

## **Preparing for Pesach During the Covid-19 Crisis** **Rabbi Jeffrey Fox, Rosh HaYeshiva at Yeshivat Maharat**

בעזר החונן דעת

Preparing for Pesach in 2020 will be challenging for many people. For those people who are blessed with health and helpers in your home and can undergo the same meticulous preparation as prior years, you are encouraged to do so. This document is based on the following assumptions:

- 1) Spending time in stores is not advisable.
- 2) The online delivery systems are not as reliable as they have been in the past.
- 3) Many people are making Pesach for the first time in their lives.
- 4) Not everyone can afford to buy - online - an entire new kitchen.

The basic challenge that I am seeking to address is, “How can I make Pesach this year with what I currently have in my home?”.

There are a few areas in which our community has accrued more stringent positions that are not required under our current conditions. The basic Halakhic principle that guides me is that “emergency situations are considered suboptimal - שעת הדחק כדיעבד”<sup>1</sup> and we are permitted to rely on positions that have been left behind for one reason or another.

The areas that I would like to address are:

- I. Kashering and preparing the kitchen**
- II. Kashering the rest of the home**
- III. Purchasing food products**
- IV. Selling and destroying *Chametz***

### **I. Kashering and Preparing the Kitchen**



- 1) Dishwashers** can be kashered. You should inspect for any specks of actual food (it may mean removing the trap in some older models), wait twenty four hours and then run through on its highest setting (pot scrubber) with soap. If your dishwasher has an enamel interior it can not be kashered.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Bavli, Berachot 9a, Tosefta Eduyot 1:5, Rambam, Commentary on Mishna Megila 2:4, Beit Yosef Orach Chayyim 55 *mi shehu anas*, Shu”t Shevut Yaakov 3:110, Shu”t Chacham Tzvi 100



2) **Earthenware** dishes can not be used on Pesach and those need to be put away for the duration of the Holiday.

### 3) Glass



- i) **Drinking glasses** that were only used for cold can be cleaned well and used for Pesach. 🍷
- ii) **Fired glass** that goes in the oven or microwave can be kashered with hagala. This only works for glass that is strong enough to withstand the heat<sup>2</sup>.

### 4) Plastic<sup>3</sup>



- a) **Melamine Plates** - these hard plastic plates, often used for children, can be *kashered* by immersing them in boiling water (*hagala*).
- b) **Hard Plastic Storage Containers** can be *kashered* by immersing them in boiling water (*hagala*). These are different from single-use plastics which, when placed in boiling water will likely melt and therefore can not be kashered.



5) **Pots and pans** - If you are struggling to buy pots and pans this year: Before Pesach begins, one can cook kosher for Pesach food in a clean (*chametzdik*) pot that has not been used in twenty four hours and eat that food on Pesach<sup>4</sup>. The food must be stored in something kosher for

---

<sup>2</sup> There are three approaches to glass: 1) Some treat glass as though it does not absorb and therefore it only needs to be rinsed; 2) Some treat glass like metal and can therefore be kashered with hagala; 3) Some treat glass like earthenware which can not be kashered. [Rav Melamed](#) *paskens* like the middle position for all *eidot*. Under normal circumstances I would not move from the accepted Ashkenazi position. For this year, for those who need it, I think it is ok to rely on the middle approach and treat glass like metal. (See Avoda Zara 75b, Shabbat 15b, Avot d'Rabbi Natan 41:6, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayyim 451:26, Gr"a 83, Aruch ha-Shulchan 49-50)

<sup>3</sup> Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim* 2:92) was stringent regarding plastic. However, many other *poskim* including *Minchat Yitzchak* (3:67), *Chelkat Yaakov* (*Yoreh Deah* 45), *Tzitz Eliezer* (4:6) and Rav Ovadya Yosef (*Chazon Ovadya, Hilchot Pesach*) were all lenient, provided that the plastic will not melt or get ruined from the *kashering* process. This is the common practice in Israel and can be done this year.

<sup>4</sup> See Rema 85:2, Gr"a 11, Aruch ha-Shulchan 6

Pesach, such as newly purchased Tupperware. If you can kasher your pots at home, you should still do so.



**6) Countertops** - Here is the secret: unless you put piping hot food on your countertops they can simply be wiped down and used on Pesach. Nonetheless, I recommend cleaning them with a bleach based soap and doing some form of hechsher. You can pour boiling water or use a steamer or iron. If that hechsher process is too difficult, it can be saved until next year.



**7) Refrigerator / Freezer** - Should be cleaned carefully. If you have chametz items that will last eight days that you are planning to sell, place them in a brown paper bag clearly marked as *chametz*. There is no reason to cover any shelves and this is bad for most modern appliances.



**8) Oven** - Clean the oven as you normally would. If you have a self cleaning oven, that is the best. It need not run for four hours at that high heat. One hour is more than enough. If that is not an option, you can simply run the oven on its highest setting for 30 minutes (after cleaning).



**9) Stove top** - the grates of the stove top should be flipped and left in place over a lit burner for 20 minutes. The remainder of the stove top should be cleaned well. Any food that falls on the stove top during Pesach should not be eaten.



**10) Sinks** - Can be *kashered* by scrubbing with soap, waiting 24 hours and then pouring boiling water over every surface, including the faucet. Porcelain sinks can not be *kashered* and plastic sink covers (bins) should be used for the duration of the Holiday.

**11) Silverware, Cookware** - all silverware can be *kashered* through immersion in boiling water for a moment. This is true for all metal and hard-plastic utensils. Large or long utensils need not be immersed all at once, but can be done in parts. Everything must be cleaned and stand unused for 24 hours before immersion.



**12) Microwave** - First, clean the microwave and let it stand for twenty four hours. Then place a microwave-safe glass of water inside and run the microwave for seven to ten minutes causing steam to fill the device and

thereby *kasher* it. You then need to move the cup and repeat in order to *kasher* the spot on which the cup was resting.




## II. Kashering the Rest of Your Home

The most important thing to remember is that dirt is not chametz and that cleaning for Pesach is not Spring cleaning. You should vacuum the entire home. Check for chametz in any place where food is eaten. This includes searching under couch cushions. However, any food that has fallen behind a bed, desk or bookcase is no longer edible.

## III. Purchasing Food Products<sup>5</sup>



**Spices** - If bought before Pesach and they are 100% pure, they can be used. Some spices are *kitniyot* so check your family customs in this regard. There is a concern that if you used your spices over a boiling pot of *chametz* (like pasta) that there may be some absorbed *chametz* into that spice. If you have any spices that you are sure that this has never happened, you need not be concerned. If you can get fresh salt, please do so. If even that feels unsafe, the amount of *chametz* absorbed is small enough that you can rely on nullification. Please make sure to only use high quality spices that are not adulterated. Iodized salt is a *kitniyot* problem because they use cornstarch to get the iodine to adhere to the salt.

**Dairy products** -  Milk, cream cheese, cottage cheese (plain), yogurt (plain) all bought before Pesach need not have a special Kosher for Pesach *hashgacha*.

## IV. Selling and Destroying *Chametz*



The appointing of the Rabbi as an agent to sell your *chametz* can and should be done online. Even if your practice has been not to sell *chametz gamur* (pasta, bread), you may do so this year. Any remaining dry *chametz* should be placed in a box and marked as such. When you search for the *chametz* on the night before Pesach I would recommend putting out just a few small pieces that can safely be flushed down the toilet. If you have too much to flush, you can put it in a bowl and cover it with bleach, rendering the *chametz* completely inedible.

<sup>5</sup> See Beit Yosef Orach Chayyim 457:2 and 4a, Shulchan Aruch 457:4, Aruch ha-Shulchan 457:10, Mishna Berura 457:31