

The Quintessential Kashering Primer

For the Pesach-phobic, Dovid Cohen presents the basics of preparing the Pesach kitchen.

One of the many preparations one must make for Pesach is *kashering* (a process to prepare a non-kosher vessel for kosher use or a *chametz* vessel for use on Pesach). Most people only *kasher* their utensils in preparation for Pesach; however, the following directions apply to *kashering* utensils year-round as well. As with all areas of *halachah*, those who are unsure of how to apply the rules of *kashering* to their situation should consult with their local Orthodox rabbi.

General rules

There are two steps in *kashering*. 1. Cleaning—removing all tangible traces of *chametz* and 2. Purging—using heat to remove all absorbed *chametz* flavor.

Cleaning

All *chametz* utensils that will be used for Pesach must be thoroughly cleaned. This includes the removal of all food, rust, dirt, calcium deposits and anything else that protrudes; this does not include the removal of discolorations. Items that contain narrow cracks, crevices, deep scratches or other areas

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that cannot easily be cleaned, cannot be *kashered* for Pesach. Therefore, the following cannot be *kashered*:

- Colander
- Decanter or baby bottle (due to their narrow necks)
- Filter/screen over drain in sink
- Grater
- Knife (or other utensil) where food or dirt can get trapped between the blade and handle
- Slotted spoon
- Sponge
- Toothbrush

Additionally, the common custom is to cover tables, counters, refrigerator shelves and other areas where one might not have been able to clean away every trace of *chametz*.

Purging

In addition to cleaning utensils, most items require some form of hot purging in order to remove the flavor that has been absorbed. As a rule, any utensil that came in contact with hot food, was washed with hot water or was used to store liquids requires purging. A comprehensive analysis regarding when purging is required and how one determines which form of purging is effective is beyond the scope of this article. I will describe the standard method of purging

flavor from the most common items.

Utensils made from the following materials cannot be *kashered*:

- Ceramic—all types—including brick, china, coffee mugs and enamel
- Glass—all forms—including Corning Ware, Corelle, fiberglass, porcelain enamel (for example, porcelain sinks and enameled pots), Pyrex or thermoses.

• Plastic—Many American rabbis follow the approach of Rav Moshe Feinstein, *z"l*, who held that one cannot *kasher* plastic and other synthetic materials (including Teflon). It is noteworthy that many Israeli rabbis take a more lenient position. However, one should consult with his local rabbi.

As a rule, materials such as fabric, metal, wood, rubber and stone (for example, granite and marble) can be *kashered*.

It is not practical to *kasher* the following items since they require *libun gamur* (an intense form of *kashering* usually requiring a blowtorch).

- Barbeque and barbeque accessories
- Frying pan
- Sandwich maker
- Spatula
- Toaster
- Toaster oven
- Waffle iron
- George Foreman Grill

Specific Items

All methods of *kashering* noted in this section presuppose that the equipment was thoroughly cleaned, as described above.

Silverware, Pots and Other Small Items

Small items are *kashered* with *hagalab*, which involves:

1. Not using the utensil for anything, including non-*chametz*, for twenty-four hours. This also applies to the (non-Pesach) pot in which the *hagalab* water will be boiled.

2. Submerging the utensil in boiling water that is over the fire. The water must be at a rolling boil *before* the utensil to be *kashered* is put into it, and the water must touch every surface of the utensil. Therefore, each item should be *kashered* individually, and the water should be allowed to return to a boil before the next item is placed into the pot. Large utensils may be submerged in the water one part at a time.

3. Removing the utensil from the water and rinsing it in cold water.

Oven

Kashering a Self-Cleaning Oven:

1. Remove any large pieces of food (or other items) from the oven.

2. Go through one complete self-cleaning cycle with the racks in place. It is preferable that the racks be cleaned and remain unused for twenty-four hours before they and the oven are *kashered*.

Kashering a Non-Self-Cleaning Oven:

1. Clean walls, floor, door, ceiling and racks thoroughly with an abrasive cleaner (for example, Easy-Off) to remove tangible *chametz*. Pay special attention to the temperature gauge, the window in the door and the edges of the oven chamber. Black discolorations that are flush with the metal do not have to be removed.

2. Once the oven is clean, it is preferable that it remain unused for twenty-four hours.

3. Place the racks back into the oven, and turn the oven to broil for one-and-a-half hours.

4. Pesach food or pans may be

placed directly on the door or racks once the oven has been *kashered*.

If the oven has a separate broiler chamber, it should be *kashered* in the same manner as the oven chamber. A broiler pan that comes in direct contact with food cannot be *kashered*.

Note: The method of *kashering* described above is based on the ruling of Rav Aharon Kotler. However, Rav Moshe held that the oven must either be *kashered* with a blowtorch, or an insert must be placed into the oven for the duration of Pesach. Consult your rabbi for guidance.

Stovetop

The grates of a gas stovetop should be *kashered* in the oven chamber in the same manner described above. For an electric stovetop, just clean the coils and turn on high for ten minutes. If you have a glass-topped stovetop you should consult your rabbi for directions on if/how it can be used for Pesach.

For a gas or electric stove, it is preferable to replace the drip pans that are under the burners; if this isn't possible, the area should be covered with aluminum foil. The work area between the burners should be cleaned and covered with two layers of foil. The knobs and handles of the oven and stovetop should be wiped clean.

Sink

Kashering a Stainless Steel Sink:

1. Remove the filter covering the drain and put it away for Pesach with the *chametz* dishes.

2. Clean the sink, faucet and knobs, and don't use the sink for anything other than cold water for twenty-four hours.

3. Boil water up in one or more large pots (clean pots that have not been used for twenty-four hours). The pots may be *chametz* pots.

4. *Dry the sink*, then pour the boiling water over every spot on the walls and floor of the sink and on the faucet and knobs. One may *kasher* part of the sink and then boil more water for the rest of the sink. *Extreme care should be taken during this type of kashering to ensure that none of the boiling water splashes onto the person doing the kasher-*

ing or others who are nearby.

5. Place an uncovered pot of boiling water directly under the faucet so that hot steam will rise and come in contact with the entire underside of the faucet.

6. Rinse the sink and faucet with cold water.

7. Put a new filter over the drain. One should also purchase new sponges and a fresh bottle of dishwashing liquid.

Kashering a Porcelain Sink:

Since a porcelain sink cannot be *kashered*, one should *kasher* the faucet and knobs as outlined above and, for the duration of Pesach, place a basin (or insert) into the sink. All dishes, silverware, et cetera, should be placed and washed in the basin, and wash-water can be disposed of through the sink's drain. One should be careful not to allow the *sink* to fill with hot water while the basin is in the sink.

Microwave Oven

Where needed, one can use a *chametz* microwave on *Pesach* by

1. Placing a "Pesach plate" on the floor of the microwave and 2. Double-wrapping the food on all sides before placing it into the microwave. (Be sure that the outside of the wrapping and all sides of the "Pesach plate" are completely dry.) There are halachic questions as to if/how one can *kasher* a microwave. One could consult with his rabbi.

Refrigerator, Freezer, Food Shelves and Pantry

These areas should be thoroughly cleaned—paying special attention to the edges where crumbs may get trapped—and the shelves should be lined with paper or plastic. The refrigerator and freezer will operate more efficiently if one pokes a few holes in the lining.

Tablecloths, Kitchen Gloves, Aprons and Other Items Made of Fabric

Any item made of fabric can be *kashered* by washing it in a washing machine set on "hot" and then checking to make sure that no pieces of food remain attached to it. Vinyl and plastic-lined tablecloths cannot be *kashered*. **JA**