



ST ALBANS MASORTI SYNAGOGUE

9 The Dencora Centre, Campfield Road, St Albans, AL1 5HN
☎ 01727 860642 ⚡ www.e-sams.org ✉ info@e-sams.org

SAMS Kashrut Guidelines

Rabbi: Rafael Kaiserblueth

Co-Chairs: Alan Green, Paul Hoffbrand **Hon Treasurer:** Simone Freedman **Hon Secretary:** Susan Hamilton

Trustees: Sarah Grant, Moira Hart, Darren Marks, Liz Oppedijk, Simon Samuels, Marcus Shapiro

Immediate Past Co-Chair – Jonathan Freedman

Charity Registration Number: 1118649 **Company Limited by Guarantee with Company Number:** 6131892

Registered office: Harben House, Harben Parade, Finchley Road, London, NW3 6LH



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SAMS STANDARD Kashrut Guidelines

Introduction

Food is a central part of who we are and what we do together as a Jewish community. It is an integral part of our communal activities and a fundamental part of daily Jewish observance. We acknowledge our relationship with God and each other by keeping its tenants. While we have a set of standards already in place, we as a community are in the midst of transitioning into a new reality of having our own home where new circumstances will occur. As much as I would like to try and avoid a situation where we adhere to differing standards – one for our new building and one for meals and events in private homes – I believe that will be the inevitable result as we attempt to reconcile some differing values. Through this document, I hope to propose a way to keep these values of observance to Jewish law and community.

Why Do We Keep Kosher?

In its most basic form, we do not have a precise reason for why we keep kosher except that our tradition says so, or God told us to. While that reason may be unfulfilling or devoid of inspiration, many have proposed varying reasons for maintaining these precepts.

I believe we seek to emulate God in our daily existence, and one way to do that is by creating and enforcing boundaries and separations between things. Further, we seek to infuse holiness into our daily lives that otherwise would not be present. By elevating things, even mundane activities such as eating, we add spirituality in our everyday lives.

The laws of Kashrut seek to do that with our most basic of needs: the consumption of nutrients. Every organism, from the most basic single cell to the most complex, must consume in order to survive. By separating what we can and cannot eat, by delineating and setting boundaries, we impart a sense of discipline into an otherwise chaotic existence. Furthermore, by making these standards communal and not individual, we elevate ourselves to a community level, making our holiness so much greater. If we can make holy something as routine and basic as food, then I truly believe there is no limit to the holiness we can bring into the world.

Possible Conflicts

One of our most treasured values is that of welcoming guests. We open our homes to others: for meals, for study, for sitting shiva and for myriad other functions. These events are the core of our communal existence, and just because we now have a permanent home does not mean they will or even should stop. Additionally, I firmly believe that the laws of Kashrut were never designed to keep Jews apart from one another, which sadly today is too often the case. Of course I would love for people to be committed to a higher standard of Kashrut. Of course I do not want to exclude anyone from hosting anything or guests to be excluded because their potential host might not keep a level of Kashrut they find acceptable. Of course I do not want to create any cause or reason for members to not trust one another. And finally, as synagogue, I do not believe we should subscribe to the lowest common denominator.

With that in mind, what follows below is an attempt to synthesise all of these competing values into a coherent scheme of communal Kashrut observance.

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Communal Kiddush or Other Functions in the Synagogue

1. Food served at these functions must be:
2. Marked as kosher or must be listed in The Really Jewish Food Guide
3. Prepared by a kosher caterer under supervision approved by the rabbi of SAMS
4. Delivered to the synagogue prior to the start of Shabbat or Yom Tov
5. Fully cooked before the start of Shabbat

Additionally, wine or grape juice that is to be served at communal functions must be supervised as kosher, not only for ritual Kiddush but for social consumption as well.

Bring-a-dish and Other Communal Events not in the Synagogue Building

By necessity, these kinds of events cannot be held to the same level of scrutiny as those that are held in the building. I have tried to strike a balance between accommodating the need for observance of Kashrut and the need for welcoming guests. The aim is definitely not to make people uncomfortable in their own home or to make anyone doubt or question the level of observance of another member. Bearing that in mind, we ask that families bringing food to communal events outside the synagogue adhere to the following standards:

- Nothing explicitly non-kosher is to be brought to any communal event
- Food that is cold or raw may be brought and served in or with any utensil (pot, pan, cutlery, etc.)
- Utensils that have been used to cook or prepare non-kosher cooked foods should not be used for food that will be brought to the event
- People who use non-kosher food in their home should bring pre-packaged food, salads or other dishes that have not been cooked and they should use separate utensils or single-use items for preparing the food for the event
- Wine or grape juice should be supervised as kosher
- Jewish law prohibits food being cooked on Shabbat as well as eating food that has been cooked on Shabbat, therefore food that is brought to a meal should not be prepared on Shabbat. Food that is already cooked may be warmed up during Shabbat; this proviso does not, however, apply on Yom Tov when cooking is allowed.

Hospitality of Individual Members

As stated, the 'welcoming in of guests' (*hachnasat orchim*), is one of the most treasured values in the community. We express that value by welcoming members, friends, family and potential new members into our homes. This act of hesed (loving-kindness) allows us to build on one of our strengths and also to inspire others in our community. We do not, however, want to create a situation where someone might feel uncomfortable, whether that is the guest or the host. Again, the aim is not to question someone's level of observance but to avoid a potential uncomfortable situation. I ask therefore that, as hosts, we should not serve non-kosher food or ingredients at any meal where synagogue members or potential members are in attendance.

Rabbi Jeremy Gordon, original text – July 2005
Rabbi Rafi Kaiserbleuth, revised – 2012