

Prohibited Foods For the Week of Unleavened Bread According to the Torah

1. Any of the five grains or flour made from them, to which water has been added and allowed to sit long enough to begin the fermentation process (18 minutes is the accepted time according to the Sages) are prohibited. **The five grains are: wheat, spelt, barley, oats, and rye.** If fermentation occurs by water being mixed into the flour of these grains, they have become leavening agents. They are not to be used during the festival.
2. All prepared foods that contain any of the five grains (sandwich breads, even pita bread, since it may have been allowed to sit too long before being baked; cereals, cookies, crackers, etc.) are prohibited. Prepared foods made from *kitniyot* **do not need to be removed** (unless one wants to adhere to the additional Ashkenazic rabbinic fences). *Kitniyot* are legumes, or substances that appear to cause other foods to rise. For example, *kitniyot* include rice, corn, soy beans, string beans, peas, lentils, peanuts, mustard, sesame seeds and poppy seeds. So, for instance, corn tortillas are okay, as are foods made from rice.
3. Noodles purchased from the store, made from one of the five grains are prohibited, unless they are marked as Kosher for Pesach. (You can make your own noodles as long as they are cooked right away after water is added to the flour, if you are using flour ground from one of the five grains).
4. Beer, whiskey and the like, which are made from fermented grains, are considered prohibited by some. However, if the yeast is no longer active, many would not consider these to constitute *chameitz*. (Not all alcoholic beverages are considered prohibited, even by those who think beer, whiskey, etc. are prohibited. For instance, vodka that is made from potatoes does not contain *chameitz* since it is not made from one of the five grains.)
5. Substances containing leaven or leavening agents but which are never eaten do not need to be removed, since the primary commandment is that one is not to eat leavened foods nor have leavening agents that would be added to foods. Thus, cleaning agents, pet food, etc. that contain one of the five grains do not need to be removed.
6. Medicines containing leaven are not prohibited during the festival, on the principle of *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life), the rule that those things necessary to sustain life generally take precedents over other commandments.
7. Wine and vinegar (other than grain vinegar) are not considered *chameitz* because they are not made from grain products, and are therefore usable during the festival.

How Do We Remove *Chameitz* in the Diaspora?

The Torah commandment regarding the removal of *chameitz* includes the notice that no *chameitz* should be seen throughout one's borders: "Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders." (Ex 13:7) Fulfilling this commandment in the diaspora is, of course, impossible. So what should we do? It became the common *halachah* among the Jewish communities in the diaspora to declare their "boarders" to be any place where they would eat during the week of Chag HaMatzot. To remove the leaven, they designated a place which would be "off limits" during the festival, and put their *chameitz* there. This might be a cupboard that is tapped shut after the *chameitz* is placed in it, or perhaps a place in a separate enclosure (shed, garage, storage cabinet, etc.).

This is what our family does as well. We have a shed for garden tools, etc., and we designate the shed as "off limits for eating," i.e., as symbolic of "outside of our borders." We remove all of the food with *chameitz* to that location, and leave it there until after the festival.