

Date: April, 2024
To: Students and Visitors to Campus
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Pre-Passover Memo

Keeping Pesach in college does not need to be overly challenging. It can be an inspiring experience of living Jewishly as a member of the broader community. I am glad to answer any questions that you may have. This short memo has some basic information and answers to questions that have come up in the past.

The Vaad Hoeir of St. Louis (OVKosher) and the Chicago Rabbinical Council publish helpful Pesach guides at <https://ovkosher.org/pesach2024> and <https://consumer.crckosher.org/pesach>.

The Basic Idea

Chametz is forbidden during the holiday of Pesach. This means that any product made with wheat, barley, rye, oats or spelt that has come into contact with water and been allowed to ferment and “rise” is prohibited.

Common forms of *chametz* include bread, baked goods, and breakfast cereals; many alcoholic beverages are also *chametz*, as they are made from fermented grain. Due to the complexities of modern food production, almost all prepared or packaged foods contain *chametz*, except those specially certified as Kosher for Passover.

Most Jews of European descent (aka Ashkenazim) also refrain from eating certain grains and legumes similar to *chametz* including rice, beans, and corn, though these are not *chametz*.

Cleaning for Passover

Prior to the day before Passover, students must thoroughly inspect any spaces in their control—including common spaces—where *chametz* may have been brought during the year. Any *chametz* found must be removed or destroyed. This can be accomplished by giving it to a friend who is not Jewish, donating it to a food drive, or selling it in a formal manner (see below).

Here are some reminders of places to check and clean:

- Your room, including under your bed
- Your desk and drawers
- Dressers and other storage
- Closets, including inside clothing pockets
- Shake out crumbs from your keyboard
- Backpacks, laptop bags, bike bags, and luggage
- Your car, especially under the seats

Pro tips:

- Although it’s praiseworthy to be stringent on Passover, dirt is not *chametz*.
- Small amounts of *chametz* can be made inedible by spraying them with soap.

Any cooking and eating utensils (e.g. sandwich makers, reusable water bottles) must be put away for the holiday and sold with your *chametz*. Certain utensils/dishes can be cleaned thoroughly and kosherized appropriately.

Refrigerators should be wiped down.

Preparing kitchens for Passover presents challenges beyond the scope of this note—though I am glad to talk you through them on the phone or in person.

Selling chametz

Another way to dispose of *chametz* is to sell it to a person who is not Jewish. After Passover, the *chametz* is repurchased. Items that are sold should be sealed away or covered. For this mechanism to work, a legitimate sale document must be drawn up. It is tricky to do this yourself, so please don't "sell" your toaster to your roommate. Instead, do so online here: chabadwashu.org/111191.

I am also glad to help you sell your *chametz* using the traditional procedure (document, signature and *kinyan*). Message me to get this scheduled.

Do not wait until the last minute to sell your *chametz*. Remember, whatever you sell must be stored away for the duration of the holiday. It isn't yours and you shouldn't steal.

Searching for chametz

A complete check for *chametz* should be performed the night before Pesach (this year, Sunday night, April 21, 2024). The procedure is at chabadwashu.org/266838. Where candles are forbidden, you may use a flash light.

Travelling for Pesach?

If you travel away from campus before the holiday with the intent to return during the days of *chol hamoed* then you must clean and search for *chametz* in your campus dwelling. If you leave before the formal time for searching, you should still search before you depart.

However, if you travel and do not plan to return until after Pesach, then you should sell your *chametz* here. You should still search for *chametz* (or participate in the search) wherever you will be for the holiday.

Kosher for Passover food on campus

We expect WashU Dining to offer many meal options certified by the Vaad Hoeir of St. Louis at the L'Chaim station in Bear's Den. Please check with WashU Dining Services for confirmation and scheduling.

Kosher for Passover pre-packaged meals should also be available at Paws & Go Market, Millbrook Market, and so forth. Look for the Passover stickers with the OVK symbol of the Vaad.

- Note: In some past years, Matzah pizza was sold at the DUC and Bear's Den. It was not Kosher for Passover, nor was it Kosher at all!

Shopping reminders

Packaged or prepared food bought for Pesach should have reliable certification. Food products used on Pesach should be from packages not opened or used throughout the year unless you did not use the open packages with *chametz*. It is best to shop early as occasionally stores run out of certain Pesach items. The Schnucks on Ladue Road (at 170) and Simon Kohns typically have the widest selection.

- Some Passover-certified food products look quite similar to their non-Passover counterparts. In fact, some Manischewitz Matzos (!) are not Kosher for Passover!
- Just because something happens to be in a Passover aisle does not mean that it is Kosher for Passover.
- A product that was Kosher last year is not necessarily Kosher this year.
- Some Passover-certified foods are permitted only to Jews of Sefardic descent, children, and people who are ill (e.g. legumes and *egg Matzah*).