

Laws of Pesach – Clear & Practical Guide

SECTION I: Prohibitions and Removal of Chometz

1. What is Chometz?

Chometz is any product that comes from the fermentation of the five grains: **chitah (wheat)** and **seorah (barley)** — which are certainly included — and possibly spelt & rye. **Shibolet shual** is not oats, and oats are definitely **not** one of the five grains. See our [FAQ](#) page.

Once flour from these grains comes in contact with water and sits for around **18 minutes**, it can become chometz. This applies even without visible signs.

2. Chometz on Pesach

- Chometz is prohibited to **eat, own, or derive benefit from** during Pesach.
- This is a serious prohibition — not just avoiding a food, but something we actively remove.

3. Chometz She'avar Alav HaPesach

- If chometz was knowingly kept by a **practicing Jew** during Pesach and not sold, it becomes forbidden even **after** Pesach.
- However, this is a **rabbinic** law, and **safek derabanan lekulah** applies.
- Don't worry about rumors that a store is owned by a Jew just because of a name like "Goldman" is on the list of shareholders. Unless you have **firsthand, reliable information** that the chometz was owned and unsold, it remains **permitted**.

4. Bedikat Chometz (Search for Chometz)

- Do the search the night before Pesach after nightfall.
- Use a **flashlight** — no need for candles, feathers, or wooden spoons.

- Only check **places where you normally bring food** — kitchen, pantry, fridge. If someone brings food into their room, check that drawer or surface — that’s it.
- **Crumbs don’t count.** We are only looking for something like a “**Gluska Yafah**” — a piece of chometz you’d actually eat.
- Keep it simple — this should not take more than 15 minutes.
- Some people put out 10 pieces of bread as a fun tradition. Do it or skip it — your choice. The kids usually enjoy this part.

After the search, recite **Kol Chamira**: nullifying any chometz you didn’t find. Say it in a language you understand.

5. Biur Chometz (Burning or Disposing)

- On the morning of Erev Pesach (14th of Nissan), dispose of all remaining chometz **before the end of the 5th halachic hour.**
- **Burning is not required.** You can throw it into your **outdoor trash** if it’s accessible to the public (e.g., curbside or alley) and considered **ownerless.**
- Say the **second Kol Chamira**, again nullifying any known or unknown chometz.
- Use MyZmanim.com to find exact times for your location.

6. Mechiras Chometz (Selling Chometz)

- If you want to save chometz for after Pesach, sell it to a non-Jew through your local rabbi (or online form).
- You don’t need to sell pots or utensils — just store them away or kasher them.
- Deadline is by the **5th halachic hour** on Erev Pesach.

7. Chometz Found During Pesach

- If found on **Yom Tov**, cover it and destroy it after Yom Tov.
- If found on **Chol HaMoed**, destroy it right away — by burning, crumbling, or placing it in public-access trash.

8. Chometz She'avar Alav HaPesach – Summary

- Only a problem if it was **definitely owned** by a **practicing Jew** and **not sold**.
- Very unlikely in practice. Unless you know for sure, it's permitted.

9. Inedible Chometz

- If it's **not fit for human consumption**, it's **not chometz**.
- It doesn't need to be inedible to a dog.

10. Kitniyot

- Ashkenazim traditionally avoid **rice and beans**.
- This is a **minhag only**, not halacha.
- If someone has **health needs** or a baby that needs food, this minhag should be set aside.
- Corn, peanuts, soy, etc. are **questionable** to say the least, and were not part of the original minhag.

11. Gebrokts

- The idea that wetting matzah could make it become chometz is a **mistake**, not a minhag.
- Today's matzah is so thoroughly baked that this is not a concern.
- Anyone who grew up keeping it can **stop** if they like — there's **no halachic reason** to avoid gebrokts.

12. Homemade Matzah & Juice-Based Baking

- You may bake your own matzah — just make sure it’s **fully baked**. From the moment the flour touches the water, you have 18 minutes to bake it.
 - For Sephardim: cakes and breads can be made using **fresh-squeezed fruit juice** (like apple or orange), **not bottled juice**, which usually contains water.
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SECTION II: Positive Mitzvot of Pesach

1. Matzah

- Torah obligation to eat matzah at the **Seder**.
- Eat **at least one kezayit**, preferably **two**.
 - **1/6th of a round hand matzah** or **1/3rd of a square machine matzah**.
- Ideally eaten **within 4–8 minutes**.
- **Men should lean to the left** while eating.

2. Four Cups of Wine (Arba Kosos)

- Rabbinic mitzvah. Drink **four cups** at specific points during the Seder.
- Use **red or white wine, or grape juice** — whatever you prefer.
- Cup should hold at least **3.3 fl. oz.** — drink **at least half** each time.
- **Men should lean** to the left.

3. Marror

- Use any type of **lettuce** (or Belgian endives, etc.). Horseradish is not ideal.
- **Check for bugs** – see our [guide](#) on that.
- Do **not lean** when eating marror.

4. Maggid

- Telling the story of the Exodus is the **central mitzvah** of the night.
- Say it in a way everyone understands. English is fine.
- If you only say one part, make it: “**Rabban Gamliel Hayah Omer**” — Pesach, Matzah, and Marror.

5. Korech – The Hillel Sandwich

- Matzah + marror dipped in **charoset**.
- Say: “**Zecher l’Mikdash k’Hillel.**”
- **Men should lean.**

Charoset recipe: ground walnuts, apples, dates, a bit of red wine or grape juice.

Optional: other fruits. Should be soft, like chummus — not solid.

6. The Meal and Afikoman

- Eat the Yom Tov meal, but leave room for the **Afikoman**.
- Afikoman: eat 1 kezayit of matzah at the end of the meal.
- **Men should lean.**
- If you’re full, **don’t force yourself**.
- Try to eat it before **halachic midnight** (check myzmanim.com).

7. Birkat HaMazon & Final Two Cups

- Third cup after Birkat HaMazon; fourth cup after Hallel.
- Pour a cup for **Eliyahu HaNavi** and say **Shefoch Chamascha**.
- **Men should lean** for both cups.

- Don't eat or drink after — but if needed, it's fine.

8. Nirtzah – Wrapping Up

- The mitzvot are done.
 - Sing, talk, learn — or go to bed. It's your call.
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SECTION III: The Rest of Pesach

1. Chol HaMoed

- Intermediate days — not full Yom Tov, but still special.
- Permitted: cooking, driving, shopping, writing.
- Avoid regular work unless necessary.
- **Tefillin**: Follow your minhag. If you wear them, no bracha.

2. Last Days of Pesach

- Full Yom Tov again: one day in Israel, two outside.
- **No Seder**, but same Yom Tov rules as the first days.
- **Seventh day** marks the splitting of the sea.
- **Yizkor** is said on the **eighth day** (seventh in Israel).

3. Sefirat HaOmer

- Count each night starting the **second night of Pesach**.
- Say the bracha, then count.
- If you miss a full day (night and day), continue counting without a bracha.

- Don't say the day to someone before you count — say "last night was..."

4. Minhagim of Sefira

- Custom to avoid **weddings, music, dancing,** and **haircuts/shaving.**
- If you need to **shave for work,** you may — and should also shave for **Shabbat.**
- Don't overdo it. Minhag is not halacha.

5. Miscellaneous Pesach Notes

- No need to re-kasher anything after Pesach.
- Chometz sold before Pesach returns to you.
- Buying chometz from stores after Pesach is **not an issue,** unless you know with certainty it was owned by a practicing Jew and not sold.
- Custom to avoid eating matzah before Pesach — not required.
- **Maot Chittin** is a good custom to help others buy food for Pesach.

Chag Sameach!