

# FOOD REQUIREMENTS & KOSHER PRIMER

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A Guide for Participants

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Approved by:

The Houston Kashruth Association - Mehadrin Kashrus of Texas#



## GENERAL INFORMATION

The reason to have a Kosher chili cook-off is to ensure that every Jew in Houston can come to the cook-off, eat and enjoy themselves. Consequently, this guide is written to allow all elements of the Houston Jewish community to participate.

This is not intended to be an extensive, or even complete, guide to keeping kosher or even the issues of Kashrut in this cook-off. It is intended to help our Houston Kosher Chili Cook-off participants prepare Kosher chili. It will not go into why certain observances came about or their textual background. If you'd like a more detailed description, you can consult the [OU's Kosher Primer](#) (or consult your local rabbi).

Many are familiar with some of the general rules of Kashrut. Meat may not be mixed with milk. One may not eat any pork or shellfish. There are details and definitions, however, which are important.

Judaism has a well-defined system of dietary laws. These laws determine which food is acceptable and in conformity with Jewish Law. The word kosher is an adaptation of the Hebrew word meaning fit or proper. It refers to foodstuffs that meet the requirements of Jewish Law. Kashrut is a derivative of the same word; referring in general to process rather than thing (The Houston Kashrut Association ensures that we have local Kosher food.)

There is a prevalent misconception that kosher reflects the conferring of a blessing on food by a Rabbi. There is no truth to this whatsoever.

The basic guidelines of kosher and non-kosher depend on two variables: the source of the ingredients and the status of the production equipment. Kosher certification is the guarantee that the food meets these kosher requirements. The guidelines for the sources of kosher and non-kosher materials originate in the Bible. The interpretations and decisions of the Rabbis of the post-Biblical era have added detail, organization, and explanation to these dietary laws.

Jewish tradition maintains a total separation of meat and dairy. Separate pots, pans, dishes, etc., are required. They cannot be cooked together or eaten together. In Israel, there are kosher McDonalds, but they do not serve cheeseburgers or milkshakes.

By tradition, the Jewish dietary laws also do not allow for cooking meat or poultry together with fish or fish by-products. Consequently, Lea and Perrins Worcestershire Sauce has the word fish next to the kosher symbol.

Because of the need to assure that prepared and packaged products are exactly what they say they are, many organizations have sprung up around the country to ensure that the foods they supervise are kosher and are in the categories that they claim to be. Almost all have a copyrightable symbol that the manufacturers use to mark their products, so that consumers can recognize them. It is these symbols that you must look for. Note that several manufacturers use a plain “K” on their products. This may mean that the manufacturer wants to state that their products are kosher. If you want to use a product with just a “K” on the label, please contact the HKA ASAP to verify its acceptability. A complete list of Acceptable Symbols can be found at the end of this document.

Note that some acceptable products do not always carry a symbol on their labels. For example, all Coca-Cola-branded products, produced in the US or Mexico are kosher – but may not carry a symbol. If there is doubt or a question, please feel free to contact HKA at [RabbiDubin@KosherHouston.org](mailto:RabbiDubin@KosherHouston.org) or 347-254-0593.

## FOOD PROCEDURES

1. All food-related items and products used by the cook-off teams, whether fresh or prepared, requiring a kosher symbol or not, for cooking or for personal use, must be new and unopened/unused when they arrive at the cook-off.
2. A list of all food products, manufacturer & kosher symbol (if applicable) to be used by your cook-off team, whether fresh or prepared, requiring a kosher symbol or not, must be delivered with your food drop-off on the Sunday before the cook-off. **(You are strongly encouraged to send the list earlier.)** HKA will provide a written response within 48 hours if any items are unacceptable.
3. All food items other than fruits, vegetables and fresh herbs and spices must be dropped off at the JCC on the Sunday before the cook-off, in a sealable box (i.e. NOT open-topped).
4. All meat will be provided by the Cook-off committee. There will be NO exceptions to this policy. There will be separate communication with the meat purchase details later. **NO MEAT OR MEAT PRODUCTS, OTHER THAN THAT PROVIDED BY THE COOKOFF COMMITTEE, MAY BE BROUGHT INTO THE COOKOFF.**
5. The only food that may arrive on Sunday morning is fruits, vegetables and fresh herbs and spices.
6. **NO milk or Dairy products OF ANY SORT** are permitted at the cook-off, even if you don't plan on serving them – this means you can't even have a morning coffee with milk for yourself in the cooking areas.
7. No fish products are allowed at the cook-off.
8. All food item must be Parve (not Meat or Dairy)
9. All leafy herbs/spices/vegetables must be washed & inspected by an HKA Mashgiach before entering the cooking areas.
10. Every food item that enters the cooking area must be inspected by the HKA Mashgiach. There will be one for every 3 teams. Your box of items dropped off on the previous Sunday will be sealed with HKA tape – this seal should only be broken under the supervision of the Mashgiach.
11. Any cooking fires must be lit by the Mashgiach. If the fire goes out during cooking, only a Mashgiach may relight the fire.
12. All eggs must be cracked individually and checked by a Mashgiach before they are used in your chili.

## CATEGORIES

In general, all food falls into one of three categories for Kashrut purposes. These definitions are:

- Meat – flesh of animals (sometimes called Fleshig or Basar).
- Milk/Dairy – the milk produced by a kosher animal.
- Pareve – None of the above, (plants, fish, chemicals, etc) and it was not prepared on equipment used to prepare Meat or Dairy.

## SPECIFIC DEFINITIONS/RESTRICTIONS

**Fruit, vegetables, nuts, etc** – all raw, unprepared plants are kosher and pareve. However, they must all be washed and then checked for insect infestations immediately prior to use. Leafy green vegetables must be washed and inspected by an HKA Mashgiach. Because of the difficulty in checking for insects in them, fresh artichokes, brussel sprouts and raspberries are not permitted at the cook-off. Dried fruit and smoked fruit does require certification. Dried chili peppers are acceptable without cert.

**Meat** – Kosher meat must be slaughtered in a very particular manner, the internal organs inspected for any signs of disease, and the meat soaked in a brine solution to remove as much blood as possible. For mammals, only those that chew their cud and have cloven hooves are Kosher. Acceptable poultry and fowl are listed by name in the Torah. In the United States, the only poultry commonly accepted by mainstream kashrut organizations as kosher are chicken, turkey, duck and goose. Certain species of quail are also accepted, though not readily available.

**Eggs** - Eggs from a kosher bird are kosher and pareve, and must be individually cracked and checked for blood spots prior to being used. Any egg with blood spots and any cracked eggs it is touching must be discarded.

**Fish** – Fish and meat may not be eaten together, so no fish or products containing fish are allowed at the cook-off, again even if you don't plan on cooking with it.

**Wine** – Grape products have a very special place in Judaism and Kashrut. All natural grape derivatives have special kosher considerations. All natural grape products must come from grape juice that has been supervised from start to finish. Only these products (including jams and juice) can be certified and approved as kosher. All wines must be Kosher and also must say on the label (usually on the back label) "Mevushal."

**Alcohol** – all domestic, unflavored beers are Kosher without a symbol. Plain, unflavored domestic Vodka is also kosher without a symbol. Simple (no sherry casks, etc) single-malt scotches are kosher without a symbol.

**Spices/Herbs** - All fresh leafy spices, herbs and vegetables will be washed by a HKA representative. Fresh spices/Herbs do not require Kosher certification. Anything other than whole spices must have Kosher certification. If it is a mixture of spices, it requires certification.

**Other prepared products** – prepared products are allowed, but they must have an approved Kosher Symbol on the product and be Pareve (not Meat or Fish).

**Canned products** - Vegetables and beans require acceptable kosher supervision. Canned fruit is acceptable without kosher supervision if BOTH of the following 2 conditions are satisfied:

1. It contains no natural or artificial flavors or colors
2. It is not from China

**No Kosher Supervision Required** – In addition to the items mentioned elsewhere, the following items do not require kosher supervision:

Aluminum Foil	Corn Starch	Popcorn kernels-plain raw
Baking powder	Cupcake holders	Salt
Baking soda	Dishwashing gloves	Split peas raw
Beer unflavored	Farina-raw plain	Sugar-cane, beet, brown
Bran unprocessed	Grains raw	Tea unflavored
Buckwheat raw	Molasses unflavored	Water-unflavored even with fluoride
Carob Powder	Oats-pure raw	
Coffee, ground, unflavored	Paper plates, cups, napkins	
Corn Meal	(Though they must be	
Corn Powder	unopened)	

**Utensils** – Utensils can cross-contaminate meat and dairy, or even treif, so each team will be provided with a set of equipment as part of their entry fee.

## APPROVED KOSHER SUPERVISION AGENCIES/SYMBOLS

One of the following symbols of Kosher Supervision must appear on all foods that you intend to cook with that require supervision.

If the symbol is by itself on the label or *just* has an upper-case P, it is assumed to be Pareve. (P in this case actually means Passover, but if that's the only additional marking (no D, etc) it is also pareve.)

If the symbol has a small upper-case D, or DE or the word "dairy", it is **NOT** permitted.

If the symbol has the word "meat" or "fish", it is **NOT** permitted.

If you have any questions, please contact HKA at [RabbiDubin@KosherHouston.org](mailto:RabbiDubin@KosherHouston.org) or 347-254-0593.

Common Symbols:



Other Acceptable ones:



(KSA Only acceptable for products manufactured in the USA).

## CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certify that we have read this entire manual and agree to abide by all rules and procedures. We recognize that any violation of these rules, even unintentional, could result in the disqualification of our Chili entry or even a request to immediately leave the grounds of the cook-off, at the sole discretion of the HKA supervisor present and the Houston Kosher Chili Cook-off Chair, Danny Fishman, based on their determination of the circumstances.

Team Name/Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Names/Signatures

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (Team Leader)
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
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