

Kashrut (Dietary Laws) Information Sheet

Jewish dietary laws are complicated and Jews need to ensure that they understand the laws in order to be able to follow them properly.

Kashrut is a collective term for Jewish food law. Food that is considered acceptable to eat is called Kosher, literally translating as 'fit'. Food which is not considered acceptable to eat is called treifah. Most of the rules come from the Torah and are found within the books of Leviticus or Deuteronomy.



When it comes to animals that may or may not be eaten, Deuteronomy has guidelines for Jews to follow. Within Deuteronomy, it is made clear that Jews cannot eat animals which do not have cloven hooves (hooves which are split) and animals who do not chew the cud (chew, swallow and regurgitate grass).

This means that animals such as cows are kosher to eat as they have cloven hooves and chew the cud, but animals such as pigs are treifah because they have cloven hooves but they do not chew the cud. There are also further guidelines about what fish and birds can be eaten. Fish have to be covered in scales and have fins. Shellfish on the other hand, would be avoided and considered treifah.



Birds must not eat other birds, therefore a chicken which eats worms and grains is acceptable, but an eagle or another carnivorous bird cannot be eaten. It is unacceptable to eat the flesh, milk, eggs or organs of treifah animals. All fruit and vegetables are parve and can be eaten as long as they do not contain non-kosher insects. Grapes used for wine must not be consumed if the wine is made by non-Jews. Therefore, wine must be of Jewish origin.



If animals are going to be eaten, they also need to be killed in a certain way for them to be kosher. The method of preparing the meat for kosher consumption is known as shechitah. Animals must not be killed in any other way than slitting the throat and allowing the blood to drain from the animal. Shocking or electrocuting the animal is not acceptable. Only certain parts of the animal can be eaten and there must be no blood remaining in the meat.

As well as being correctly killed, and only certain animals being acceptable to be eaten, there are certain food combinations which need to be considered, too. Meat must not be eaten at the same time as dairy. There must be a number of hours before meat can be eaten after dairy or vice-versa. This is why Jewish kitchens must often have two of all cooking utensils, pots and pans and plates etc. Meat and milk must never mix. As an example, a cheeseburger would be treifah to eat. This comes from the Torah where Exodus states 'do not boil a kid in its mother's milk' (Exodus 23:19), therefore this is taken as any mixing of meat and dairy either in the mouth, a cooking pot or on a plate is unacceptable. Jewish people will usually allow between 3-6 hours before eating dairy after meat or meat after dairy.

