



Making Food Sacred - A Beth Hatikvah Policy on Kashrut

“Faith is a private affair in Judaism, while observing tradition is a community effort.”

-- Masha Gessen

The purpose of this policy is to provide a guide for the preparation and consumption of food when we eat as a community, and when our synagogue is used as a gathering place. It takes into account biblical laws, Rabbinic teaching, and the varied traditions of the Jewish people developed over many years and in many lands. It interprets these in ways that positively foster our contemporary ethical and spiritual values as a Reconstructionist Jewish community. It is guided by our synagogue's stated Core Values and a commitment to our stated Vision. It endeavors to be respectful of our traditions and practical in its application. It appreciates that eating as a community is an opportunity to raise our awareness of the sanctity of our daily activities and an opportunity to express our thankfulness for our bounty. Indeed, in adopting this policy, we encourage our community to avoid waste and to be evermore aware of the effects of our choices on the environment, and on other living things.

This policy has been developed by the Ritual Policy Task Force after study and taking into account the feelings and needs of our members. Fundamentally, it is about our intentions as a community. It is a statement of how, out of mutual respect, we will strive to conduct ourselves as a community; it is not a legalistic set of rules to be policed, with violators called to account. By adopting this policy, we hope to open a door of opportunity, and to assist all those who wish to walk through it.

(Because our building is made available to people beyond the Congregation Beth Hatikvah community, the policy also establishes standards for food consumption in our building by outside groups and individuals.)

We encourage a continuing dialogue about this policy. The chair of the Ritual Policy Task Force and the Rabbi will address specific questions, concerns and suggestions.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY EVENT?

Our synagogue is a sacred space for our *kehillah*, or community. So these policies apply to our community's use of our building and our grounds. They also apply to private functions held by members in our building or on our grounds.

In addition, our congregation is a sacred community, wherever it gathers, so these policies apply to certain congregational events held off-site. If there is a pre-set menu that is selected on behalf

of the congregation (at, for example, a fundraising dinner in a catering hall), then these policies are to be followed. When individuals make their own meal choices and pay for them at the time

(at, for example, a Renaissance Havurah event including a meal in a restaurant), then these policies do not apply. When congregants host congregation-sponsored events in their homes (for example, a Moveable Feast dinner at a member's home), these policies do apply.

These policies do not apply to such lifecycle events as a *shiva minyan* (week of mourning following a death), wedding or *brit milah* (bris/circumcision ceremony) held in a member's home or another location outside the synagogue, even if an open invitation has been extended to the community.

In all circumstances, it is in the spirit of Congregation Beth Hatikvah to be considerate of fellow congregants, so members of the community who plan events including a meal are always encouraged to be mindful of these policies.

Because eating is a sacred act, and because we want to instill a sense of communal appreciation for our food, we will recite *motzi* (or the appropriate blessing, if bread is not served) before eating, and we will pause to recite some version of *birkat hamazon* (the prayer after meals) following any seated meal.

OUR MOST FUNDAMENTAL POLICIES

- We do not allow *treyf* in our building or on our grounds, and we do not serve it at community functions. *Treyf* refers to forbidden foods and food-related practices: pork; shellfish; non-kosher meat, fish and poultry; meat and dairy products cooked together or served at the same meal.
- The CBH kitchen is a dairy/parve kitchen. That means that the only foods that can be cooked or prepared in the kitchen, or served on our plates or with our utensils, are dairy or parve (neither meat nor milk) foods. If a meat meal is being served in the building, we allow the warming of kosher meat or poultry in our ovens, in covered containers, and covered containers can be stored in the refrigerator – clearly marked, with meat items where possible on different shelves than milk items. But our kitchen's utensils, plates, flatware, etc. may not be used with meat or poultry; those materials must be brought in for the meal and removed afterward. (Note: Parve foods include fruits, vegetables, grains, eggs and kosher fish. For purposes of *kashrut*, "meat" includes chicken and poultry.)
- We do not require a *hecksher* (the symbols – K, OU, etc. -- indicating Rabbinic supervision of a food product's preparation) on packaged foods and other products brought into our building or served at community events. (For those in doubt, though, a *hecksher* can be a useful guide that a product does not contain *treyf*.)
- A vegetarian option will always be available at any meal.

PUTTING THESE POLICIES INTO PRACTICE

Most community events involving food at CBH have been, and we expect will continue to be, dairy/parve, including Friday night and Saturday morning *onegs*. Nothing about these events needs to change with the adoption of this policy. But because the policy allows serving meat, we need to be more explicit about our norms and expectations as a community in a few specific circumstances.

Arrangements for a Potluck Meal

Potlucks are events in which the participants contribute all or most of the foods, without any sort of control by some official body or representative of CBH over the purchasing or preparation of the foods.

Potluck meals in our building or on our grounds, or at community events in other locations, must be dairy or *parve*. We recognize that congregants and guests bringing foods from home may have prepared them in non-kosher kitchens. But we expect congregants to be sensitive to the intention of our community, which is to value the sanctity of food and Jewish tradition. So foods brought to potlucks should not include *treyf* ingredients.

To show our respect for our fellow congregants – including food allergies and vegetarian or other eating preferences – our norm will be to label the main ingredients in foods we bring to potlucks; pre-printed forms will always be available to facilitate such labeling.

What if We Want to Serve Meat?

From time to time, the congregation, its committees or other groups within the congregation will have an event that involves bringing in purchased, prepared foods, or a combination of purchased foods and foods prepared in members' homes. Examples would include a committee-sponsored barbecue, a religious school class dinner or a community Seder.

Only kosher meat may be served at such events. And to maintain our prohibition on *treyf*, these events cannot be potlucks; the food must be acquired and provided by the event sponsor, or the sponsor must assign food contributions to individual members, being alert to such concerns as the prohibition on mixing meat and milk. Congregants may prepare kosher meat at home, even if they do not maintain a kosher kitchen, and bring it to the CBH kitchen for reheating. In all regards, the kitchen policies outlined in “Our Most Fundamental Policies” apply to such meals. Any questions about the menu for such an event or the acceptability of any food item should be referred to the Rabbi.

What if We Want to Use a Caterer?

Dairy/*parve* events may be catered by a kosher or non-kosher caterer. However, meat meals may only be catered by a kosher caterer. CBH will maintain a list of recommended caterers who demonstrate an understanding of these guidelines and a willingness to adhere to them. Questions should be referred to the Rabbi, or to the designated representative of the Facilities committee.

APPEARANCES

Products such as “mock shrimp,” “mock bacon,” or “mock crab” are not served in our building, on our grounds or at community functions elsewhere. At meals where meat is served, non-dairy substitutes (such as non-dairy creamer, margarine or “ice cream”) should be clearly labeled so no one thinks that meat and milk are being mixed.

SEPARATING MEAT AND MILK

Traditionally, Jewish communities have differed sharply – and quirkily – about the amount of time that must pass between consuming meat and milk at the table. Engaging in this sort of debate seems foreign to the nature of the CBH community. So our policy is that a community event must be either meat or dairy/*parve*, regardless of how long the event lasts. If, for example, a picnic lunch is followed by a program and singing, and then dessert is served, this is a single event and so must be either dairy or meat.

However, if different events involving different groups of congregants occur in close proximity, there is no need to worry about the time between serving meat and dairy foods. For example, if meat is served at a class dinner on Friday night, the *oneg* following services that night can be dairy.

NON-TRADITIONAL ASPECTS OF *KASHRUT*

Kashrut is an evolving system of practices that reflects our values as Jews. Given the growing consciousness in our community about the labor and environmental practices of commercial farmers, butchers and food processors, we are encouraged with the emergence of the “ethical *hecksher*” (or kosher certification), and suggest further community research and study on these issues.

Usage of environmental-friendly products is also encouraged.

PASSOVER

During Passover, we maintain the traditional restrictions on eating *hametz* (that is, food prepared from five species of grain--wheat, barley, oats, spelt, and rye--that has been allowed to leaven), and we do not bring *hametz* into our building. As during the rest of the year, no *hecksher* is required certifying that food products are kosher for Passover. Community events during Passover should be planned in consultation with the Rabbi.

POLICIES FOR NON-CBH GROUPS USING OUR BUILDING OR GROUNDS

Because people or groups outside our community are unlikely to be familiar with our practices and the thinking behind them, we ask them to abide by simple, and somewhat more restrictive, standards than those we ask of our own members.

Renters and others who use our building may bring in dairy/*parve* foods, either catered or not. If they wish to serve meat, they must use a kosher caterer on CBH’s recommended list; the option of preparing kosher meat at home and bringing it to CBH for rewarming is NOT available to outside individuals and groups.

If individuals in an outside group bring their own meals (children or students bringing a brown-bag lunch, for example), we will ask that our policies be communicated to attendees and assume that they will be respected.