

# PESACH FOOD

*by Rabbi Yehudah Prero*

## **Question: Why people abstain from corn products on Pesach.**

**Answer:** The Aruch HaShulchan (Orech Chayim 453:4) writes: "And you should know that according to the law, it is permitted to eat rice and all types of legumes on Pesach. However, our sages and fathers have had a long standing custom and accepted upon themselves that it is forbidden to eat rice and legumes on Pesach...." He continues to give three reasons for this custom: Because one frequently finds grains of wheat mixed in with these other foods, we refrain from them as well, so as not to mistakenly eat grains which have become Chametz (leaven); One frequently finds that grains are made into a type of "hot cereal" such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, farina, etc.. These "hot cereals" are often indistinguishable from those "hot cereals" made from legumes. Because we do not want people who see these foods from afar to become confused and mixed up, we do not eat legumes either; It is possible to make a dough from many of the "legumes," like corn bread. Again, we do not want people to become confused when they see someone eating "bread," and therefore we do not eat legumes."

This custom is generally practiced by those of Ashkenazic descent. Those of Sephardic descent, however, generally do not practice this custom.

## **Question: Another reader wanted to know what items are needed for a traditional Seder.**

**Answer:**As far as "foods" go:

To start, one drinks four cups of wine during the Seder. It is preferable to use red wine, although red wine is not required. If one cannot tolerate wine, one should speak to their Rabbi for instructions.

Matzo, the unleavened bread eaten throughout Pesach, also plays an important role at the Seder. Matzo is made both by hand (round shaped) and by machine (square shaped).

For the step of Karpas, one dips a green vegetable in salt water and then eats it. Celery and cabbage, according to R' David Feinstein, are the best vegetables to use.

Maror, bitter herbs, are also eaten during the Seder. Ground raw horseradish and lettuce are two commonly used items for Maror.

It is customary to have a "Seder Plate," a "Ke'arah," on the table during the Seder. On the Seder plate, one will find different foods. Two of them, Maror and Chazeres, are essentially the same. Some people use lettuce for Chazeres and horseradish for Maror. (Both can be used when eating Maror.)

Charoses, a mixture of grated apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine, has the appearance of mortar. It symbolizes the life of the Jews in Egypt, whose lives were embittered by the back breaking labor with brick and mortar. Both the Z'roa, a roasted bone with some meat on it, and the Beitza, a roasted egg, symbolize the two sacrifices that were eaten on the Seder night at the time the Temple was standing. Karpas, as mentioned above, is placed as well on the Seder Plate.

Because we must recline while eating at certain times during the Seder, some find it helpful to have a pillow to lean on. There are many who have the custom to wear a "Kittel," a special white coat worn on Yom Kippur, at the Seder. It is of utmost importance that one have a Hagada, the book that contains the steps of the Seder and accompanying liturgy and blessings, at the Seder that one is comfortable with. It should be easy to read and easy to follow, so that the Seder will be the truly uplifting and pleasurable experience it should be.