

TEMPLE HILLEL B'NAI TORAH KASHRUT POLICY

Nourishing our Community: Valuing Kashrut at Temple Hillel B'nai Torah

Over the last few years, an increasing number of questions have arisen regarding how the community shares food within the synagogue, our shared home. A group of members, reflecting diverse experiences with kashrut, formed the Kashrut Committee to study a variety of texts, both Biblical and contemporary, together with Rabbi Penzner. Over the course of this process, a primary goal evolved of making sure that - in the spirit of Elijah's invitation - anyone who is hungry may come and eat.

With the Reconstructionist values-based decision making process as our guide, we gleaned many values which became the basis for creating a kashrut policy. Some of them include:

- Kashrut is a tool of Jewish identity and connects us to other Jews
- Kashrut is a connection to past and future generations
- We have a responsibility to support those who keep kosher
- Kashrut is a spiritual practice that brings holiness to our meals
- Eating is an intentional, mindful act
- Sharing a meal helps build community
- Our practice should not pose a financial burden to members
- The practice of kashrut should include taking care of the environment and minimizing waste.

In our study of kashrut and with the policy below, we have tried to nourish celebration and community-building through food while honoring the religious traditions that have been entwined with Jewish identity since ancient times.

Overview

The observance of kashrut is the foundation and goal of bringing food into Temple Hillel B'nai Torah. We encourage those who use the building, including members and non-members, to do their best to provide kosher-certified food. Members are invited to learn more about the rules and values of kashrut by contacting the Rabbi or a kashrut coordinator.

In this policy, we make a distinction between the use of the temple kitchens and their contents, appliances and utensils, and the use of temple space. The kitchens, their appliances, and all dishes and utensils are limited to kosher-certified (*hechshered*) products and caterers. In very specific cases, however, we do allow for bringing non-certified foods that do not involve the use of the kitchens or temple utensils as outlined below. The two main alternatives are communal pot-luck meals and caterers who are not certified as kosher but have been approved by the rabbi for a specific event.

When planning events at HBT, it must be clear whether the food served will be meat or dairy. In all cases, when in doubt about any aspect of kashrut and bringing food into the

temple, ask! In addition to ensuring kashrut at the temple, our goal is to educate and nourish ourselves.

Kitchen Use

The MAIN (downstairs) kitchen has two areas:

The FRONT part of the kitchen is a preparation and staging area, with a double sink, counter space, some utensils, coffee/hot water urns, and a refrigerator.

The BACK part of the kitchen can be used for cooking and baking and has a freezer, counter space, ovens and stoves, and separate sets of utensils for milk and meat stored in separate areas. Members' use of the kitchen requires the input of a kashrut coordinator.

The UPSTAIRS kitchen (by the library) is used primarily for *kiddush* and other small groups. This kitchen and its utensils are to be used only for dairy or *pareve* foods which bear a *hechsher*.

If food that is not kosher-certified is brought into the temple, be sure not to use any temple utensils and that all leftover food is removed from the building. Such food should not be brought to the upstairs kitchen nor into the back of the main kitchen.

The KASHRUT COORDINATOR is a temple member or staff person who is well versed in the kashrut policy as it relates to the layout and use of the kitchens. A list of names is available in the temple office.

Shabbat and holiday kiddush

The sanctity of Shabbat and holidays is an important value that demands more scrupulous attention to the observance of kashrut. Our services are open to anyone and we want all who attend a Shabbat or holiday service to know that they can trust the kashrut of the food that we offer at the kiddush. Therefore, all food for congregational sharing on Shabbat and holidays must be certified kosher (bearing a *hechsher*), including wine, grape juice and challah. This also applies to Tot Shabbat and all other children's activities.

The only exception to this rule is in the case of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah as it involves many invited guests, as well as congregants, and is announced in advance. We want to uphold the value not to impose a financial burden on members, and the use of a caterer could potentially entail significant expenses above and beyond the cost of the food itself. If a kiddush is being provided by a family in conjunction with a b'nai mitzvah, then non-*hechshered* food can be included as long as a *hechshered* alternative is provided.

School events

All snacks at the Chaverim School must be certified kosher (from a kosher bakery or prepackaged with a *hechsher*) so that everyone, including our teachers, can share them. This includes grape juice but not other drinks, which do not need a *hechsher* as long as

they do not contain any grape juice (which is often included in fruit drinks and flavored water).

Youth programming exception: When pizza is the main food item for a school or youth event, *unsliced* cheese pizza may be brought in from a non-kosher establishment if there is no acceptable kosher pizza available. *The pizza should not be sliced at the vendor* because the cutter is used for both meat and dairy (and *treif*). The pizza will be sliced at the temple and should be served only on disposable plates. The pizza should not be brought into either kitchen. All leftovers must be taken out of the temple. No other prepared food may be brought from non-kosher establishments. Any other food served with the pizza must be kosher (dairy).

Other temple events or meetings

1. Events or meetings to which the community is invited (e.g. adult education, Rosh Hodesh group, semi-annual meeting, etc.):

Congregational events and meetings are enhanced by sharing food together. At these events, refreshments should be dairy or *pareve*. If your food is the only choice available, it should be kosher-certified. This includes bagels, which should come from a kosher-certified bakery. Temple utensils and plates may only be used for kosher-certified food, drinks, and uncooked food such as cheese, eggs, tuna, or fresh produce.

Home-baked goodies or foods without a *hechsher* are permitted as long as an additional, kosher-certified option is provided. The temple's utensils may not be used. *For guidance, see the section "Potluck Meals" below.*

2. Closed meeting:

For meetings where only a small group of members are involved/invited, the group can decide to bring in food and NOT require a *hechshered* alternative. *See the next section, "Food for personal consumption," for further explanation.*

Food for personal consumption (staff and temple members)

Only dairy/*pareve* foods are permitted. Temple utensils and plates may only be used for kosher-certified food, drinks, and uncooked food such as cheese, eggs, tuna, or fresh produce. The downstairs kitchen is not available for personal use.

If your meal is not kosher-certified, do not use the upstairs kitchen, utensils, microwave or sink. Food should not be brought into the temple that mixes meat and milk or contains non-kosher ingredients (such as pork or shellfish), even for personal consumption.

Potluck meals

Potluck meals encourage community without adding undue financial burden and facilitate sharing home-made dishes and favorite recipes. For a temple potluck, food may be brought from home following these simple rules. Every potluck event will have a kashrut

coordinator who will oversee the use of the kitchen and who can answer questions.

What can I bring?

- Dairy or vegetarian food only. Don't forget serving utensils.
- If you bring food prepared at home, please bring a list of ingredients (for kashrut as well as for reasons of health, diet, and allergies).
- If possible, use *hechshered* ingredients and products. *Hechshered* products generally do not cost more than non-*hechshered* ones.
- You may bring anything dairy or vegetarian with a *hechsher* or from a kosher establishment (e.g. Cheryl Ann's or the Butcherie).
- You may bring prepared foods that have a list of ingredients, such as food from a supermarket, if they do not include any prohibited foods. Bring the list as well.
- Do not bring anything from a restaurant, including pizza, since the ingredients can not be verified.
- You may bring a hot plate to keep your dish warm but will not be able to use the temple's ovens.

What do I do at the temple?

- Food for potluck meals may be served from the front room of the downstairs kitchen, where the sinks are, and may be kept in the refrigerator until served.
- Food for potluck meals should not be brought into the back area of the downstairs kitchen where the ovens are. The ovens may not be used for pot luck meals.
- Bring your own utensils and sponges for preparation, serving, and clean-up. Utensils, pots and pans are not available from the temple kitchen.
- Take your leftovers home, including anything stored in the refrigerator.
- Recycle! You may wash your container in the downstairs kitchen sink marked "potluck" using specially-marked sponges.

Special events (B'nai Mitzvot and private rentals)

The community's preference is that kosher-certified food be served at Jewish celebrations. Ideally, a kosher caterer should be used. However, in special cases, particularly if using a caterer presents a financial burden, there are alternatives available; all of them respect the basic laws of kashrut.

There are three choices for providing food when hosting an event:

1. Hire a caterer

Please make sure that the Rabbi approves your caterer **before** signing a contract to avoid the potential loss of your deposit. After the Rabbi has approved the caterer, please send a copy of the menu to the Rabbi. The Rabbi will advise the caterer regarding the use of the kitchen.

- a. K kosher-certified caterer: when using a kosher caterer, you may choose either a meat or dairy menu. A list is available in the Temple office; there are several

available at a wide range of price points. The full kitchen is available for the caterer to use.

b. Non-kosher-certified caterer: some caterers who are not certified, but who only prepare dairy, vegetarian or fish dishes (but not shellfish) in their place of business, *might* be allowed, but they **must** be approved by the Rabbi **each time** someone wishes to hire them.

2. Prepare the food in the HBT kitchen

Some people enjoy gathering with friends and cooking in the HBT kitchen. You may bring uncooked food, including fruits and vegetables, eggs, cheese, uncooked pasta, and baking ingredients, in new, unopened containers. All packaged foods, including pasta, flour, etc., must bear a *hechsher*.

You must have a kashrut coordinator work with you who will help you be sure to stick to either meat or dairy, and to only use the appropriate pots, pans, and utensils. You may use both the front and back parts of the kitchen.

When cleaning up, use the correct sink, sink mat, dish drainer, and sponges for either meat or dairy. New sponges should be brought for this purpose.

3. Prepare food at home

In some cases, you may choose to cook dairy and vegetarian foods in your own home or have friends cook for you. *Hechshered* food must be provided in addition to the food you are preparing yourself. You will need to consult with a kashrut coordinator well in advance to advise you. *Hechshered* ingredients do not generally cost more than non-*hechshered* items.

For details on bringing the food to the temple, see the “Potluck meals” section above, remembering that the oven and back of the kitchen, as well as all temple utensils, are off-limits. You may use the refrigerator and the front of the kitchen as a staging area for serving food. Be sure to clean up only in the designated potluck sink using the new sponges you have brought.

Glossary of terms

Dairy/milchig (Yiddish)/**chalavi** (Hebrew) - food that contains any dairy product. At HBT, domestic cheeses are acceptable even when not bearing a *hechsher*.

Kashrut coordinator - a temple member or staff person who is well versed in the kashrut policy as it relates to the layout and use of the kitchens. A list of names is available in the temple office.

Hechsher - symbol of kosher certification indicating that an approved rabbi or rabbinic body has overseen the production of the food to assure its kashrut. *See samples below.* A list of local food outlets, including bakeries, which are certified kosher can be viewed at

http://www.cjp.org/ir_category_listing.html?id=1893&view=1. Call to confirm as changes can be frequent.

Meat/fleishig (Yiddish)/**basari** (Hebrew) - food that contains any meat product, including poultry, but not including fish.

Pareve (Yiddish) - food that is “neutral” – neither milk nor meat – including fish, eggs, fruits and vegetables, grains. Pareve foods can be eaten together with either milk or meat foods and therefore are always permitted.

Treif - food that is not kosher, including shellfish, catfish or sea mammals (anything without fins and scales); mammals that do not have cleft feet **and** chew their cud (e.g. pork); meat (including poultry) that has not been slaughtered by kosher rules; food that mixes milk and meat products.

These are a few of the most common hechshers (symbols of kosher certification) found in our area. The letter “K” alone is not hechsher.



The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations (OU)



The Organized Kashrus Laboratories (OK)



"Star-K" Kosher Certification (STAR-K)



"KOF-K" Kosher Supervision (KOF-K)



KOAOA



Rabbinical Council of New England (KVH)



Chief Rabbinate of Quebec - Kashruth Commission



Jewish Community Council of Montreal

