

Kosher 101

(Disclaimer: Jeremy and Whitney are by no means experts in kashrut laws, Judaism and/or cooking. The majority of our research comes from experience and expertise of family and friends but also from websites such as: www.myjewishlearning.com; www.chabad.org; www.aish.com; <http://blogs.forward.com/the-jew-and-the-carrot/>).

The basic laws of kashrut (a Hebrew word referring to kosher and its application) are of Biblical origin (Leviticus 11 and



Deuteronomy 17).

The Nitty Gritty:

- **Meat + Dairy = TREIF (a.k.a. non-kosher)**
Meat equals anything that used to be living so we're talking beef, turkey, chicken, lamb. According to the Torah cloven hooved, cud-chewing mammals are kosher. Deer, sheep and goats, for example are all kosher, while pig and rabbit, for example, are not. Only certain birds are considered kosher in the United States. This includes chicken, duck, goose, and turkey.
- **Schecht It To Me:** Poultry and meat must be slaughtered under strict guidelines called "shechita." This means the animals are slaughtered without pain. Only those who

are trained and qualified are allowed to slaughter kosher animals. Once the animal is no longer alive, another team of folks will examine the animal to be sure the animal is without illness, abnormalities or anything else that can be considered unsanitary. The lungs in particular must be pure. In addition, all blood, nerves, and most fat must be removed.

- **Fish oh Fish:** Fish can be a little tricky. You can eat it at the beginning of a meat meal but also can be eaten with dairy.
- **Oh Those Bottom Dwellers:** Lobster lovers might be dismayed to find that for seafood or fish to be kosher, it must have fins and easily removable scales. Shellfish generally, and lobsters, shrimp, and clams, specifically are not kosher. Fish, on the other hand, such as tuna, carp, and herring, are kosher, but only if they are prepared by a kosher fish monger with kosher cutting implements and machines. There's more. In most cases, scales must be present on the fish in order to be purchased by the consumer.
- **The Kitsch'n:** Kosher kitchens must maintain separate sets of utensils, pots, pans, dishes, and anything else that comes in contact with food. In addition, dishes and utensils in a kosher kitchen can't be washed together (though, this is not technically true. Once soap touches a sponge and then a dish, whatever food particles were on either are not considered food anymore). If a kitchen has two sinks, it is an ideal setup for a kosher family. If not, separate wash buckets are often used. Dishes and utensils must be dried using separate racks or dish towels as well.
- **HEAT!:** Heat is really the determinant between what is or is no longer considered kosher (or as they say in Whitney's house, 'treifed-up'). So, what's considered hot? Well, fire of course but also garlic, hot peppers and onions. So that means that if you cut up an onion on your dairy knife, that onion is now dairy. But this

also means that you do not have to have separate refrigerators or even separate shelves for your kosher food. A package of cheese can be placed on the same shelf as half a pound of salami and nothing's going to be 'treifed-up' because there was no transfer of heat. Oy, did you catch that!?

- **Eating Your Vegetables:** In Jewish law, the prohibition against eating bugs is quite stringent, so before you prepare vegetables, you must always check for bugs. Leafy vegetables (including broccoli and cauliflower), with their crevices and curled ends, provide a significant challenge for those who want to maintain a bug-free, kosher kitchen. With proper checking, leafy vegetables can be eaten in full confidence that they are kosher and free of insects.