Jewish Dietary Restrictions—A Brief Guide

Kosher food is food that obeys *Kashrut*: Jewish dietary law. Kosher is Hebrew meaning 'fit' or 'apt', ie 'fit to eat'. Food that is not kosher is also known as *treif*. Kashrut originates in Jewish scripture, with a long history of commentary and debate about its implementation and specific meanings. As a result, eating kosher foods, or 'keeping kosher', will look different for different people.

Different Jewish communities and individuals will observe different degrees of Kosher. Outlined below are some of the most important aspects of keeping kosher, but everyone's priorities here may differ. When in doubt, it's always best to ask: and if all else fails, vegan food is generally a safer bet.

Meat & Slaughter

Animals must have cloven hooves and chew cud - sheep, cattle, goats and deer are permitted if they have been slaughtered in a kosher manner.

Pork products are always forbidden. Less common meats that are not permitted include rabbit, hare, camel, any rodent, reptile, amphibian or insect.

Birds must not be scavengers or birds of prey. Birds that are permitted include chicken, geese, ducks and turkeys.

Any product that comes from a forbidden animal, such as their milk, eggs, fat or organs, also cannot be eaten. Rennet, an enzyme used to make hard cheese, is often sourced from non-kosher animals: kosher hard cheese such as parmesan can be difficult to find.

Mammals and birds that are eaten must be slaughtered in accordance with Jewish law and certified as Kosher. Animals must have no diseases or flaws in their organs at the time of slaughter, and it is also forbidden to eat animals that have died of natural causes or were killed by other animals. It is also forbidden to consume blood, including eggs that contain blood spots. Kosher butchers drain the blood from all meat.

These rules do **not** apply to fish.

Seafood

Food that comes from the water must have fins and scales. Fish, such as tuna, salmon, tilapia, herring etc., is permitted, and does not need to be slaughtered under kosher rules.

Other water creatures such as shellfish, lobsters, oysters, shrimp, eels, octopus & squid, clams and crabs, are not kosher.

Dairy & Parve

Food in Judaism is divided into meat, dairy, or *parve*: foods that fall into neither category. Dairy cannot be combined with meat, but *parve* foods can be combined with either: therefore, it is acceptable to eat dairy with fish or with eggs. Individual practice varies around whether it is accceptable to eat meat and dairy as separate courses within the same meal, or whether a longer break is needed.

Strict Kosher can practice also involve keeping separate utilities and cookware for meat and dairy, so that the same pans, plates, forks etc. are not used for both. Learn more about parve rules here.

Kosher Certification

Food certified as kosher means that the facilities where the food has been prepared have been inspected by a rabbi to ensure full compliance with Jewish dietary law. Not all food needs a kosher certification: fruits and vegetables, for example, are naturally kosher. The certification is particularly useful for prepared food and things containing multiple ingredients.

There are also stricter laws about keeping kosher around passover, where there are restrictions on leavened grains: many products will release a special 'kosher for passover' variant in the weeks running up to it.

These are some of the most common logos used on food packaging to indicate that the food within has been certified kosher.

Kosher Recommendations

New Haven does not have a huge Kosher food scene, though it has been growing:
Ricotta is a fully kosher pizzeria and bakery.
Edge of the Woods is a bakery with extensive kosher options (though not *all* food is kosher.)
Fin & Scale is a fully kosher sushi restaurant.
Ladle and Loaf is a fully kosher soup and sandwich restaurant.
Finally, the Slifka Center has a fully kosher kitchen, and meals there are available through the academic year. You can use a Yale meal plan there as an enrolled student.