



## **Pesach: Passover**

פסח

Of all the Jewish holidays, *Pesach* is the one most commonly observed, even by otherwise non-observant Jews.

*Pesach*, or Passover in English, is 8 days long. As with all Jewish holidays, Passover begins at sundown the night before with the first Seder meal. It is important to note that on the first two days and the last two days some people do not work; however, work is permitted on the intermediate days.

The primary observances of Passover are related to the Biblical Exodus from Egypt after generations of slavery. This story is told in The Torah (Bible; Exodus, Ch. 1-15). In addition, it is customary to read the Biblical book "Song of Songs" or the "Song of Solomon" as well. The name "*Pesach*" means to pass through or to pass over and it refers to the fact that G-d "passed over" the houses of the Jews during the slaying of the firstborn of Egypt.

### **Pesach Laws and Customs**

Probably the most significant observance related to *Pesach* involves the removal of *chametz* (sounds like "ha-matez") or leaven from our homes. This commemorates the fact that the Jews leaving Egypt were in a hurry, and did not have time to let their bread rise. It is also a symbolic way of removing the "puffiness" (arrogance, pride) from our souls.

*Chametz* includes anything made from the five major grains (wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt) and allowed to ferment with water for more than 18 minutes; including but not limited to, bread, pasta, cookies and crackers. It is customary for Jews with an Ashkenazic background (from Eastern Europe) to also avoid rice, corn, peanuts, and legumes (beans) as if they were *chametz*.

Many Jewish people will clean out their cupboards and refrigerators, removing all the leftover leaven. They will either throw it away before Passover or lock it in a separate cabinet and symbolically sell it so that it is not considered to be in their possession. Many people will use a different set of dishes and utensils than they use the rest of the year. People will restock their cupboards with Kosher for Passover food which can be bought in local supermarkets such as Hen House (at Roe and 117<sup>th</sup>), Hy-Vee (especially 95<sup>th</sup> & Antioch) and Price Chopper (especially 103<sup>rd</sup> & State Line). Kosher for Passover food has a special symbol on the package with the words "Kosher for Passover". Certain products do not need a special Kosher for Passover symbol, including but not limited to fresh fruit and vegetables, eggs, and milk.

The grain product we eat during *Pesach* is called *matzah*. *Matzah* is unleavened bread (like a cracker), made simply from flour and water and cooked very quickly. This is the bread that the Jews made for their flight from Egypt. *Matzah* can be bought in boxes (about 10 sheets to a box) or ground up, like flour, called *matzah* meal or in flakes, like oatmeal, called *matzah farfel*. Kosher for Passover cookies, cakes, crackers are all made from different *matzah* products.

On the first two nights of *Pesach*, families have a special meal filled with ritual (singing, eating symbolic foods, telling the story, and discussing the story as it relates to our lives) to remind us of the significance of the holiday. This meal is called a *seder*, from a Hebrew root word meaning "order". Families use a book called a *Haggadah* at their *Seder* which tells the story of Passover and provides the order of the *Seder* for people to follow. To read excerpts from different *Haggadahs* please visit [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and search for "Passover Haggadah".

Here are some suggestions to help your residents celebrate and get ready for Passover.

1. **Kosher for Passover *Matzah*:** Having Kosher for Passover *Matzah* available throughout your center would make for a meaningful holiday for all Jewish residents.

Other special foods enjoyed year round:

- Hard boiled eggs
  - Gefilte fish
  - Horseradish
  - Matzo ball soup
2. **Prepare and Serve *Charoset*:** *Charoset* is a fruit, nut and wine (or grape juice), mixture eaten (chopped into a paste) during the *seder*. A somewhat coarse textured paste, it is meant to remind us of the mortar used by the Hebrew slaves to build during the period of slavery. The recipe below makes a very large quantity.
    - 4 medium apples, 2 tart and 2 sweet (Cut into small pieces)
    - 1/2 cup finely chopped almonds and/or walnuts
    - 1/2 cup Kosher for Passover sweet wine (or Kosher for Passover grape juice)
    - 1 Tbs. cinnamon (if desired)

Cut up the apples. Add all other ingredients. Allow to sit for 3-6 hours, until the wine is absorbed by the other ingredients. Alternatively, putting all the ingredients into a food processor works well. Serve on *matzah*.

3. **Communal Seder Space:** If residents do not have somewhere to go the first two nights of Passover, ask if they would like to have their own *Seder*. Offer for the residents to help organize and prepare the meal.
4. **Passover Reading:** Visit the library and check out books on Passover. Have the books available for residents to borrow. Try and have some *Haggadahs* available.

The information above was taken from [www.Jewfaq.org](http://www.Jewfaq.org)

For more information on Passover, please visit:

[www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com)

[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/holidaya.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/holidaya.html)

[www.holidays.net/passover/index.htm](http://www.holidays.net/passover/index.htm)