

Jewish Food Laws - Kashrut Laws

Jewish food laws = Kashrut laws.

Kosher = Fit or proper

Terefah = forbidden

Where are they found?

- In the Torah - Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

Why do Jews observe Kashrut laws?

- The laws are not given for health or hygiene reasons although some argue there are health benefits e.g. method of slaughtering, there is some evidence that eating meat and dairy together interferes with digestion
- To test Jews' obedience - the laws are given in the Torah. The Torah does not specify any reason for these laws
- To mark them out as different from other nations.
- Some have suggested that the laws of kashrut fall into the category of "chukkim," laws for which there is no reason. We show our obedience to G-d by following these laws even though we do not know the reason.
- Other suggested reasons - the dietary laws are designed as a call to holiness. The ability to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, pure and defiled, the sacred and the profane, is very important in Judaism.

Imposing rules on what you can and cannot eat ingrains that kind of self control.

- It raises the simple act of eating into a religious ritual. The Jewish dinner table is often compared to the Temple altar in rabbinic literature.

The Food Laws - What is Kosher?

Meat - Fleischig

- Must have cloven (split) hooves and chew the cud (balls of grass that some animals form in their stomachs after grazing) e.g. cows, sheep, goat and deer. Forbidden - pigs, horses, and camels.
- Only the forequarters of animals are kosher.

Poultry

- There is no way of recognising kosher birds. They are just listed in the Torah. Chicken, turkey and duck are kosher.
- Forbidden - Birds of prey.

Fish

- Kosher - Must have scales and fins and a backbone e.g. plaice, cod, haddock, tuna and salmon.
- Terefah - octopus, eels or squid. Shellfish - crab, prawns or lobster.

Kosher Slaughtering - Shechitah

All meat must be slaughtered by a ritual method. This is performed by a shochet.

- Short blessing, with a sharp knife the animal is killed with a single cut across the throat. The animal is hung upside down for the blood to drain. The meat has to be checked for disease. The meat has to be soaked in salt to remove any other blood.

Other Laws

- *"You shall not cook a kid in its mother's milk."*
(Deuteronomy 14:21) Meat and dairy products may not be eaten or cooked together. It is, however, OK to eat fish and dairy together. It is also OK to eat dairy and eggs together.
- Separate cooking utensils for meat and dairy products must be used.
- Jews have to wait between 1 to 6 hours between eating meat and dairy.
- Parev - neutral and can be eaten with anything e.g. vegetables, fruit, cereals, beans, pulses.
- Eating rodents, reptiles, amphibians, and insects is forbidden.

Jewish Kitchen

This separation includes not only the foods themselves, but the utensils, pots and pans with which they are cooked, the

plates, the dishwashers or sink in which they are cleaned, and the towels on which they are dried.

Other Information

- Jews can buy their food from a local supermarket and specialised shops. Kosher butchers will display a licence given from the rabbis.
- Packaged food can come with a label saying it is kosher.



Pros of keeping Kashrut Laws

- *Faithful to the Torah*
- *Keeping your part of the covenant*
- *Rules are clear to follow*
- *More specialised shops now available catering for different diets*
- *Some health benefits*
- *Makes you think about what you are eating*

Cons of keeping Kashrut Laws

- *Difficult to follow when eating in a non-kosher restaurant or non-Jewish home.*
- *Some products can be expensive or difficult to find*
- *Need a special kitchen and extra utensils.*
- *Lack of empathy or tolerance from others.*
- *Could feel guilty if accidentally ate non-kosher food.*