

Proposed Potluck Guidelines

For Beth Shalom programs, the values of Kashrut (awareness of food), Derech Eretz (how we treat one another) and Kehillah Kedoshah (being included in a sacred community) are of utmost importance. Our goal is to live these values and experience them daily at Beth Shalom.

We want to ensure that everyone is aware of these guidelines so that we are consistent and respectful in fulfilling these goals together.

With the value of Kashrut playing such a preeminent role, we expect the food that is prepared in the kitchen at Beth Shalom to be maintained under kashrut supervision.

However, it is becoming more apparent that meals prepared in the kitchen are not helping us reach goals of building community and providing programming that is accessible to many in our congregation. The cost of on-site preparation for Shabbat meals can be a barrier to participation for many. There are events that people would like to attend but are not able to due to the cost. In addition, members of a Kehillah, making food for one another, helps to strengthen the feeling of community.

To overcome these two concerns, the following guidelines have been established in order to allow for pot-luck functions to be held under the auspices of Congregation Beth Shalom. These guidelines should be followed whether the program is to be held at Beth Shalom or at an outside location.

1. During potluck events the Beth Shalom kitchens will remain closed. All items necessary for the potluck, such as paper goods will be arranged and organized before the event so as not to have to enter the kitchens during the event itself.
2. Potlucks can also be held at congregants' homes or neutral locations. If the location of the potluck is not kosher, appropriate steps must be taken to assure disposable serving utensils and similar items are available for use.
3. Only dairy or parve (neutral) food can be brought to a pot-luck meal. No meat (even if kosher) can be brought to a meal.
4. All prepared foods should be brought to the potluck in **new plastic or foil containers with new plastic serving utensils. Conversely, they can be brought** in a container or serving bowl or platter used exclusively for bringing food to Beth Shalom. Good quality "caterware" is inexpensive and ideal for this purpose.
5. Food brought to a potluck should be marked with the preparer's name, ingredients and potential allergens.
6. When preparing foods for the synagogue, use only Kosher ingredients (those prepared foods which contain a hechsher, or do not require certification)
7. Cold food that requires no cooking of any kind can be prepared with your existing utensils provided that all ingredients are kosher and that all utensils have been thoroughly cleaned.
8. Fresh fruit and vegetables are kosher and do not require a kosher symbol. Drinks such as milk, 100% fruit juice or soda are also kosher, even those without a kosher symbol.
9. For congregational purposes, wine and grape juice should have kashrut certification.
10. All domestically produced cheeses are permitted even without a kosher symbol on the package.
11. Products containing gelatin must contain a hechsher.
12. Fresh fish is also kosher without a kosher symbol if it is on the list of kosher fish. Fish with scales and fins are kosher such as tuna, scrod, sole, salmon, sardines, whitefish, herring, halibut, talapia and flounder. (Canned tuna is also considered fresh fish.) Eel, catfish as well as all shellfish are not kosher.
13. Members who have a "**kosher**" home (defined below) may cook/bake in their kitchen and bring the food to share at a pot-luck meal.
14. Members who have a "**not yet kosher**" home may cook/bake in their kitchen if they use brand new pots, pans, baking dishes, e.g. aluminum pans, and provided that they kasher their oven before cooking or baking. This is done simply by running it through a self-cleaning cycle and then letting it run empty at its highest setting for 30 minutes. If your oven lacks a self-cleaning cycle, please thoroughly clean the oven so that no food particles remain and then run it on its highest setting for 30 minutes. 100% metal utensils can be thoroughly cleaned, run through the dishwasher, and then used. Please do not use previously used wooden or ceramic items that will come in contact with anything hot.
15. All ingredients for such food (in numbers 4 and 5 above) must be kosher. This means any processed food to be used as part of a recipe for a dish cooked in a member's home must have a kosher symbol. (As an example, tomato sauce bought in a store must have a kosher symbol.)
16. Any commercially prepared food that has kashrut supervision can be brought to a pot-luck meal such as Entenmann's cakes or Sabra salads.
17. All food for a pot-luck must be cooked or purchased before the beginning of Shabbat but can be brought to the potluck on Shabbat.
18. We will have no way to store leftovers. Please plan to take home your dish's leftovers.
19. Please label what it is you've made/bought and highlight any dietary issues that people might need to know (nut free or gluten free, for instance)

20. Warming of food at a potluck can be done through electric food warming trays which are either left on from before Shabbat begins or are on a timer. An oven can also be left on at a low temperature (200 degrees) to warm food on Shabbat.
21. The Congregation's Mara D'Atra (or designated representative) serves as the Masgiach (Kosher supervisor) for the congregation and retains final decision as to an item's acceptability at a potluck. Questions should be brought to the Mashgiach's attention.

Different households will practice kashrut as they determine. Please note that there are items listed below as acceptable in a home kitchen that, when we come together for a potluck, are not permissible. For example, there are different opinions in the Conservative Movement as to the kashrut of cheeses with non-kosher [REDACTED] gelatin, and swordfish. These items, and others, are deemed as halachikly acceptable by some within our movement and therefore would not disqualify a certain home from being considered kosher. But, we ask that these items not be brought to our communal, pot-luck meals. For purposes of Congregation Beth Shalom's communal Kashrut, the **DEFINITION OF A KOSHER HOME is:**

Exclusively kosher foods are brought into the home:

All meat and poultry is purchased from a kosher butcher or is prepackaged and has rabbinic certification.

Only kosher fish – that is, those with fins and scales – are used. Shell fish and eels are not used. A list of kosher and non-kosher species can be found on the internet www.kashrut.com/articles/fish/. Some Conservative practice permits the eating of swordfish and sturgeon, although many people do not follow this ruling.

All packaged, canned, or frozen products are certified kosher.

Commercially cooked food must come from establishments that are under rabbinic supervision.

Commercially baked goods must come from establishments that are under rabbinic supervision.

All wines and cheeses are permitted.

Eggs are checked for blood spots and spotted eggs are discarded. (Checking is especially necessary for “free-range” and organic eggs. For regular “factory eggs” this practice is not necessary, but a blessing alights on the scrupulous). In all events, if blood is found, the eggs must be discarded.)

Meat and dairy dishes are completely separated in the kitchen:

Separate dishes, pots, pans, utensils and flatware are used for meat and dairy foods. Utensils that become non-kosher are properly koshered.

Meat & dairy dishes, pots, utensils, etc. are washed separately. Separate sponges, cloths, towels are used. Meat and dairy dishes are not washed together in the dishwasher.

Need more help?

If there are any questions, please feel free to call me in the office 412-421-2288. I know these sound complex, but I believe with a commitment by all of us to work together we can enjoy pot-luck meals that are delicious and kosher.