



What Does “Kosher” Mean?

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The story of the young Daniel’s insistence upon eating only vegetables and water rather than the rich food from the king’s table is well known. The practice of eating only kosher foods is still an important custom for Jews today. But for many non-Jews, the practice of eating kosher (or kashrut) is a mystery.

While there are many explanations about the observance of kashrut, three are particularly important. One of the most frequently given reasons for eating a kosher diet is the biblical command to live holy lives. Following the list of animals, fish, and fowl that may be eaten, Lev 11:44-45

states: “For I the Lord am your God: you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy.” Thus eating kosher is a sign of ritual purity and is indicative of a healthy relationship between God and humanity. Another explanation given for a kosher diet is temperance and self-control. Learning to set personal boundaries is an important part of the kosher diet. The final reason for observing kashrut is reverence for life. Originally, God designed humans to be vegetarians, thus the practice of killing and eating meat was not in God’s original creative plan. Observing a strict kashrut helps to preserve the sanctity of life. “The killing of an animal with flesh, blood, and

life, much like ours, is not necessarily cruel or inhumane, but it is certainly weighty. It is proper and fitting to the dignity of man that he does not just kill and eat, but takes responsibility for his food—before God and before life itself.”¹

Because life is in the blood, blood is forbidden in the kosher diet (Lev 17:11). Further, basic cruelty is to be avoided in the killing, preparing, and eating of meat.² Thus Exod 23:19 forbids the boiling of a kid in its mother’s milk (cf. Exod 34:26; Deut 14:21).

Due to the practice of separating meat and milk products, the kosher home has two sets of

dishes and two sets of silverware, which are stored separately: one for meat meals and one for dairy meals. These two sets are never mixed, even in washing or storing. The strictly kosher home will also further separate meat and dairy

products by waiting a certain specified time between the eating of meat and dairy foods. The amount of time varies according to family tradition.

Kosher foods are divided into several different categories:

¹Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld, and Sharon Strassfeld, eds., *The First Jewish Catalog* (Philadelphia: JPS of America, n.d.), 18-19, for more information, see 18ff.

²Ibid., 19.

Vegetables	All vegetables and fruits are kosher (Gen 1:29). Because they are genderless, they may be served with either milk or meat foods.
Fish	Any variety of fish that has <i>both</i> fins and scales is considered kosher (Lev 11:9-12). Fish may not be cooked with meat, but it can be cooked in or with milk.
Fowl	Most domestic fowl are kosher; wild birds and birds of prey are not (Lev 11:13-25). Fowl and birds must be ritually slaughtered by a qualified kosher butcher. Any animal that is killed in any other way or dies a natural death is not kosher.
Eggs	Eggs from nonkosher birds are not kosher. Neither are eggs containing blood spots.
Meat	All animals which both chew the cud and have a split hoof are kosher (Lev 11:3-8). Meat must be slaughtered ritualistically by a kosher butcher. Once meat is properly slaughtered, it must be kashered (i.e., soaked and salted to remove excess blood).

News

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A historic meeting took place in January 2004 when both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic chief rabbis met with the pope in Rome. The meeting is intended to promote understanding between the Jews and the Catholic Church and to encourage cooperation in the search for peace and freedom from terrorism and anti-Semitism. The two groups were also to visit the Vatican library to view ancient Jewish manuscripts that are held there.

Study to show thyself approved: A seventeen-year old from Toronto attained a score of 98 percent in the Diaspora Bible quiz in April 2004. Yoni Halpern was among the fifty-five delegates from twenty-eight countries who participated.

Computers to Galilee: Arab Christians in the Galilee village of Fassouta are to benefit from the cooperation of the Jewish Federation and the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago. The mayor of the village was asked by the executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Chicago to identify a project that would be of most benefit to his village. Provision of computers and training in their use was proposed. The project will continue over three years, after which the village will assume responsibility for continued maintenance of the program.

Vegetarian Matza Ball Soup

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atza Ball Soup is traditionally enjoyed during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or Pessah, when the prohibition against eating unleavened bread is in effect. But its simple, delicious flavor makes any Shabbat meal special.

Matza Balls

3 eggs
3 Tbl. olive oil
1/2 tps. salt
3 Tbl. hot water
3/4 cup matzo meal

Separate the eggs. Beat the yolks until light-colored and thick. Add the olive oil, which should be at room temperature, and the salt and water. Beat the whites until stiff but not too dry. Fold in the matzo meal. Refrigerate the batter for about 1 hour, or until batter is thick enough to form balls.

Drop the balls carefully into 2 quarts of boiling salted water or hot soup. Cover and cook for 25 minutes. If not cooked in the soup, put the dumplings in now. Cook for another 15 or 20 minutes in the soup.

Soup

1 cup of shredded cabbage
1 cup of shredded carrots
1 large onion finely diced
2 Tbl. McKay's Chicken Seasoning (or other vegetarian chicken seasoning)
salt and pepper to taste
2 quarts water

Combine ingredients in water and bring to a boil, then simmer until vegetables are tender. Add matza balls approximately 15 to 20 minutes before soup is served.