



torah-centered pesach PREPARATION GUIDE

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6



Mashiach our Pesach also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate The Feast...!

1 Corinthians 5:7b-8a

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Don't Worry!

Helpful encouragement

At first, it can seem overwhelming to even think about having a Seder. There are a million tiny details to keep track of in a complicated sequence of events that probably seems confusing.

But don't worry - this guide is designed to make your Seder easy and stress-free!! We've included helpful tips for preparing your home, setting the Seder table, and serving the perfect meal, as well as a timeline for the weeks and days leading up to Passover.

Don't be discouraged if your first attempt isn't "textbook" perfect – the important thing is that you desire to honor G-d and keep His commandments. Over time, you'll grow more familiar with the Passover celebration. Our family has observed the Passover for many years, and every year is a little different!

"You shall observe this [the Passover] as an institution for all time, for you and your descendants. And when you enter the land that the L-rd will give you, as He promised, you shall observe this rite. And when your children ask you, "What do you mean by this rite?" you shall say, "It is the Passover sacrifice to the L-rd, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians but saved our houses."

Shemot (Exodus) 12:24-27

Let's get started...



Preparing the House

Begin weeks ahead, if possible.

Much of the pressure and stress of keeping the Pesach is to prepare ahead of time – and not be surprised by some of the steps necessary for success. The Pesach has few requirements, but the most important is that the house be cleansed of leaven before the Pesach begins the Feast of Matzot.

Cleaning house is where the western world gets its idea of *spring cleaning*. The house should be thoroughly cleaned beginning about one week before the Pesach. Leaven must be removed from the house before the Seder begins. We remove the leaven the day *before* the Seder. We donate this food and it has been a great discussion tool for us.

After examining the cupboards, cabinets and labels for leavened food, the ladies of our house deliberately *plant* some leaven (bread crumbs) around one of the rooms of our house. It is *hidden* and must be searched for diligently by the men of our family. This is a great time of laughing and togetherness that is punctuated by moments of somber instruction regarding the parallel between leaven and sin. As we diligently search for leaven in our home, we also seek to diligently search our hearts for hidden and unconfessed sin.

When all the leaven has been found by the men and dutifully swept into an envelope with a feather or basting brush, the envelope is placed outside the house overnight. The following day is the Seder meal.



The envelope containing the leaven will be burned before the Seder begins. We have done it first thing in the morning (if the envelope gets covered with dew, it's often more difficult to burn), as well as just before the Seder, as the sun is setting. A little gasoline or kerosene goes a long way to making an impressive leaven burn. 😊

If there are guests coming to keep the Pesach with us, we have to get the extra folding chairs and tables setup. The Seder meal must be prepared and the Seder table set.

Our Haggadah includes some pages to take notes, so we need to be sure pencils or pens are available.

The Leader of the Seder needs a place with some extra room, if possible. His Haggadah is probably bigger than everyone else's. He also needs a pillow on his chair – and the Seder plate will be near his plate too!



The Seder Meal

Menu and Recipes

Seder Menu

Chicken Breasts with Fruited Rice Pilaf
Roasted Caramelized Carrots <i>or</i> Salad
Charoseth
Matzo
Passover Pecan Pie Bars <i>or</i> Matzo Almond Brittle <i>or</i> Matzo Butter crunch

The reason we chose this particular chicken dish is because it's easy to prepare, feeds a lot, and cooks for precisely the amount of time it takes to go through our Seder ☺ Simply stick it in the oven at the beginning of the Seder (on time bake, just in case the Seder Leader is long-winded), and when the first part of the Seder is through, you take it out.

The candied carrots pair very well with the chicken dish. However, if you are inviting guests to your Seder (and they offer to bring something!), it is ideal to ask them to bring a salad, instead.

We have found it easiest to serve buffet-style, because at this point, guests are ready to get up, stretch, and fix their own plates.



Charoseth, which is used on the Seder plate, also makes a delicious side dish, so we make a lot and serve it with the dinner.

Dessert is not included in the Seder meal; we serve it after the completion of the Seder. The following three recipes are unleavened and tasty ☺

Recipes

Chicken Breasts with Fruited Rice Pilaf



This recipe serves a crowd!

1 cup apple juice	1 cup chopped fresh parsley
1 cup chicken broth	3 cups uncooked rice, cooked
1 8-oz. pkg. chopped apricots	1 tsp. pepper
1/2 cup raisins	1 tsp. salt
Cooking spray	1 tsp. savory
1 cup chopped onion	8-10 boneless chicken breast halves
1 cup chopped celery	

Preheat oven to 350°.

Combine juice and broth in glass measuring cup. Bring to a boil in microwave. Add apricots and raisins, let stand 1 hour. Do not drain. Coat a skillet with cooking spray and place over medium-high heat until hot. Add onion, celery, and parsley; cook, stirring constantly, until tender. Remove from heat, stir in apricot mixture, rice, and next four ingredients. Place chicken in a greased 13x9" baking pan, sprinkle with pepper. Spoon rice around chicken. Cover and bake at 350° for 35 minutes. Uncover and bake 10 more minutes.

Recipes

Roasted Caramelized Carrots



Makes 8-10 servings.

3 lbs. carrots, peeled & sliced into 1/4" discs

1/2 cup sugar

3-4 Tbsp. vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 400°.

In a large bowl, combine the carrots, sugar, and oil. Toss to coat. Spread the carrots into 2 jelly-roll pans in single layers. Roast about 45 minutes to 1 hour on the middle and top racks of the oven, until carrots are caramelized and begin to shrivel. Switch the pans midway through cooking time. Shake occasionally to prevent carrots from burning.

Recipes

Traditional Charoseth



Make about 2 cups.

1½ cups shredded apples

½ cup finely chopped walnuts or pecans

2 – 3 Tbsp. honey

½ tsp. cinnamon

2 Tbsp. red wine or grape juice

Mix together apples, nuts, and cinnamon. Add grape juice until it looks wet, but not mushy. Make this early on the day of your Seder, because it's supposed to turn brown.

Recipes

Apricot-Pistachio Charoseth



Makes about 2 cups.

1 cup minced dried apricots, preferably Californian

1 cup unsalted shelled pistachio nuts (not dyed red), chopped and lightly toasted

1/3 cup sweet white wine, such as Bartenura Moscato d'Asti or Herzog Late Harvest Riesling

1 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice

1 Tbsp. shredded fresh mint

10 threads saffron, crumbled

In large bowl, combine all ingredients and mix well. Wait approximately 20 minutes before serving to allow apricots to absorb liquid. This recipe produces a slightly dry, chunky Charoseth. If you prefer a more moist version, add extra wine, a tablespoon at a time until you achieve the desired consistency.



Recipes

Passover Pecan Bars



Makes 48 servings.

Crust

1 cup matzo cake meal	1/2 cup matzo meal
1 cup packed brown sugar	1/4 cup ground, toasted pecans
1/2 tsp. cinnamon	1/4 tsp. salt
6 Tbsp. unsalted butter	1 large egg white
Cooking spray	

Filling

1 1/3 cups packed brown sugar	1/2 cup maple syrup
2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted	1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. lemon juice	1/8 tsp. salt
5 large egg whites	1 large egg
1/3 cup flaked, sweetened coconut	2 Tbsp. finely chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350°.

To prepare the crust, combine matzo cake meal, matzo meal, and next four ingredients (through salt), stirring with a whisk; cut in butter with a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add one egg white, stirring just until moist. Press into the bottom of a 13"x9" baking pan coated with cooking spray. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes or until edges begin to brown. Cool 15 minutes.

To prepare the filling, combine brown sugar and next seven ingredients (through egg) in medium bowl, stirring well with a whisk. Stir in coconut and pecans, pour over prepared crust. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes, or until set. Cool to room temperature, cover and chill at least 1 hour. Cut into bars.

Recipes

Matzo Almond Brittle



Makes 1½ lbs. of candy.

2 cups matzo farfel	Cooking spray
2 cups sugar	1/4 cup water
1/2 tsp. salt	3 Tbsp. salted butter, softened
1 1/2 cups sliced almonds, toasted	

Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 350°.

Spread matzo farfel in large, shallow baking pan (½"-1" deep) and toast, stirring and shaking pan occasionally, until golden, 15-20 minutes. Transfer to bowl, cool pan and coat with cooking spray or line with parchment paper. Bring sugar, water, and salt to a boil in a heavy saucepan over moderate heat, stirring slowly until sugar is dissolved. Boil gently, without stirring, until syrup begins to turn golden. Continue to boil, swirling pan occasionally, until syrup is deep golden caramel. Immediately remove pan from heat and carefully stir in butter with a wooden spoon (mixture will rise and bubble vigorously). When bubbling begins to subside, immediately stir in matzo farfel and almonds and quickly pour into baking pan, spreading and smoothing with back of spoon before mixture hardens. Transfer baking pan to cooling rack and cool completely. Break brittle into bite-sized pieces.

Recipes

Matzo Buttercrunch



Makes 36 servings.

6 6" unsalted matzo crackers

1/2 cup unsalted butter

1 cup packed brown sugar

1/2 cup semisweet chocolate minichips

Preheat oven to 375°.

Line a jelly-roll pan with foil; cover foil with parchment paper. Arrange matzo crackers in a single layer on pan, cutting them as necessary to fit; bake at 375° for 5 minutes, or until crackers are lightly browned. Reduce oven temperature to 350°. Combine butter and brown sugar in a small heavy saucepan; bring to a boil, stirring often. Cook 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Pour mixture over matzo. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes, or until the mixture bubbles. Sprinkle evenly with chips. Cool slightly. Refrigerate 30 minutes, or until chocolate is set. Break into pieces.



The Seder Table

Mandatory Items

- Tablecloth
- 2 candles & lighter or matches
- The Leader's Seder Plate
 - Lamb Shank Bone

This is the most difficult item on the plate to prepare. Go to the grocery store and find a lamb shank (with meat, of course). Bring it home and boil it to death. Remove all the meat from the bone, scrub it, and let it sit out and dry thoroughly (it could take days). Save this bone to use each year in a Ziploc bag in your freezer.



- Roasted Egg

It is *impossible* to successfully roast an egg. That said, we have discovered an invaluable trick to make it look roasted! Take a little balsamic vinegar or any other dark brown liquids from the refrigerator, and brush onto the egg. Put in oven on low temperature (250° or 300°) in a small oven-proof dish for 15-20 minutes. Let it sit and dry for the rest of the day.

- Charoseth
- Parsley
- Horseradish

It is more impressive to go back to an item's original form. We put a piece of horseradish root on our Seder Plate. Look for it in the produce section of the grocery store.

- One Wine glass and water glass for each guest, including Elijah!
- Individual Seder plate for each guest

We have found it easiest to pre-assemble Seder plates for each guest prior to their arrival, and have them on the table already.

- Heaping tablespoon of charoseth
- A few parsley sprigs
- Heaping tablespoon of horseradish

You want the real thing, not a spread. Look for the hottest, fresh-ground horseradish you can get. We like to use Silver Springs Foods, Inc. Fresh Ground Horseradish (NOT the spread), found in the refrigerator section. We also grate some fresh horseradish root into it for extra zip.

- Forks, knives, spoons, & 2 napkins (one for the Seder, one for dinner)
- Bowls of salt water, strategically placed for easy access

Each guest will be required to dip parsley in salt water, so everyone needs to be able to reach a bowl easily.

- 1 bowl with salt water and a peeled hardboiled egg
- Baskets of matzo
- The Echad

Take one large cloth napkin, folded into quarters, and insert a sheet of matzo into each fold, for a total of three. Put this on a plate in front of the leader. Cover with another napkin.

- Cloth napkin for the Leader

Put this under the Echad.

- Bowl of wasabi peas ☺

This is a great, kid-friendly version of that signature horseradish taste. Plus, they're fun to eat!

- Haggadot
- Pillow for the leader

Since we can't really do the reclining dinner anymore, we give the leader a pillow as a symbol instead.

- Red and white wines, and/or red grape juice

A no-fail formula for purchasing the correct amount of fluid is *one* bottle of wine or grape juice for every *two* people.

- Paper goods

We use paper plates instead of real plates, because traditionally, Jews use a set of dishes that have never touched leaven. In order to be good stewards and because we don't have unlimited storage space, we choose to purchase beautiful plastic disposable plates at Costco each year. ☺ When it comes to cups, stemmed plastic ware tends to tip over too easily, leaving you with a mess. We recommend using regular cups, if you want to do plastic; you can invest in next year's Seder, and go ahead and buy some durable, sturdy wine glasses at someplace like Target.

Setting the Seder Table

- ✧ Put your best tablecloth on the table and arrange the festival candlesticks.
- ✧ Place a Kiddush cup and Seder plate at the Leader's place.
- ✧ Arrange three matzos on the table in front of the Leader wrapped in a linen napkin and another linen napkin under it.
- ✧ Set out the wine or grape juice for all participants.
- ✧ Put at each participant's place: a Haggadah, wine glass, and plate with a bit of horse radish, parsley, and Charoseth.
- ✧ Place baskets of matzos around the table as you would baskets of bread.
- ✧ Remember an extra place setting for Elijah.
- ✧ Make the table as festive and beautiful as you can. Besides Elijah's place and the special Seder plate foods, everything else is essentially the same as for any other holiday dinner party.

Optional Ideas

Table Setup

Consider putting some Pesach-related coloring pages and a limited number of crayons for younger children. These can be placed under the child's Seder plate, should they become bored.

We place colorful plastic or rubber frogs, wind-up bugs, cow tails and flies to dress up the table a bit. We also found some chocolate lambs at World Market one year. These decorations can also be used for prizes!

Decorations

Centerpieces should be kept small and simple so as not to block the guests' view. Since the table tends to be very full anyway, simple is best.

Remember that during the Seder someone may need to get around all the guests with a bowl of water and towel!

The Pesach Supplies List

Everything you need from soup to nuts...

Food

1 cup apple juice	1 cup chopped fresh parsley
1 cup chicken broth	3 cups uncooked rice, cooked
1 8-oz. pkg. chopped apricots	1 tsp. pepper
1/2 cup raisins	1 tsp. salt
Cooking spray	1 tsp. savory
1 cup chopped onion	8-10 boneless chicken breast halves
1 cup chopped celery	

3 lbs. carrots, peeled & sliced into 1/4" discs
1/2 cup sugar
3-4 Tbsp. vegetable oil

Chopped apples
Chopped nuts (we usually use walnuts)
Cinnamon
Grape juice

Supplies

- Tablecloth
- 2 candles & lighter or matches
- The Leader's Seder Plate
- Lamb shank bone (if there isn't one in the freezer from a previous Seder)
- Horseradish Root
- Bunch of Parsley
- Prepared Horseradish (not spread)
- One Wine glass and water glass for each guest, including Elijah!
- Forks, knives, and spoons
- Bowls for salt water
- 2 Eggs
- Matzo – buy enough for the entire week of Unleavened Bread
- 3 Cloth napkins
- Wasabi peas
- Haggadot
- Pillow
- Red and white wines and/or red grape juice
- Pencils or Pens
- Paper goods (Seder plate, Dinner plate, Dessert plate plus cups and napkins for each guest)

The Pesach Preparation Timeline

Step by step...

Purim (1 month before Pesach)

- Start thinking about Pesach!
- Send invitations to guests
- Stop buying leavened products
- Start eating up most of the leaven!

1 week before Pesach

- Buy Seder supplies
- Start thoroughly cleaning the house – spring cleaning
- Print or obtain Haggadot

Day before the Seder

- Clean all leaven from the house
- Put out piles of bread crumbs to be *found* by the men
- Review the Exodus story

Evening before the Seder

- Find the leaven (men)

Day of the Seder

- Burn the leaven
- Set the table
- Start dinner preparations

One Hour before the Seder

- Prepare the Seder plates

Sundown – The Seder!

Day One of Unleavened Bread

Day One of the Omer – Start counting

