

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** or **crystal**, 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, out of concern that the person would be afraid of breaking his utensil and would therefore not *kasher* properly.

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

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1. Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Chazon Ovadia* – Pesach 2003 edition page 151), following the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim 451:26*), rules that glass and crystal DO NOT need to be *kashered* for Pesach. Glass is a non-porous material, and thus merely requires to be washed and cleaned and may be used for *Pesach*. This includes **Pyrex** and **Duralex** as well. (*Chazon Ovadia*, *ibid.*)
2. However, an item that is not 100% glass, but contains even a small amount of material that is not able to be *kashered*, such as ceramic, may not be *kashered* (personal communication with Rav Ovadia Yosef). For example, a glass stovetop is likely not 100% glass and may contain additional materials. If even a small percentage of those additional materials are not *kasher-able*, then the entire stovetop may not be *kashered*.
3. Rav Yosef (*Chazon Ovadia* – Pesach 2003 edition, page 151) opines that plastic may be *kashered* for Pesach.

NOTE: Sephardic applications are indicated in marked boxes.

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 “*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 *kasher*ed 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 (e.g. Fiesta Ware, Le Creuset)** and **glass pots (e.g. Pyrex)** cannot be *kasher*ed.

In general, **baking, roasting,** and **frying pans** cannot be *kasher*ed 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 *kasher*ed via *libun kal* which involves cleaning the pans well, not using them for 24 hours and then putting them upside-down 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 *kasher*ed 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, fill the glasses with water and leave the water in the glasses for at least 24 hours; repeat this procedure two additional times with fresh water. Drinking glasses made of **plastic** can be *kasher*ed in the same manner as flatware outlined above, and drinking glasses (or anything else) made of **ceramic** or **china** cannot be *kasher*ed.

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Glass Pots (Pyrex)

Per point #1 above, these items do not need to undergo *kashering*. Washing and cleaning them suffices (*Chazon Ovadia* – Pesach 2003 edition page 152).

Frying Pans

Following the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 451:11), Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Chazon Ovadia* – Pesach 2003 edition page 138) rules that *hagala* suffices for frying pans. However, the difficulty in achieving the prerequisite level of cleanliness necessary for *hagala* may make this process impractical.

Glassware

Per point #1 above, glassware does not require more than being washed and cleaned to be usable on Passover.

TABLECLOTHS

Fabric tablecloths may be used for Passover after being laundered. **Vinyl tablecloths** cannot be *kasher*ed 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. A food processor or blender whose motor area is truly sealed, such that food does not penetrate, is 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 *kasher*ed 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, and the aerator on the faucet, should be replaced for Passover. If a faucet has a coiled hose, the faucet can be used on *Pesach* as long as the coiled portion remains in the “base” and is not pulled out. **Porcelain sinks** cannot be *kasher*ed. Dishes and other Passover utensils may not be placed in a sink which was not *kasher*ed; 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.

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Sinks

Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Chazon Ovadia* – Pesach 2003 edition page 151) ruled that **porcelain** sinks may be *kasher*ed in the same way that **stainless steel** or **Corian** sinks are *kasher*ed. He added that it is preferable to undergo this process three times for **porcelain** sinks.

STOVETOPS AND OVENS

Stovetops (ranges) and ovens may be *kasher*ed for Pass-

over 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 enamel surface. Others have electric coils in the place of an open flame or have a **glass** (a.k.a. glass-ceramic) surface covering electric coils; the most popular brands for this last type of stovetop are **Corning** and **Ceran**.

The *kashering* of stovetops – including glass ones – is done as follows: 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 at least 30 minutes. [For electric stovetops with exposed coils (i.e. not covered with glass), leave the coils on for just 15 minutes.]

Afterwards, cover the following areas with foil: (a) the knobs, catch trays, and all areas between the burners, and (b) areas behind the burners where pots might touch. If there is food residue on the underside of the stove's hood, it should be thoroughly cleaned before Pesach.

NON SELF-CLEANING OVEN

The interior and exterior surfaces of the oven and its racks must be thoroughly cleaned, the oven and racks should not be used for a full 24 hours, and then the oven should be turned on to 500-550°F for one hour. As an added precaution for Passover, once this process is complete, some cover the racks and grates on both sides with aluminum foil (which should be perforated for air circulation), and do not allow food to touch the side, bottom or top of the oven on Passover.

SELF-CLEANING OVEN

A complete high-temperature 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

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Ovens

Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Chazon Ovadia* – Pesach 2003 edition page 132) does not require the additional stringencies of covering the racks etc. and preventing food from coming into contact with the oven walls.

while the self-clean cycle is run, the racks should be *kashered* separately.

Note: Low-temperature self-clean cycles (e.g. AquaLift, Steam Clean) do not qualify as *kashering*.

WARMING DRAWER

Light one can of chafing-dish fuel (e.g. Sterno cans) in the warming drawer, being sure to use a can fueled with ethanol or methanol. [Wicked-cans that use diethylene glycol as a fuel should not be used for *kashering*.] Make sure to leave the door of the warming drawer slightly ajar, so that there will be enough air to allow for combustion, and allow the can to burn for two hours. As with all *kashering*, before you begin, the warming drawer must be thoroughly cleaned and not used for 24 hours.

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. Some microwaves have a porcelain enamel interior; these **cannot** be *kashered*.

To *kasher* the microwave appliance, clean it thoroughly, and do not use it 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.

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Microwave oven

Regarding the glass plate, refer to Point 1 above that glass does not require anything more than being washed and cleaned to be usable on Passover. This assumes, though, that the plate does not contain even a small amount of *un-kasherable* materials (see Point 2 above).

REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS

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

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.

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), or with materials which are not robust enough to withstanding *kashering*, and one may also not *kasher* any utensil that has cracks, nicks, or scratches where pieces of food might get stuck. These same restrictions apply to countertops, and the practical examples are detailed below.

There are many countertop materials available for home use today, with an old favorite being **plastic laminate (Formica)**, manufactured by laminating a hard plastic material onto a thin piece of wood. 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.

Others create counters from **butcher block** or **wood**. In general, 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

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Refrigerators

Rav Ovadia Yosef does not require the shelves to be covered, assuming the general usage does not involve placing boiling hot pots and pans directly on the racks. To his view, washing and cleaning the shelves is sufficient (*Chazon Ovadia* – Pesach 2003 edition page 148).

covered for Passover.

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

Another material used for countertops is **quartz resin**, a man-made material made to look like granite or marble. Some common brands are **Cambria, Caesar Stone, Silestone, QStone,** and **Zodiaq**. These may be *kashered* for Passover. Similarly, countertops made of **acrylic** or **polyester** look like stone. Some popular brands are **Avonite, Corian, Gibraltar, Hi-Macs, Meganite, Staron, Surrell,** and **Swanstone**. 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. These countertops **cannot 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.

Special thanks to Rick Glickman of “Dream Kitchens” in Highland Park, Illinois, for his assistance with our countertop research.

As with all *halachic* issues, if a question arises regarding *kashering* one's kitchen, contact your local Orthodox Rabbi.

A summary of the information about countertops is included in the chart on the following page. ▲

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Countertops

According to Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Chazon Ovadia* – Pesach 2003 edition page 160), countertops are *kashered* by pouring boiling hot water over them, assuming of course that the material is *kasherable*.

Glass Countertops

Although Rav Ovadia Yosef is lenient regarding glass, in this instance, due to the presence of porous *un-kasherable* grout, one should cover such a countertop and not *kasher* it.