

## Potluck Guidelines, Revised February 2020

Congregation Beth Shalom, Pittsburgh, PA

The values of *kashrut* (holy eating), *derech eretz* (how we treat one another) and *kehillah kedoshah* (the context of sacred community) are of primary importance to the Beth Shalom community. As such, we provide the following guidelines to ensure that potluck meals at Beth Shalom are consistent and respectful of our *kehillah's* values. (These guidelines may also be helpful regarding how you may elevate the principle of holy eating in your own home. If you have questions, please contact Rabbi Adelson.)

These principles have been established to allow for potluck functions to be held under the auspices of Congregation Beth Shalom, either in the synagogue building or at an off-site 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.
2. Potlucks may 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 *pareve* (neither dairy nor meat) food can be brought to a potluck meal. No meat or *fleishig* dishes (even if kosher) may be brought to a potluck meal.
4. All prepared foods should be brought to the potluck in **new plastic or foil containers or glass 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 include the following info, preferably on a card that may be displayed alongside the food: the preparer's name, ingredients and potential allergens. Please prepare this card beforehand, as we do not write on Shabbat.
6. When preparing foods for the synagogue, use only kosher ingredients (those prepared foods which are labeled with a *heksheber*, the certifying mark of a *kashrut* supervision organization, or do not require certification)
7. Cold food that requires no cooking of any kind (e.g. salads made with only fresh vegetables) can be prepared with your existing utensils provided that all ingredients are kosher and that all utensils have been thoroughly cleaned.
8. Items that do not require a *heksheber*:
  - Fresh fruits and vegetables (please note that canned items do require a *heksheber*)
  - Drinks such as milk, 100% fruit juice or soda are also kosher, even those without a kosher symbol
  - Pure oils, pure sugar, pure coffee and tea (not herbal infusions or flavored teas)
  - Fresh kosher fish (those with scales and fins are kosher: tuna, scrod, sole, salmon, sardines, whitefish, herring, halibut, tilapia and flounder. For a more extensive list,

check out [www.kashrut.com/articles/fish/](http://www.kashrut.com/articles/fish/). Eel, catfish as well as all shellfish are not kosher.

9. Wine and grape juice should have *kashrut* certification.
10. All domestically produced cheeses are permitted even without a *hekshter*.
11. Products containing gelatin require a *hekshter*.
12. Please note that a plain letter “K” is not considered an acceptable *hekshter*. If you have questions about certifying marks, please contact Rabbi Adelson.
13. Members who have a **“kosher”** kitchen (defined below) may cook/bake in their kitchen and bring the food to share at a potluck 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 may be thoroughly cleaned, then entirely immersed briefly in boiling water. Please do not use previously used wooden or ceramic items that will come in contact with anything hot.
15. Any commercially prepared food that has *kashrut* supervision can be brought to a potluck meal.
16. All food for a potluck must be cooked or purchased before the beginning of Shabbat but can be brought to the potluck on Shabbat.
17. We will have no way to store leftovers. Please take your leftovers home with you.
18. Food at a potluck may be warmed via electric food-warming trays, which have been set up before Shabbat (e.g. on a timer) or (if at home) in an oven left on for Shabbat at 200 degrees F.
19. Rabbi Adelson is the *mashgiach* (supervisor) for the congregation, and all questions regarding the above should be directed to him.

### **How do I know if my kitchen is kosher?**

While we acknowledge that different households have varying practices regarding *kashrut*, we offer this standard for the sake of consistency and *shelom bayit*, so that all may feel welcome and comfortable at these meals.

For the purposes of potluck meals at Congregation Beth Shalom, the definition of a kosher kitchen is:

#### **1. Exclusively kosher foods are brought into the home**

- All meat and poultry is purchased from a kosher butcher or is prepackaged and has *kashrut* certification.
- Only kosher fish - that is, those with fins and scales - are used.

- All packaged, canned, or frozen products are certified kosher. (The use of non-hekhshered wines and cheeses is acceptable at home.)
- Commercially cooked food must come from establishments that are under rabbinic supervision.
- Commercially baked goods must come from establishments that are under rabbinic supervision.
- Eggs are checked for blood spots. (Checking is especially necessary for free-range and organic eggs. If blood spots are found, they must be removed from the raw egg before use.)
- Meat and dairy dishes are completely separated in the kitchen:
  - i. Separate dishes, pots, pans, utensils and flatware are used for meat and dairy foods.
  - ii. Utensils that become non-kosher are properly koshered, through cleaning and boiling, or immersion in a *mikveh*.
  - iii. Meat & dairy dishes, pots, utensils, etc. are washed separately. Separate sponges, cloths, towels are used.

**Need more help?** If you have any questions, please feel free to call Rabbi Adelson at 412-421-2288 x115.