

'In extremis' guide to preparing your home for Pesach in light of Coronavirus

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Given the very difficult circumstances this year due to Coronavirus, it is impossible for many people to prepare for Pesach in the ideal way as they usually would.

Accordingly, here are some guidelines for United Synagogues which would like to use them, for preparing 'in extremis' especially for those people who will be unable to have help from others with these preparations, or are unable to get supplies due to isolation or delivery problems.

They have been compiled by rabbanim at the US Centre and have been approved by Dayan Simons. They are being shared in light of the urgency of our current situation, as well as the difficulty of having our usual consultations due to the damaging effects of the Coronavirus on the organisation.

We hope will provide practical guidance at this challenging time, assist us in helping each other and feeling as great a sense of community as we can. We thank those other rabbanim who also assisted for their input.

There is no substitute, and certainly not on the Internet, for asking your rabbi a question directly if you can, so please do consult with your local rabbi should you have any queries.

If you are able to prepare for Pesach in the ideal way, then you must do so and not rely on 'in extremis' provisions. Whenever we can, we perform our sacred mitzvot in the best way possible. Generations of our ancestors have bequeathed this heritage to us and we today are continuing those practices, observances and traditions as we celebrate Pesach.

Our local communities and the US centrally are here to assist as best we can. May God bless us and protect us and all humanity. We wish you all well.

If you have any questions, please contact your local community rabbi in the first instance, or the United Synagogue Coronavirus helpline on 020 8343 5696.

Chag Kasher veSameach

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<http://drybonesblog.blogspot.com/2008/04/wise-son.html>

Pesach House and Kitchen Preparations¹

What is Chametz?

Chametz is not dust or dirt! Anything which is inedible is not Chametz and therefore not prohibited on Pesach. Cleaning materials, which make Chametz inedible, are therefore particularly useful for Pesach since they nullify any Chametz which they touch.

What chametz do I need to clean for?

Pieces of chametz which are less than the size of a *Kezayit* (an olive) do not need to be cleaned. Crumbs on the floor which are less than this amount are nullified intrinsically and you do not need to worry about them for Pesach cleaning since they are considered null and void. Therefore, a full 'spring clean' is not required and places where Chametz has not been brought do not require particular cleaning for Pesach above your usual home cleaning. This is explained in further detail below.

There is a positive Mitzva from the Torah to enjoy Yom Tov. It is important to tailor your Pesach preparations accordingly so that you do not spend time on extraneous matters that will stop you from

¹ See www.theus.org.uk/pesach for more Pesach information and the IS IT KOSHER App of product listings - <http://passover.isitkosher.uk/>

enjoying Yom Tov or fulfilling the Mitzvot of Yom Tov, especially those of the Seder. In our current challenging circumstances, we need to look after our health and the health of others as much as possible, avoiding unnecessary stress.

So where should I clean?

1. As noted above, you only need to clean places where Chametz has been. So, for example, if you do not eat or store Chametz in your airing cupboard, then you do not need to clean there!
2. Therefore, the main area that requires attention is the kitchen. Other areas of the house only require attention as is necessary. This normally involves vacuuming, cleaning sofa etc. – i.e. a regular household clean.

What should I do to my kitchen?

1. You need designated cutlery, crockery and kitchen utensils for Pesach. If you do not have these, we suggest this year either using disposable cutlery, crockery and utensils or purchasing new utensils. This is an easier option for some people than 'kashering'. Sadly, the mikvaot for kelim are not open at the moment. Instead, we suggest that you lift new items up and declare them ownerless.
2. **If you are unable to obtain new saucepans, other utensils or disposable utensils and need to kasher your Chametz utensils, we suggest the following guidelines:**
 - 2.1 Metal items to be kashered must be one piece of metal, without plastic handles or the like.
 - 2.2 Make sure that the items have been cleaned and left unused for at least 24 hours.
 - 2.3 **Method 1:** Take a chametz metal pot which is clean has not been used for 24 hours. Fill it with water, put a little bit of washing up liquid into the water and boil up the water until it is bubbling. Then, using scissors, insert the items to be kashered, one by one making sure the water is bubbling. You do not need to immerse the item in one go, as long as the whole item has been immersed on one or more goes. Immediately put the item under cold water to cool it, without touching your sink (unless the sink is ready for Pesach) and then place the now kosher for Pesach item onto a clean towel on your kitchen side. If you wish to kasher this pot so you can use it for Pesach, make sure the water is boiling and then gently spills over the sides of the pot. Afterwards, pour boiling water from a

kettle on the pot handles. If your pot has a metal lid, kasher it by pouring boiling water over it from a kettle. If it has a pyrex lid, use a silver foil covering on Pesach instead of the pyrex lid since the pyrex lid is complex to kasher for Pesach.

- 2.4 **Method 2:** as above, but use a kettle instead (the kettle you use for year round), on the assumption that the kettle has not had chametz in it. We suggest cleaning and descaling the kettle before kashering. If you wish to use this kettle for Pesach, please follow the guidance below about kashering.
- 2.5 Oven trays cannot be kashered for Pesach.
- 2.6 In ideal circumstances, plastics may not be kashered for Pesach. In extremis, when ideal circumstances are not possible (such as in the IDF kitchens), hard plastics which will not break in the kashering process may be kashered following either method 1 or 2 above, as long as they have been cleaned and unused for 24 hours prior to kashering.
- 2.7 Earthenware, ceramics and pyrex cannot be kashered for Pesach which means that chametz plates cannot be kashered for Pesach.
3. **Fridge** – clean it out thoroughly using fridge cleaner, following the manufacturer’s instructions. If there are parts of the fridge that you cannot clean properly, then spray fridge cleaner on those parts and cover them, making tiny holes for ventilation.
4. **Freezer** – clean out thoroughly, following the manufacturer’s instructions. Defrost if necessary.
5. **Food Shelves** - Clean thoroughly and cover with foil or another material, even tissues, if you are using those shelves for Pesach. Cupboards which will contain chametz (which you will have sold before Pesach), should be labelled as such as sealed. You do not need to clear them out.
6. **Stainless Steel sink and counters** – clean the whole apparatus, take out the sink filter (if you have a detachable one) and do not use with anything hot for 24 hours. Pour bleach down the plughole and clean the gasket etc. around the plughole with bleach. Then pour boiling water straight from a kettle (ideally with a burning hot metal rod such as a hanger in the sink to maintain a piping hot temperature) all over the taps and all over the sink, starting from the top. The kettle should be connected to the socket and bubbling whilst pouring the boiling water onto the sink. Year-round strainers and plastic/rubber plugs must not be used on Pesach. Even if you perform the above mentioned procedure with your sinks, we would recommend getting washing up bowls for Pesach, especially if you have separate milk and meat sinks, as an extra precaution. If you have only one sink, you will need separate meat and milk washing up bowls for Pesach anyway.
7. Whatever your sink arrangement, use new washing up gear for Pesach, i.e. sponges, gloves, washing up liquid.

8. **Enamel or porcelain sinks** – these cannot be kashered for Pesach. Clean the sinks, plughole and drain. Use Pesach washing up bowls and gear etc., as in point 6 above.
9. **Non granite counter tops** – these should be thoroughly cleaned and covered. Ideally, cover them with a durable material. Alternatively, use clean towels or tablecloths to cover these tops. You may change and wash these during Chol Hamoed in the washing machine. When using hot items, place a Pesach heat mat or some silver foil on the place on the towel or tablecloth where you will put the item to avoid any damage to the towel or tablecloth.
10. **Granite counter tops** - These should be thoroughly cleaned. Good practice is to cover them or kasher them with boiling water, but it is not strictly necessary to do so if they are genuinely made of top-quality non-absorbent granite. Otherwise cover as with non-granite counter tops.
11. **Non Self-Cleaning ovens** – Clean thoroughly with oven cleaner, including the racks, and spray cleaner into the fan area making sure you follow the manufacturer’s instructions. Once the oven is clean, turn it onto the highest temperature. Once the oven has reached that temperature, leave it on for an hour. Items which you cook in the oven during Pesach should be covered using silver foil. It is also recommended to do as much cooking as possible before Pesach, if possible.
12. **Self-Cleaning Ovens** – remove any food from the oven. Clean the racks and if possible do not use them for 24 hours after they have been cleaned. Replace the racks and put the oven through one complete self-cleaning cycle.
13. **Microwaves** – On applying the law to the facts, rabbinic views differ as to whether a microwave can be kashered for Pesach. If you have received halachic advice to kasher your microwave for Pesach, apply the following procedure (always following the manufacturer’s instructions and checking first whether those instructions permit the following procedure). Clean the microwave thoroughly. Either get a Pesach microwave plate or double cover your existing plate with appropriate cling film. Having cleaned your microwave, put a Chametz glass (clean and unused for 24 hours) of boiling water into the microwave for 6 minutes. Once this time is up, remove the glass and the Chametz plate and now your microwave is ready for Pesach. **Otherwise**, if you cannot follow the above procedure, use your Pesach microwave plate or double wrapped regular microwave plate and double wrap anything that you put into your microwave. Avoid putting the double wrap on your Pesach surfaces.
14. **Fabrics** – i.e. dishcloths: Just wash them in the washing machine and make sure they are clean.
15. **Kettle** – wipe down your kettle so it is clean, descale it so it is as clean as possible inside and leave it for 24 hours. Then boil water in the kettle to the maximum amount allowed and pour that water out, not into your kitchen sink if that sink is ready for Pesach or in the 24 hours before being made ready for Pesach. A **Shabbat urn** can be kashered similarly, whether it is made of plastic or metal.

Once the Shabbat urn has reached boiling point, let it boil and release steam for some minutes before emptying it. If you have put chametz during the year on the lid of your Shabbat urn, clean the lid, leave it for 24 hours and then pour boiling water over the whole lid.

16. **Electric Hob** – clean thoroughly, then turn up to highest setting. Once the highest setting is reached, leave the hob on for 15 minutes. It is good practice to avoid putting Pesach saucepans in the areas between the heating circles. Follow your manufacturer's instructions.
17. **Gas Hob** – clean thoroughly, both the racks and the rest of the hob area. If feasible, and your manufacturer's instructions allow, kasher the racks by holding them with pliers whilst passing the racks through the gas flame, so that the whole rack has been 'burnt' in the flame by each part getting as "red hot" as possible.

Alternatively, clean the hob and racks very thoroughly. Turn the gas onto full and leave it as such for 15 minutes. Then cover the racks with silver foil and replace during Pesach when necessary. Another option is to buy a Pesach cooking ring, which is very useful on Yom Tov itself when used with a time switch and this is what we do in our home. If you do **not** use your hob on Pesach, make sure that you cover it properly so that nothing is inadvertently put on the hob on Pesach, even when the hob is off.

18. **Dishwasher** – A dishwasher with a stainless steel interior, once cleaned properly (including the filter), can be kashered for Pesach with its usual racks as long as the racks are undamaged.

The procedure for kashering is as follows: Leave the dishwasher unused for 24 hours. Clean the dishwasher thoroughly with detergent, especially the filter and rubber around the doors.

Run a cleaning cycle. The dishwasher is now ready for Pesach. **Only stainless steel dishwashers can be kashered, either at Pesach or throughout the year.**

19. **Hotplates** – Recent research by Machon Tzomet, a technology lab in Israel which studies the application of halacha to technology, concluded that there is a serious possibility of fire hazard if hot plates are covered, even if silver foil is used. Machon Tzomet recommend purchasing a new hot plate for Pesach. If this is not feasible, clean the hot plate thoroughly and turn it on until it reaches its highest temperature. Leave it on for 1 hour once it has reached its maximum temperature. As long as chametz food has not been put directly on the hot plate but only in containers, the hot plate may be used on Pesach. No Pesach food should touch the hot plate directly.

20. **Glass** can be kashered for Pesach as long as it has been used for cold items and is 100% glass (not pyrex, for example). Make sure your glass is clean and has been unused for 24 hours. Fill a large, clean container with cold water. Soak the glass in water for 72 hours in total, changing the water every 24 hours. Please note that glasses that have been used for whisky or similar 'strong'

chametz alcoholic drinks cannot be kashered for Pesach. The alternative is to purchase new glasses for Pesach, which can be done cheaply online, or to use disposables.

21. Use a new toothbrush for Pesach. Check the KLBD Pesach product pages at www.theus.org.uk/pesach to see further advice about toothpaste, floss and mouthwash for Pesach.
22. If your doctor has prescribed **pills** which contain chametz to be taken during Pesach, please consult your rabbi for advice or call the Coronavirus hotline on 020 8343 5696. **Do not change any medication without consulting your doctor first.**

חג שמח

Chag Kasher Ve'Sameach! Have an enjoyable Pesach!