the spout itself is being kashered.

19. The same method can be used for Quooker or other high-end boiling water taps.

Ovens

20. In normal situations throughout the year we often *kasher* ovens just by cleaning them with a strong commercially available cleansing agent and turning them on to the highest setting for 30-40 minutes. We

consider this sufficient to guarantee that any possible absorption of *ta'am* (taste) in the walls has been burned away. This is subject to varying halakhic opinions, but is nevertheless widely accepted as a means of kashering an oven, in many situations throughout the year.

21. There are some authorities (such as the late Rav CP Sheinberg in his famous Pesach Notes which we have distributed in the past) who validate the above method for Pesach as well. Others, however, dispute the validity of this approach WRT Pesach altogether. With this in mind:

22. Ovens can be kashered for Pesach if they have a pyrolytic self-cleaning function. This is hot enough to fulfil the standard of *libun gamur* according to all opinions (and maybe even more than this). Even enamel and other non-kasherable substances can be kashered with very high heat. This is the "high road" and is recommended in the first instance *if you have a pyrolytic oven*. This tends to be a high-spec model. (If you don't have one, buy yourself as a year-round Pesach present for next year?)

23. Otherwise, there is the blowtorch option, *which I do not recommend for non-specialist use*.

24. The luxury option: A dedicated Pesach oven.

For the rest of us: If you are using your normal oven, it is acceptable to rely on the usual kashering method (as per #20-21 above) for cooking **before Pesach**. One must clean the oven well with a strong oven cleaner, then put on to the highest temperature setting for 30-40 minutes. After this it can be used for designated Pesach-only cooking *until Pesach begins*.

25. From the beginning of Pesach only double-covered food should be put in the oven described above (#24).

26. Oven trays and racks should be cleaned and also lined with foil. It is also recommended that they are first put in the oven while the oven is kashered, as above. (Note that although in principle they may also be left in an oven during the pyrolytic self-cleaning cycle, in which case they do not need covering, they may become discoloured and possibly warped as a result, so this is not necessarily recommended.) Dedicated Pesach-only racks, if you have them, are ideal.

27. If using only for covered food, as above #25, the racks do not need covering, but the Pesach dishes should not be put directly onto the rack, only with a sheet of foil or something between.

28. Microwaves: If you have the counter space during Pesach and the storage space the rest of the year, a Pesach-only microwave is recommended. (This is not a high-ticket item nowadays and is available for well under £100.) If not, IMO *one can kasher a **standard microwave oven*** as follows: Clean and leave unused for 24 hours. Replace (ideally) or cover the glass turntable (eg with double layer of cling film). Fill a Styrofoam cup with water and boil for 10 minutes. Cover the interior glass windowpane with contact paper (or similar) for the duration of Pesach.

Hobs

29. There are four common types of hobs, each of which has different rules regarding kashering. A normal gas hob can be kashered relatively easily. It must be cleaned thoroughly. Then a *blech* or other thin metal (thick foil is fine but make sure it doesn't catch fire), should be placed on top to spread the heat, and all the burners on their highest for 20 minutes. It is then fine to use on Pesach.

30. Some are meticulous not to put their Pesach pots directly in contact with the same pan rests as they use during the year. If you would like to maintain this practice and are unable to have separate pan rests for Pesach, you can just wrap the top part with foil, or use a piece of chicken wire to raise the pots so they are not touching the pan rest. This is only a stringency (*chumrah*) and is not required.

31. A normal old-style electric ring can just be cleaned and put on the highest heat setting for 20 minutes. It should then be covered with foil and can be used as normal.

32. This does not work for a ceramic hob, as glass cannot be kashered for Pesach (according to the Rema and *minhag* of Ashkenazim). (For Sephardim there may be grounds to be lenient.) Also, it cannot be covered with foil, which may cause it to crack. One should kasher it as above, taking particular care to clean where it joins onto the counter, and the buttons. However, the pots can be put directly onto the glass only if one can be certain that they will remain dry underneath and will not spill over.

33. The best solution for these is to use a Pesach-dedicated simmer ring or similar under every pot. Thereby the pot will not be in contact with the hob, and there cannot be any concern. One must be careful that the pot does not slip off onto the hob, and food that may fall onto the glass when it is hot should not be eaten.

34. *Induction hobs* are both more problematic and less so, as the halachic definitions are completely different from any other type of hob. They should be thoroughly cleaned, then can be used with an adaptor or silicon mat, dedicated for Pesach, which raises the pot off the glass. (Note that in any case one needs such an item for Shabbos and Yom Tov use, as just removing the pot from the hob breaks the circuit, unlike any other type of hob.)

Other items

35. **Hot plates** can be thoroughly cleaned and covered with heavy-duty aluminium foil. It is preferable to put them on (highest setting) for forty minutes beforehand.

36. Urns can be kashered if they are made of metal. They must be cleaned, left 24 hours unused, then filled to the maximum and brought to boil. When boiling, hot water should be poured from a kettle over the top and the outside, including the spout. See above #18.

37. *Plastic urns* cannot be kashered for Pesach if they are ever used in direct contact with chometz food, eg if one heats challah or other food on top. If one does not do this, they may be kashered as above.

38. Metal (also wood and stone) items that do not have any joins or small holes can be kashered. They must be cleaned, left 24 hours, then put into a pot (Pesach, or chometz unused 24 hours) or urn at a rolling boil. They should then be rinsed in cold water. It is easiest to remove them if they are held in something like a sieve with a handle, so they can be held in for a few seconds, then removed to rinse.

39. This does not work for frying pans, or dishes that are put into the oven, such as baking trays. These should be purchased for Pesach-only use.

40. Glass items generally should not be kashered for Pesach (as per #32 above). However, if only used for cold, ie never washed up together with chametz items or in a dishwasher, they can be kashered by leaving in a bowl of cold water for three days, changing the water every 24 hours. (Is this more trouble than it is worth? Probably. Drinking glasses are not expensive.)

41. A final observation: Many people prefer not to kasher kitchen utensils for Pesach, except things that are only kashered as a *chumrah*, such as kiddush cups, etc. this practice is both a stringency as well as a convenience. The investment in a set of Pesach-only utensils pays dividends over time.

Appendix: *Tevillas Kelim* (immersion in a mikveh of new utensils before use)

42. All new utensils used directly with food and made of metal or glass need *tevillah* (immersion) in a mikveh. Contrary to a misconception in some circles, there is no *heter* (permission) to use something only once

without *tevillah*. However, utensils designed/intended for short-term use only, such as foil dishes, do not need *tevillah* (even if one decides to re-use the item over a period of time).

43. In 2020 and 2021, the SARS-2 COVID epidemic in some cases made it difficult to fulfil this mitzvah. As a result, some were compelled to rely on the exigency described below. While we have thankfully moved on from the dark days of the contagion, the information below may still be relevant in certain cases.

44. Where there is no alternative, it is acceptable to halakhically transfer ownership to a gentile, thereby rendering the utensil exempt from *tevillah*. (This strategy is already mentioned in *SA OH 323:7 WRT tevillat kelim* on Shabbat.) As with Sale of Chametz, this is a genuine legal and halachic *kinyan* (transfer of ownership) and if the “purchaser” wishes to take home his/her utensil s/he must be permitted to do so. You can explain to him/her beforehand that he is expected to pay the full value at some point, but that if the item is stored in your home, you will not demand the payment yet.

45. The preferred way to accomplish the *kinyan* (acquisition) is for the purchaser to actually lift up the utensil in his hands.

46. The strategies mentioned above should only be relied on short term. As soon as it is practical to immerse your utensils, you should do so. If one has access to the non-Jewish purchaser, s/he should first acquire back the utensil(s), after which they should be immersed with a *berachah* in the usual way. Otherwise, perform the mitzvah of *tevillah* without a *berachah*.

Finally allow me to wish you and yours a joyous, healthy, kosher and redemptive Pesach.

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