

You have a friend that keeps kosher and are invited to their house for dinner and would like to bring a bottle of wine or some candy as a gift. Or perhaps your child has converted to Judaism and keeps kosher and you would like to include him or her in family celebrations. Here, in a nutshell are the basics of the kosher dietary laws (or *kashrut*) and a few suggestions on hosting and being hosted by someone who is kosher.









Although the details of *kashrut* are extensive, the laws all derive from a few fairly simple, straightforward rules:

1. Certain animals may not be eaten at all. This restriction includes the flesh, organs, eggs and milk of the forbidden animals.
2. Of the animals that may be eaten, the birds and mammals must be killed in accordance with Jewish law.
3. All blood must be drained from meat and poultry or broiled out of it before it is eaten.
4. Certain parts of permitted animals may not be eaten.
5. Fruits and vegetables are permitted, but must be inspected for insects (which cannot be eaten)
6. Meat (the flesh of birds and mammals) cannot be eaten with dairy. Fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables and grains can be eaten with either meat or dairy. (According to some views, fish may not be eaten with meat).
7. Utensils (including pots and pans and other cooking surfaces) that have come into contact with meat may not be used with dairy, and vice versa. Utensils that have come into contact with non-kosher food may not be used with kosher food. This applies only where the contact occurred while the food was hot.
8. Grape products made by non-Jews may not be eaten.

Being Hosted

The first thing to know about buying kosher food applies whether you are hosting or being hosted: look for the kosher symbol (*hechsher*). All kosher prepared foods have a symbol somewhere on the label from one of a number of kosher certifying agencies; this symbol means that the item is prepared according to kosher dietary guidelines. The letter "K" by itself is not a *kashrut* symbol. A majority of the kosher products you will see on store shelves will bear one of these marks and will be a lovely gift for your hosts.

The most common symbols in North America include:

| Symbol | Supervising body | Symbol | Supervising body |
|---|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
|  | Orthodox Union |  | Kof-K Kosher Supervision |
|  | The Organized Kashrut Laboratories |  | Chicago Rabbinical Council |
|  | Star-K Kosher Certification |  | Kosher Overseers |
|  | Star-K Dairy |  | Kosher Supervision of America |



Cooking for Someone Who Keeps Kosher

The first rule of cooking for someone who keeps kosher is to involve them in the process. Always ask what you can do to make them comfortable eating in your home. Depending upon the level of observance of the person you are hoping to host, the answers may fall along the spectrum ranging from

- Anything that does not have any meat or meat by products. This can include dairy products, pasta, kosher fish (with fins and scales) and anything else you would serve to a lacto-ova vegetarian or pescetarian.
- Non-cooked cold items (vegetable salads, canned tuna salad and other items that have not been cooked)
- Non-cooked cold items as long as all ingredients have a *hechsher* (kosher symbol)
- Non-cooked cold items as long as all ingredients have a *hechsher* (kosher symbol) and the dishes and utensils used in preparation and for serving are all either new or unused disposables
- Hot food if it's bought from a kosher establishment and served on paper plates with plastic silverware
- Hot food if it's bought from a kosher establishment, triple wrapped by the establishment before heating/reheating in the oven with the seal intact until serving and served on paper plates with plastic silverware

Feel free to ask as many questions as you need – the person you are hosting will appreciate your diligence and attention to detail.