

Masorti Kosher

Preparing a
Kosher
Function

Guidelines
for Caterers

Introduction

You have been asked to prepare Kosher food under the supervision of the Masorti Bet Din. This may sound intimidating, but it is not as difficult as it seems. Many commonly used ingredients are Kosher, and you are probably already preparing Kosher dishes without even knowing it! We aim to make the task of kosher catering as straightforward as possible.

Caterers are surprised to discover how easily they can prepare a Kosher meal. Once they have tried their hand, they find that a new market is open for them, to the benefit of both themselves and their clients.

We are available to answer any questions you have – do not hesitate to ask. This short guide will provide you with some background information to start you on your way.

What is Kosher?

The word Kosher comes from Hebrew and it literally means 'proper' or 'fit'. It is used to describe food which has been prepared according to Jewish dietary laws. Jewish law applies to many different aspects of the preparation of food, including the choice of ingredients, the method of preparation, when the food is prepared and how different foods are combined. The role of Kosher Supervision is to oversee the preparation of food for a Kosher function to ensure that it complies with Jewish Law.

How does Masorti Supervision Work?

There are three main stages to the supervision designed to enable us to certify that the food is kosher and to prevent mistakes during the preparation.

First, when the event is first booked, we will go over your menus with you, checking that every ingredient used is Kosher. We will advise you which ingredients need to come from a Kosher source, and will suggest alternatives to those ingredients that are unsuitable.

Next, we will prepare your work area and make it Kosher. This involves rigorous cleaning with boiling water, fire and heat.

Finally, while you are **cooking and serving**, we will be there to oversee and make sure that everything is going to plan.

Kashrut supervision only works if there is full cooperation between the caterer and the Kosher supervisor. You will be asked to sign a contract in which you commit yourself to complying with our guidelines for this function. Without your cooperation it will be impossible to produce the Kosher meal your client requires.

Practical Details

Selecting Menus

After you have decided on a menu together with your client it needs to be submitted to the Bet Din Kosher Supervisor for approval. You will need to decide whether the meal will include meat or dairy products. A Kosher menu can include either meat or dairy, but not both at the same time. Once you have made this decision with your client, you will not be able to serve any milk product at a meal containing meat, or any meat product at a meal containing milk. For example, this means that after a meat meal there can be no milk in the tea or cream on the cakes.

For each item you prepare, you will need to submit a list of all the ingredients that are used. The menu will be approved on the basis of this submission. If you are using unsuitable ingredients, we will guide you on finding a Kosher alternative.

Preparing the Work area

Before you start working on the day of preparation, the Kashrut Supervisor will prepare your work areas and make them Kosher. He will also Kasher (make Kosher) pots, pans, trays, utensils, ovens and hobs, plates and cutlery that you will be using. There are some items which are not able to be koshered, and you may have to use an alternative. You will need to take in to account that making your kitchen Kosher usually takes two hours, depending on how complicated the meal is and the size and the number of utensils involved. Your kitchen helpers will be expected to assist the Supervisor in this task

You will need to take into consideration that large amount of boiling water are used in the Kashering. Rather than Kasher, some work surfaces will be covered. If this is impracticable, you will need to let us know.

Items that cannot be Kasherred include baking tins, whisks, some knives and some types of oven.

Cooking and serving

Catering a large function is a complicated task. Sometimes things go wrong. The role of the Supervisor is to ensure that Kosher standards are maintained throughout. If a mistake is made, it is essential that the Supervisor is advised of this fact immediately. There is sometimes a way to rectify the situation. If a major mistake renders the food unkosher, you will need to take steps to rectify the situation if possible, or remove the item from the menu. Otherwise the Kosher License will be withdrawn.

Kosher crockery must be used for serving the food. Crockery is provided by the Bet Din for a minimal hire charge. Metal cutlery can usually be koshered, but you should be aware that it is inadvisable to kosher silver cutlery as it may be spoiled by the koshering process.

Final Words

Like many things, Kosher catering seems more complicated to the uninitiated than to those with experience. We have extensive experience working with caterers who are new to Kosher catering. On numerous occasions it has been a mutually rewarding experience. We hope you will join the club.

APPENDIX

A Overview of Regulations for preparing Kosher Food

The rules of Kashrut apply to both ingredients and to the way that food is prepared. Following are some short guidelines, to introduce you to the subject. They are not intended to be fully comprehensive.

Ingredients:

The following regulations apply to ingredients used in Kosher cooking:

Meat: Meat can only come from a Kosher source.

Fish: Kosher fish must have fins and scales. Kosher species include: Tuna, Salmon, Cod, Haddock, Plaice, Sea Bass, trout. Your Kosher Supervisor can provide you with a full list.

Fruit and Vegetables: All Kosher. BUT – no bugs or insects are allowed, and therefore fruits and vegetables need to be well washed.

Grains: All are Kosher. Rules about bugs (see above) apply, and flour needs to be finely sifted.

Eggs Eggs are Kosher, but need to be checked if they have bloodspots. Eggs with bloodspots are discarded.

Oils and fats: All pure vegetable oils are Kosher. All pure butter is Kosher. No other oil permitted. Shortening, fats and margarine need to be produced under Kosher supervision.

Milk: All milk is kosher.

Cheese: Must come from a Kosher source.

Drinks: Usually Kosher.

Wines and Spirits: All wine must come from a Kosher source. There are also special rules about serving wine which may apply. Most spirits are Kosher, but must not contain wine. Consult Supervisor about specific products.

Sea Food: NOT KOSHER

Bread: Should come from Kosher source. If you are baking your own bread, consult the supervisor.

Baked goods: If bought they need to come from a Kosher source. If baking your own, consult the supervisor.

Food Additives: Not all food additives are Kosher. For this reason, it is easier to prepare meals from scratch than to use ready prepared items. The supervisor will check each item.

Preparation:

There are many rules for the preparation of food. These are the three main areas you will encounter.

Utensils All food must be prepared in Kosher dishes, with Kosher utensils, on kosher work surfaces and in a Kosher oven. Your Kashrut Supervisor will prepare your Kitchen for the preparation of Kosher food.

Milk and Meat It is forbidden to mix dairy products and meat. Foods that contain neither milk or meat, such as grains, fruits and vegetables, may be served at any meal.

Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath) There are special regulations about preparing food on Shabbat – the Jewish Sabbath – and on Jewish festivals. If this is applicable, you will need to consult

The European Masorti Bet Din

Director: Rabbi Chaim Weiner

Alexander House, 3 Shakespeare Road Finchley

London N3 1XE

Tel: 020 8349 6650

Email: contact@europeanmasortibetdin.org