



Kashering the Kitchen

Introduction

Dishes, utensils, kitchen appliances, countertops, and anything else used with food year-round, cannot be used for Passover unless it goes through a process known as “*kashering*” or “*hechsher keilim*”. For a few items *kashering* just involves thoroughly cleaning the item, but for most items *kashering* also requires submerging the item in boiling water or a similar hot process. The laws of *kashering* are quite complex, and this article will present the most practical points for the average consumer; readers are encouraged to discuss any questions not covered in this article with their local Orthodox Rabbi.

The following items **may not** be *kashered* for Passover:

- China, pottery, earthenware, cement/concrete and enameled pots **may not** be *kashered* for Passover. The Ashkenazic custom is to not *kasher glass*, with the exception of glass stovetops discussed below. There is a difference of opinion as to whether **plastic** and other synthetic materials are included in this rule, and the cRc position is that those materials may be *kashered*.
- Utensils and appliances which cannot be thoroughly cleaned such as those having crevices in which *chametz* can accumulate **may not** be *kashered* for Passover. Some examples of this are dishwashers, sieves, graters, utensils with loose-fitting handles, and bottles with narrow necks.
- Materials which might get ruined during the *kashering* process **may not** be *kashered* for Passover, as the Rabbis were concerned that the person would not *kasher* properly for fear of ruining the utensil or appliance.

We now turn to the parts of the kitchen which can be *kashered*.

Flatware

Silver, stainless steel, and plastic flatware may be *kashered*. The process begins with a thorough cleaning, after which the utensil should not be used for 24 hours. A pot of water is brought to a rolling boil, and the pieces of flatware are dropped into the water one at a time. If the water stops boiling at any point, one must wait until it returns to a boil before putting in any more flatware. The custom is to rinse the flatware with cold water after *kashering*.

Some have the custom to *kasher* in a dedicated

New Utensils

Many people choose to purchase extra dishes, flatware, and other utensils which are kept from year to year for Passover use, thereby avoiding the need to *kasher* those items.

- All **new** metal, aluminum and glass utensils require *tevilat keilim* (ritual immersion) in a kosher *mikvah* (ritual bath).
- New disposable aluminum pans are acceptable for Passover without special certification. Ritual immersion and the appropriate *bracha* (blessing) are required if the pans will be used more than once.
- New utensils made of plastic or Styrofoam are acceptable without special certification, and ritual immersion is not required.



“*kashering* pot” which is not used for anything else, but most *kasher* in any pot which is clean and has not been used for 24 hours.

Pots and Pans

Standard metal pots are *kashered* in the same manner as flatware; consult with your Rabbi if the pot which requires *kashering* is too large to fit into any other pot of boiling water. **Enameled pots** and **glass pots (e.g. Pyrex)** cannot be *kashered*.

In general, **baking, roasting, and frying pans** cannot be *kashered* for Passover unless they are always used with generous amounts of oil or other grease when cooking. If that is the case, they can be *kashered* via *libun kal* which involves cleaning the pans well, not using them for 24 hours and then putting them on an open flame until both the inside and outside of the pan are hot enough to singe paper.

Drinking Glasses

The Ashkenazic custom is that drinking glasses made of **glass** cannot be *kashered* if they were ever used for hot beverages or washed with hot water, such as in a dishwasher. If they were never used or washed hot, contact your Rabbi for directions as to how they may be *kashered*. Drinking glasses made of **plastic** can be *kashered* in the same manner as flatware outlined above, and drinking glasses (or anything else) made of **ceramic or china** cannot be *kashered*.

Tablecloths

Fabric tablecloths may be used for Passover after being laundered. **Vinyl tablecloths** cannot be *kashered* and should be replaced for Passover.

Electric Mixers, Food Processors and Blenders

The motor area of small electric appliances (e.g. mixers, food processor, blenders) is often exposed to *chametz* and is very difficult to clean; it is therefore recommended that one purchase separate appliances which should be reserved for Passover use. Food processors and blenders whose motor area is truly sealed (i.e. they cannot be unscrewed or opened by consumers) are not affected by this issue and may be used for Passover after separate bowls and blades are purchased for Passover use.

Sinks

Stainless steel or Corian sinks may be *kashered* by cleaning them thoroughly, leaving them unused for 24 hours, and then carefully pouring boiling water from a kettle over all surfaces of the sink and faucet. The strainer covering the sink’s drain should be replaced for Passover. **Porcelain sinks cannot be *kashered***. Dishes and other Passover utensils may not be placed in a sink which was not *kashered*; rather, an insert or basin which was never used for *chametz* must be placed in the sink, and all dishes should be put into that insert.



Stovetops and Ovens

Stovetops (ranges) and ovens may be *kashered* for Passover use, and the process for doing so is as follows:

Stovetops

The most common type of stovetop is a metal grate over an open flame, which is situated on a porcelain surface. Others have electric coils in the place of an open flame or have a **glass** surface covering electric coils, and the most popular brands for this type of stovetop are **Corning** and **Ceran**.

The *kashering* of all of these stovetops is similar. All parts of the stovetop should be thoroughly cleaned, including scraping residual food from the surface and catch-tray, and not used for 24 hours. Then the fire or coil should be turned to its maximum temperature for one hour. Finally the knobs, catch trays and all areas between the burners must be covered with aluminum foil.

Non self-cleaning oven

The interior and exterior surfaces of the oven must be thoroughly cleaned, the oven should not be used for a full 24 hours, and then it should be turned on to its highest temperature for one hour. As an added precaution for Passover, once this process is complete, the racks and grates should be covered on both sides with aluminum foil (which should be perforated for air circulation). Additionally, no food should be permitted to touch the side, bottom or top of the oven on Passover.

Self-cleaning oven

A complete self-clean cycle should be run with the racks inside the oven, and then the oven may be used for Passover without covering the racks. This *kashering* may be done even if the oven was not left unused for 24 hours. If the racks are not inside the oven while the self-clean cycle is run, the racks should be *kashered* separately.

Note: All oven cleaners are acceptable for year-round use including Passover.

Microwave oven

Microwave ovens may be used on *Chol HaMoed*, but not on *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*. The **glass plate cannot be *kashered* (or used)** and should be removed before *kashering* begins. To *kasher* the appliance itself, the microwave must be thoroughly cleaned and not used for 24 hours. Then, a cup of water should be boiled in the chamber for an extended amount of time, until the chamber fills with steam and the water overflows from the cup. For Passover, it is a commendable extra precaution to cover all foods in the microwave, even after performing the above *kashering*. If a microwave has a metal grate, it should be *kashered* in a pot of hot water as described in the Flatware section above.

For **convection microwave ovens**, the same *kashering* process as a conventional oven should be followed, paying particular attention to cleaning out the chamber and fan assembly.



Refrigerators and Freezers

All parts of refrigerators and freezers must be thoroughly cleaned and washed, including storage bins. The shelves should be lined with plastic or foil, which should be perforated with small perforations to allow for air circulation.

Countertops

The procedure for *kashering* a countertop is to clean it thoroughly, not use it for 24 hours, and then carefully pour boiling water on all surfaces. Once the countertop is *kashered*, it may be used without being covered. However, many people have a custom to both *kasher* and cover their countertops. As noted at the beginning of this article, one may not *kasher* utensils made of certain materials (ceramic, cement, glass), materials which are not robust enough to withstanding *kashering*, and any utensil that has cracks, nicks or scratches where pieces of food might get stuck. These same restrictions apply to countertops.

In any situation where the countertop cannot or will not be *kashered*, it may only be used on Passover after being covered with a non-porous material which will not easily rip or tear.

There are many countertop materials available for home use today, with the old favorite being **plastic laminate**, manufactured by laminating a hard plastic material onto a thin piece of wood. Some popular brands of laminate are **Formica**, **Pionite**, **Wilsonart**, and **Nevamar**. In some cases, there are seams where two pieces of laminate meet, creating the potential for *chametz* collecting in that area during the year, and special attention should be paid to cleaning those seams.

Butcher block or wood surfaces are once again becoming popular. Wood may be *kashered* only if it contains no cracks that might trap *chametz*. Due to the likelihood of such cracks developing, it was the practice to sand down wooden surfaces in butcher shops before Passover. If sanding the countertops is practical in one's home or if the countertop contains no cracks, the countertop may be *kashered*; otherwise the wooden countertop should be covered for Passover. Some of the popular wood brands on the market are **John Boos**, **Craftart**, **Spekva**, and **Omega**.

Many kitchens use natural stone such as **granite**, **marble**, **limestone**, **soapstone**, **slate**, and **onyx** for countertops. All of these may be *kashered* for Passover regardless of which sealant is used to coat the stone.

Another material used for countertops is **quartz resin**, a man-made material made to look like granite or marble. It is different than natural stone in that it is not porous. Therefore the surface does not need to be sealed. Some common brands are **Cambria**, **Silestone**, **Zodiaq**, and **Caesar Stone**. These may be *kashered* for Passover.

Similarly, there is another countertop material which is made to look like stone but it is actually an **acrylic or polyester** and therefore easy to maintain. Some popular brands



are **Corian, Staron, Swanstone, Gibraltar, Surrell, and Avonite**. These materials may be *kashered* for Passover if they do not contain any scratches or stains; otherwise they must be covered.

There are also **glass, ceramic, cement, and porcelain** countertops available, with porous grout between each tile. **Buddy Rhodes** and **Cheng Design** are popular brands of cement countertop. These countertops **may not be kashered** for Passover and must be covered.

While not used as often in a home, **stainless steel, copper, and zinc** countertops are also available, and they may be *kashered* for Passover.

There can always be unique situations that might arise in one's own home. When in doubt, contact your local Orthodox Rabbi. Special thanks to Rick Glickman of "Dream Kitchens" for his assistance with our countertop research.

A summary of the information about countertops is included in the chart below.

COUNTERTOPS

The following is a summary of the countertop information presented in the preceding article.

Brand Name or Material	Can it be kashered?	Comment
Acrylic	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Avonite	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Buddy Rhodes	No	Must be covered for Passover
Butcher Block	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Caesar Stone	Yes	
Cambria	Yes	
Cement	No	Must be covered for Passover
Ceramic tile	No	Must be covered for Passover
Cheng Design	No	Must be covered for Passover
Concrete	No	Must be covered for Passover
Copper	Yes	
Corian	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Craftart	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Formica	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Gibraltar	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Glass tile	No	Must be covered for Passover
Granite	Yes	



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Brand Name or Material	Can it be kashered?	Comment
John Boos	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Laminate (plastic)	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Limestone	Yes	
Marble	Yes	
Nevamar	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Omega	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Pionite	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Plastic Laminate	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Porcelain	No	Must be covered for Passover
Quartz Resin	Yes	
Silestone	Yes	
Slate	Yes	
Soapstone	Yes	
Spekva	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Stainless Steel	Yes	
Staron	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Surrell	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Swanstone	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no scratches or stains; otherwise cover.
Wilsonart	Yes	Carefully clean seams before <i>kashering</i> .
Wood	Yes	May be <i>kashered</i> if there are no cracks; otherwise sand or cover.
Zinc	Yes	
Zodiaq	Yes	

