

Planning for Diverse Needs

Rabbi Jonathan S. Siger

What is Judaism?

- Judaism is based on the texts and traditions of the Jewish People.
- The Torah, part of the Hebrew Scriptures, sometimes called “the Old Testament” is the source of hundreds of “Mitzvot.” These “Mitzvot”, or commandments, define a Jewish person’s life. They include rules of diet, religious observance and the way we treat and respect the world around us.
- We are called to be good and loving people and to appreciate what others do for us.

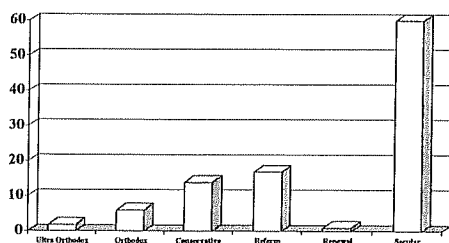
Working with Jewish groups

- Many levels of observance
- Lots of varied needs
- Most guests won’t care about “Jewish”
- A few will care a great deal
- Sensitivity is key to success
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions

Degrees of Observance

Lifestyle/ Concern	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Renewal	Non-Observant
Kosher	YES	Probable/ Plan for it	Possible/ Be prepared	Possible Vegetarian	No
Sabbath	YES	Probable/ Plan for it	Possible/ Be prepared	Possible	No

The U.S. Jewish Population



What is Kosher?

- ‘Kosher’ describes food and drink that is ‘fit’ to eat.
- ‘Treyf’ describes food that is ‘unfit’ or ‘not-kosher’.
- ‘Ha-mets’ is food and drink that is not allowed during passover: any bread or grain food or drink that isn’t made from matzoh (a cracker-like bread widely available in stores). This only applies for 8 days each spring.

Kosher

- Dairy and meat are not eaten together
- One waits at least an hour after eating dairy before eating meat
- One waits six hours after eating meat before eating dairy
- What's the deal?
- Bible forbids 'cooking a kid in the milk of the mother.'
- Pagans used to do this!
- Jews don't want to come anywhere close to breaking this Law.

Kosher meats

- Only animals that are ruminants with cloven hooves are kosher. (vegetarian and don't hunt)
- The animal must be slaughtered in a supervised and humane method overseen by a certified expert. For example, deer, while kosher, cannot be harvested by rifle or bow.
- The preparation of the food must also be supervised by a supervisor.
- Poultry is considered meat but fish is not.

Kosher Fish

- Only Fish with scales and fins are kosher.
- Catfish and Swordfish are not kosher.
- Shrimp, Shellfish and Octopusses-er, Octopii--uh, Squidy-looking things aren't kosher.

It seemed simple enough

- 'Pareve' describes 'neutral' food, food that can be eaten with either milk or meat. These are 'pareve':
- All fruits and vegetables
- Grains and legumes
- Eggs
- Fish (But fish and meat are not served on the same plate--it's an old tradition. This is important--'surf and turf' is problematic, even with kosher products like beef and salmon.

"Kosher Style"

- A good compromise for many.
- Not as strict--you can do it in-house.
- Don't serve pork, shellfish or blutwurst.
- No dairy and meat at the same meal.
- Have plastic plates and utensils available to prepare and serve salads and fruit plates, canned tuna or salmon or hard boiled eggs and kosher packaged baked goods.

It's okay to be confused

- Coordinate with a kosher caterer or local rabbi
- Vegetarian is always a good option
- Kosher food will have a certification symbol on it.
- Lists of reliable certification symbols are available to you online and from most rabbis.
- If you are dealing with a large Jewish group that makes Kosher food an issue, you will likely outsource the food-service anyway.

Don't hate me because I'm Kosher

- A little effort goes a long way.
- Jews will help you take care of them, just ask!
- Jewish tradition forbids embarrassing someone.

Shabbat (Sabbath) observance

- Shabbat begins Friday night at sundown
- Ends at nightfall Saturday night
- "Do no work on your Shabbat" includes things that may not seem like work.

Shabbat (Sabbath) Traditions

- Lighting candles at dusk on Friday night.
- Having (Kosher) grape juice or wine to make 'kiddush'--a celebratory prayer.
- Have small conference room set up with a lectern and chairs so that people can gather to pray and celebrate on Friday evening/Saturday.
- Saturday night: more candles, some more wine and some cloves or cinnamon to smell (and to remember the sweetness of the day of rest)

Forbidden on Shabbat

- Turning lights on or off.
- Driving.
- Pushing elevator buttons
- Using electronic locks.
- Electricity is considered a kind of fire, and doing these things is likened to starting a new fire. I know it seems strange, but it comes back to the idea of 'not coming close' to breaking a commandment.

Forbidden on Shabbat

- Writing.
- Conducting business.
- Tearing paper.
- If you can't sign for a meal or service on Shabbat, you should arrange to pre-pay or have managerial permission to delay 'settling up'.
- Make sure Kleenex is available in guest rooms.

How to avoid these problems

- Easy: Schedule conferences for Sunday/Monday rather than Friday/Saturday.
- Put Jewish guests on lower floors so they don't have to walk up twelve flights of stairs.
- Provide keys or have someone available to open doors if they have keycard locks.
- Ask, ask ask how you can help your guests meet their religious obligations.

How not to ask

- What's with the little hats?
- Aren't you afraid of going to Hell?
- Is it true you cut the baby's thing off?
- Why don't you believe in X,Y, Z?
- Why are Jews so...(fill in the blank)

How to ask

- I would like to know more about Judaism.
- Would you mind teaching me about your beliefs?
- What can I do to help you feel comfortable?
- Is it hard to be Jewish?
- What do I need to know to make this event enjoyable for you?
- Do you need anything for Shabbat?

Summary

- Dealing with a large, conservative Jewish group means getting some outside help.
- Most individuals will be happy to tell you what they need when asked.
- If you expect large Jewish participation, try to avoid scheduling over Friday night/Saturday.

Glossary of Terms

1. **Kosher/Kasher/Kashrut** – These terms define dietary practices of observant Jews. Only certain animals are kosher, or ‘fit’ for eating. Dairy and meat are never eaten together or at the same meal. The slaughter of animals must be humane and overseen by an expert. Cooking and eating utensils in the U.S. are Kosher only after they have been dipped in a ritual bath as an act of consecration.
2. **Shabbat/Shabbos** – From sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. G-d created the world in 6 days and on the 7th, he rested and restrained from work and commanded the people of Israel to do the same.
3. **Hadlakat Nerot** – Marks the beginning of Shabbat on Friday evening by lighting and blessing candles. If a woman is present, she traditionally lights the candles and leads the blessing.
4. **Havdalah** – Marks the end of Shabbat Saturday at sundown. At Havdalah, one engages all five senses to mark the end of Shabbat, using candles to feel the heat, wine to taste, a scented herb to smell.
5. **Mashgiach** (pronounced mosh-gee-ach) (plural: Mashgichim) – An expert in kashrut (kosher practice). Required in any public Kosher kitchen to supervise and ensure that all Kashrut laws are followed.
6. **Teveilah** – Any item used in a Kosher kitchen and made outside of Israel, or by non-Jews, must be taken to a natural body of water and dipped into the water to dedicate them to Jewish service. This excludes items made from plastic or wood.
7. **Pareve** (pronounced parve) – Everything edible besides milk or meat such as fruits, vegetables and eggs. When pareve food touches meat or dairy, it becomes meat or dairy. In a Kosher kitchen, there is a pareve section of the kitchen with separate stoves, cooking and serving utensils.
 - a. **Note** – Under specific circumstances, fish is considered pareve. One can eat meat and fish together although they must be served separately and eaten with separate utensils. One may eat fish and dairy together and there are no restrictions.
 - b. **Note** – To ingest meat *then* dairy, observant Jews wait from 3 to 6 hours. To ingest dairy *then* meat, some say to wait half an hour to an hour and some say just to wash out one’s mouth. Pareve food may be eaten at anytime.
8. **Heksher** – Most food has to have a heksher symbol, signifying that the place of manufacture is supervised by a mashgiach and the product is Kosher.
9. **Challah** – A sweet, braided egg bread served on Shabbat (Friday night).
10. **HaMotzi** – The blessing over the bread with a meal.
11. **Kiddush** – The blessing over the wine and also marks the beginning of Shabbat meal on Friday evening.
12. **ORB** – Orthodox Rabbinical Board is a company which hires Mashgichim, supervises them and answers their questions about kashrut laws.
13. **Seudat Shlishit** – The Shabbat meals honor the three fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Friday night honors Abraham, Saturday morning, Isaac, and Saturday evening, Jacob. Seudat Shlishit, or “3rd meal” refers to the last meal eaten during Shabbat on Saturday before the sun sets.
14. **Kitchen Kashrut Rules/Supervision** – A Kosher kitchen is a kitchen that separates between meat, dairy and pareve and uses only Kosher cooking and serving utensils. Only mashgichim can turn on the stove or oven and check various foods. Also, all of the food that enters the kitchen is checked by a mashgiach to ensure that it is Kosher with correct hekshers.
15. **Torah** – All the rules and commandments which G-d gave to Moses to pass on to Jewish people on Mt. Sinai. The 10 commandments are part of the Torah.
16. **Traditional (Orthodox) Judaism:** Jewish life is based on a code of behavior and practices derived from Jewish religious texts beginning with the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, sometimes called the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Every aspect of life from business ethics to marital relations is addressed in Jewish Law. This Jewish way of life has been and continues to be determined for Jewish communities by their rabbis who follow specific methods of interpretation. Traditional / Orthodox Jews follow these rulings very strictly and rely on the rabbis to determine the correct way of doing things.
17. **Reform Judaism:** Jews that practice Reform Judaism seek to live fully modern lives while remaining true to the spiritual and ethical teachings of traditional Judaism. Worship is conducted in both English

and Hebrew and Holiday services often use musical instrumentation, something traditional practice forbids. Maintenance of traditional Jewish dress and dietary laws are considered a matter of personal preference. While deeply rooted in tradition, Reform believes that informed choice should dictate a Jewish person's observance.

18. **Conservative Judaism** – Conservative Jews seek to blend traditional observance with reform. Services are almost entirely in Hebrew, matters of religious law are resolved through traditional methods and are considered binding, and traditional observance is strongly encouraged. However, as in the Reform movement, men and women are seated together and women may serve as rabbis.
19. **alternative Judaisms**: Based on meditation, chanting and movement rather than traditional liturgy and readings of scripture, many Jews find alternative worship more accessible and inspiring. Small groups often join together to celebrate Shabbat and other holidays involving non-traditional practices drawn from a variety of cultures and traditions, adapted to meet the needs of a Jewish people engaged in a global village. The Jewish Renewal movement is becoming a home for many that are attracted to these 'alternative' approaches to Jewish spirituality and life.
20. **High Holidays** – Rosh Hashana is the Jewish New Year and begins a period of ten days when Jewish communities and individuals are called on to reflect on their actions and achievements of the past year. One is obligated to seek forgiveness for wrongs done to others and to forgive when asked. The ten days end with Yom Kippur, the day of repentance when Jews fast, pray and meditate as an act of spiritual cleansing and renewal.
21. **Kosher for Passover** – There is a different custom for Kosher for Passover food. Food eaten on Passover cannot contain chametz, leavened bread, of any kind. This is to commemorate when the Jews were slaves and Pharaoh released them, the Jews had to take unleavened bread with them. We call this *matzah* and make *matzah ball soup* traditionally eaten during Passover. To ensure that no chametz of any kind is consumed during Passover, Kosher for Passover foods are the first packaged after machinery and cooking equipment have been cleaned and Koshered. This includes any machinery and equipment in the kitchen, stoves, pots, pans and all eating utensils. Dishes and knives must be purchased and kept separately and used only during Passover.
22. **Mevushal** – A term found on wine (along with a Kosher heksher) marking that the wine has been made by Jews. Wine can be Kosher and not mevushal, but then only Jews can touch the open bottle. The purpose is that Kosher mevushal wine can be opened and touched by non-Jews and remain Kosher.
23. **Cholent** – To avoid cooking on Shabbat, observant Jews prepare cholent, a traditional meat stew, left on the stove cooking at a low temperature overnight to be eaten on Saturday.
24. **Hamantashen** – Triangle cookies which symbolize the triangle hat that Haman, the finance minister of King Xerxes, wore. Haman wanted to execute all the Jews in the 120 countries that King Xerxes ruled because one Rabbi refused to bow to him stating that he only bowed to G-d. Haman was discovered by the Jewish wife of the King and hanged along with his ten children.
25. **Mitzvah** – a good deed, or a divine obligation given in the Torah. Helping each other is “a Mitzvah”.