

ShaPotluck!

HNT's Potluck Policy: *The why and the wherefore*

What is different about HNT's Potluck Policy?

Because of HNT's high standards of kashrut (a good thing!), for many years, meals served to congregants on Shabbat and holidays had to be prepared in the synagogue kitchen under proper kashrut supervision. There were periods of time when our policy allowed congregational potlucks once or twice a year. Without weakening our kashrut standards, we have opened things up more to ***make it possible to have Shabbat potlucks in the synagogue on a regular basis.***

How to cook for a ShaPotluck at HNT

Ingredients

- All ingredients must have an approved hechsher (kosher symbol) from the list below:



- or any listed at <http://seattlevaad.org/kosher-symbols/>
 - This does not apply to fruit, vegetables, or items with only a (single) raw ingredient (i.e. sugar, eggs). Those items do not require a hechsher.
- All ingredients must be dairy/pareve (no meat). This will be indicated by a small D or P (or written out "Dairy," "Parev," or "Pareve") next to the kosher symbol.

Preparation

- For preparation of hot dishes, only use new or disposable utensils and cookware.
 - This includes bowls, dishes, pots, pans, colanders, mixers, blenders, knives, ladles, etc...
- If cooking a hot dish in a non-kosher oven, please cover the dish during cooking
- For preparation of cold dishes, any containers or utensils may be used
- The easiest way to do this is to use disposable tins for cooking. They are inexpensive, and easy to use. And, you don't have to clean up. But, wait! What about pasta? We thought we'd thought of every contingency, and then we realized that there is no such thing as a cheap, disposable pot for cooking spaghetti. **So, our ritual committee came up with a brilliant idea – the Sha-pot!** We offer to all our members, free of charge, a special pot for cooking HNT Shabbat pasta. It will be yours to for use forever anytime you want to cook pasta for an HNT ShaPotluck. And, it comes with a colander, too. What a deal! If you are interested in getting a Sha-pot, please email Ilyse Wagner at ilyse@seattlewagner.com.
- Just be sure to clean you Sha-pot separately from your other dishes (with a new sponge). Or...you can just bring a fruit salad! Either way, by working together, and lowering the bar here and raising it there, we affirm the values of mutual respect and kindness that have always been the hallmark of our community.
- If cooking something kosher does not look like it's in the cards this week, you can always pick something up from one of the kosher restaurants listed at <http://seattlevaad.org/kosher-portfolio/> and bring it with you. Be sure to check for early closing times on Fridays!

Why did we make this change?

We have found that eating together on Shabbat is a wonderful way to build community and to nurture Jewish values. But, it is very expensive to have a congregational Shabbat every week. So, we are looking for ways to make communal Shabbat eating more accessible. One solution we came up with: more potlucks. And, we asked ourselves: Can we increase our congregation's commitment to Shabbat without diminishing our standards of kashrut?

Shabbat and Kashrut: The Yin and Yang of Jewish Life

Here is the challenge. Shabbat and Kashrut represent complementary Jewish values. ***Shabbat is about inclusiveness.*** The goal of Shabbat is to break down the barriers that separate us from each other during the week. That's why it's such a mitzvah to have guests for Shabbat dinner. ***Kashrut is about identity.*** Eating Jewishly reinforces our distinctiveness and reminds us that as a people we have a unique message to offer the world. You can see how these two wonderful values could potentially clash with each other. What to do? Turn challenge into opportunity. ShaPotluck is a chance for us to increase our connection to Shabbat while learning more about the value of kashrut. It's a win-win.

What is Kashrut?

The Torah tells us that to be a holy people we must follow certain eating guidelines. Based on the Torah, the rabbis outlined what Jewish law (halacha) has to say about what we may eat and what we may not eat. The core rules of kashrut include:

- An extensive list of animals, fish, birds and insects that we are permitted or not permitted to eat.
- Specific rules about who may slaughter a kosher animal and how
- A proscription of the consumption of blood
- The separation of meat and milk at meal time, including rules about the separation of utensils used to cook meat and dairy dishes

Why Kashrut?

Here are some of the most important reasons that Kashrut is such a central Jewish value:

- Kashrut teaches us to be kind to all of God's creatures. Every time we eat a steak or a hamburger, we have to ask ourselves: did an animal suffer in order for us to enjoy our food? If the answer is yes, that food is forbidden to us.
- We live in a world in which animals we eat are routinely treated with great cruelty, by the millions. Imagine how a revival of the Jewish people's commitment to kashrut could become a rallying cry for changing the way we raise and kill animals for our pleasure.
- Couldn't each of us develop kindness to animals on our own? Of course, we could. But, when an entire nation makes a commitment to make kindness to all of God's creatures a central part of every day, that is very powerful.

But, Doesn't Kashrut Divide Us?

Let's be honest. There is a lot of angst around kashrut. Even among the most observant Jews, there isn't a uniform standard. That can lead to hurt feelings. When we offer food, we offer love. Shouldn't that gift be accepted unconditionally?

There is a famous joke about Avram, a religious Jew who goes up to heaven and sees a huge banquet. Having observed Jewish law carefully his whole life, Avram asks one of the angels, "Who is the mashgiach (the supervisor of kashrut)?" The angel replies: "God is the mashgiach!" But, Avram says: "That's OK, I'll have the fruit salad." We hope that we will not behave like this at HNT. If we do, be sure to let us know!

Identity and Inclusiveness at HNT

At HNT, we value both distinctive Jewish identity and inclusiveness and we are continually looking for ways to find just the right balance between these two very important core values. We do not want anyone to feel judged for the level of their Jewish observance. And, we want members of every level of kashrut observance to feel included at our communal Shabbat meals. Hence, ShaPotluck! Thank you for your patience and understanding. We hope to see you at the next ShaPotluck!