

Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey

Kashrut/Food Policy

The Jewish Center of Northwest Jersey, affiliated with the Reform Jewish movement, treasures its members and guests who hail from diverse backgrounds and, therefore, different dietary practices. We honor personal autonomy and educated choice when it comes to Jewish ritual practice while we strive to create a communal sacred space—our synagogue—that exemplifies and celebrates our Jewish heritage, customs, rituals, and ethical laws. Our communal meals draw us together as we nurture one another through food and the rhythm of Judaism. We hope that our kashrut/food policy will be a living expression of our community and the values we uphold.

The following guidelines will govern all functions within our building and property.*

- We sanctify the act of eating as a community by reciting blessings.
- Being created in the image of God, we believe that our bodies should be respected. We encourage the serving of healthful foods and strive to provide safe options for those with food allergies, particularly nuts and gluten reactions. We will especially strive to label food in order to help make allergy-safe choices clear.
- We believe that we are stewards of God’s creation. Therefore, we encourage the serving of food that takes into account environmental sustainability and animal welfare. We strive to reduce the use of disposable food service items by using reusable plates, cups, flatware, dish towels, sponges, etc. When we use disposable items, we will strive to make choices that minimize the impact on the environment. We will seek to reduce our use of individual water bottles.
- No foods forbidden by Torah (treiff, meaning pork, shellfish, fish that do not have both fins and scales) will be served or brought into the synagogue. We also extend the prohibition of these foods to include products that mimic them, meaning, for example, fake bacon, imitation crab, etc.
- Meat and dairy foods will not be served at the same meal; that is, meals are to be designated as either meat or dairy.

- Potluck meals will be dairy or parve.** Dairy foods, including cheese and gelatin, do not require a certification, but we encourage a close examination for hidden meat or treiff ingredients, such as broths and flavorings, before serving.
- Meals and snacks brought in by congregants for personal enjoyment should be dairy or parve.
- Meat meals require the approval and oversight of our rabbi and/or ritual committee chair. This includes meals prepared by a kosher caterer or home cook or prepared at the temple.
 - All meats purchased for synagogue functions must be certified kosher.
 - A vegetarian option is to be provided at any meal designated as a meat meal.
 - Dessert served immediately after a meat meal must not contain any milk. This includes non-dairy creamer for coffee and tea.
 - Dairy dessert may be served after a meat meal if the meat meal is completely cleaned up and there is a waiting period of at least 72 minutes after the end of the meat meal.
- All pots, serving items, plates, etc. used in food preparation and service can be used for both milk and meat meals.
- The dishwasher can be used for cleaning up both milk and meat meals, but milk and meat loads should be run separately.
- Our congregation will mark the eight days of Passover by cleaning the kitchen thoroughly and removing all hametz (leavened bread and any food prepared from five species of grain—wheat, barley, oats, spelt, and rye—that has been allowed to leaven) in advance of the holiday; leavened products and leavening will be removed. While we support the eating of kitniyot*** during Passover, we ask that kitniyot not be served at communal seders. Outside of a thorough cleaning, the kitchen and its equipment and food service items do not need to be re-kashered for Passover. The preparation of food for Passover should be approved and overseen by our rabbi and/or ritual chair.

Questions regarding the implementation of this policy should be directed to our rabbi.

These guidelines were ratified by the JCNWJ Board of Trustees on September 8, 2014.

*Functions within the JCNWJ are defined as any function that is held on the synagogue grounds (e.g.: oneg Shabbat, Shabbat dinner, religious school or youth group event, picnic, Sukkah meal, etc.) involving the entire congregation, a sub-group of the congregation, or private participants.

** Parve is a Hebrew term (pareve is the Yiddish term) that describes food without any meat or dairy ingredients; thus, parve foods can be served with either meat or dairy as they are considered neutral. For example. vegetables, fruit, grains, eggs and kosher fish are parve.

*** In addition to hametz , Ashkenazic (European Jewish) authorities add rice, millet, corn, and other legumes to the forbidden foods.