

Potluck Kashrut Guidelines

We're so glad you want to join us for potluck or share food with us at Etz Hayim! We have a potluck dinner after Friday night services on the third Friday of most months. During summer months we have a potluck dinner before services. We encourage everyone to bring a dish to share, but if you can't - please join us anyway! There are also other opportunities to bring food throughout the year.

In recognition of the sacred nature of food and communal eating, Jewish law institutes the rules we call *kashrut*. In order for us to share food, we have come up with the following guidelines so that all food brought for official Etz Hayim events meets a baseline level of kashrut.

Please note: while the following guidelines are meant to help a community with many different kashrut practices share food, they should not be taken as a guide for how to keep a kosher kitchen. If you are interested in maintaining a kosher kitchen, please reach out to Rav Amelia who would be delighted to help!

Please review the following guidelines carefully:

- All food must be milchig or pareve, meaning vegetarian food or [kosher fish](#).
- Store-bought multi-ingredient food must have a hechsher (symbol on the packaging that indicates a kashrut agency has declared it to be kosher). See a non-exhaustive list of hechshers [here](#). Raw/fresh fruits and vegetables, including store cut, do not need a hechsher.
- Food made in a kosher kitchen can be made as usual. *(For the purposes of these guidelines, a kosher kitchen refers to a kitchen where meat and dairy are kept separate and are cooked with different utensils and dishes and where all foods used in the kitchen are understood to be kosher either by hechsher or by ingredients.)**
- Cheese made with any sort of rennet or enzymes may be used for potluck and does not have to be hechshered. To learn more about the kashrut of cheese, [please see this teshuva](#).
- Food made in a non-kosher kitchen must be:
 - Made with kosher ingredients only (either known to be kosher by hechsher or by ingredients).
 - When food is hot (such as during cooking or baking), it must be cooked or baked in and with:
 - disposable (single use) utensils and dishes or

*We recognize that different people have different standards of kashrut. As noted above, if you (the reader) consider yourself to keep a kosher kitchen through separating meat from dairy and only using kosher ingredients, then you are trusted. If you have any questions, please reach out to the Rabbi.

- utensils and dishes set aside for the purposes of kosher food only or
- utensils and dishes that have been clean and unused for 24 hours prior to food preparation.**
- Only hechshered food may enter the kitchen.

As a best practice, we encourage you to bring in a card with labels that include ingredients, especially allergens and dairy and note whether the cheese you use (if applicable) is made with animal rennet.

In order to preserve the sanctity of Shabbat, all foods must be cooked or heated before Shabbat starts, which is eighteen minutes before sunset on Friday. If you have a warming tray, you may use it to heat the food even after Shabbat starts.

**24 hours comes from the Talmudic-rabbinic understanding of how long flavor remains in a dish and when it can transfer to another dish so as to render that dish forbidden.

Nut-Aware Policy

Purpose Congregation Etz Hayim is committed to creating a safe and welcoming space for all members of our community. While we are not a completely nut-free facility, we are a **nut-aware community**, and we ask for everyone's cooperation in minimizing risk and promoting safety.

What does "Nut-Aware" mean?

- We **strongly discourage** bringing foods that contain peanuts or tree nuts to the synagogue.
- We ask **all families, staff, and guests** to read ingredient labels carefully and avoid products that:
 - Contain peanuts or tree nuts
 - Include nut oils or nut butters
 - Include nut flour
 - Are labeled "may contain nuts" or "processes in a facility that also processes nuts"
- We **encourage store-bought items** with clear ingredient labeling for shared snacks and events.

Events & Community Gatherings

- Event organizers are asked to **prioritize nut-free options** when planning menus.
- **Caterers and vendors** should be informed of our nut-aware policy and asked to avoid nut-containing ingredients.
- If nut-containing items are present, they must be **clearly labeled** and kept separate from other foods.

Preschool & Religious School Guidelines

- **Snacks and lunches** should be nut-free to protect children with allergies.
- **Teachers and staff** will monitor food brought into classrooms and may remove items that pose a risk.
- **Birthday and holiday treats** must be store-bought, sealed, and clearly labeled as nut-free.
- **Parents** of Religious School students are required to:

- Note their child's allergy on designated areas of school forms;
- Verbally alert both the Religious School Director and the student's teacher to the allergy;
- Provide specific instructions and, if needed, medications in the event their child has an allergic reaction to nuts.
- **Staff are trained** in allergy awareness and general emergency response procedures.

Our Shared Responsibility

We rely on the care and mindfulness of our entire community to protect those with allergies. By being nut-aware, we demonstrate our values of compassion, inclusion, and mutual respect.

Questions & Communication

If you have questions about this policy or need guidance on safe food choices, please contact the synagogue office at **office@etzhayim.net**.

Thank you for helping us make Congregation Etz Hayim a safe and thoughtful space for everyone.