

Kids in the Kitchen



Make your Passover Seder More Kid-Friendly

Prepare

Whenever going into a new situation, kids do better when they know a little bit about what's going to happen. In this case, you want to explain that the seder is a special meal, that there might be a lot of talking, and that it celebrates the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Get some books that tell the story and you can read in advance such as *Afikomen Mambo* by Rabbi Joe Black and *Passover Magic* by Roni Schotter.

Hagaddah-it-up

Have your kids make their own hagaddot. They can draw matzah, a seder plate, themselves singing the Four Questions, the 10 plagues, Moses meeting Pharaoh, crossing the Red Sea to freedom, etc. It might be nice for you to ask your child to describe the picture to you, and write a sentence about that picture on the bottom (for reference later so that you're not confused by pages of scribble from your 2-year-old). Then simply attach the pages together (staples or three-hole punch and ribbon or yarn to tie it up) and you've got a hagaddah that your child can share with all of the seder guests, and use to follow along.

Snacks

One of the first steps of the seder is eating *karpas*, the parsley, which we dip in saltwater. Kids LOVE dipping stuff. And actually, one of the Four Questions is about dipping: *Why on this night do we dip twice, when usually we don't even dip once?* Dipping your food in sauces and condiments was once a sign of royalty—the opposite of being a slave. So to celebrate our freedom, we do a lot of dipping! Your kids can really get into this one. Set up platters of cut veggies and fruit at each of the kids' plates, with assorted dips (from simple salad dressing to almond butter to honey. Be as creative as you'd like!) This way, your kids are dipping and snacking and enjoying themselves.

Music & Four Questions

If your child is the youngest attending the seder, he or she has a very special job: the Four Questions. Now, not every kid is going to learn all four questions in Hebrew when they're two years old. But they can probably sing *Ma nishtana ha-laila hazeh* if you practice with him that one line enough. If it's a song, it's fun! So sing it again and again, or, better, listen to it on Shira Kline's album, *Shirlala Pesach*. This album is a fun way to cover the Passover story, the seder, and she even sings the Kiddush for you! Listening to it enough will help you and your kids know the songs of the seder and be able to participate in them—or maybe even lead them!

Afikomen

This is the best part of the seder when you're a kid. And everyone can participate—even the littlest ones who only know peekaboo. You can think of the *afikomen* hunt as peekaboo with matzah. In the beginning of the seder, an adult hides half of the middle matzah, which is then called the *afikomen*, and it's the kids' job to find it. Before the seder, get your kids excited about finding the *afikomen*. Remind the kids that the *afikomen* search comes after dinner—and they get a prize. Speaking of which, you better work on what you're going to get them. With all this preparation work, you're setting the expectations high!

Add Special Surprises!

Give out plastic frogs during the 10 plagues; provide small gifts (play jewelry or other small treats) if a child asks a question during the seder; leave the room and come back dressed like Pharaoh. Passover is the re-telling of a rich and ancient story; keep your child—and other guests—guessing what is next!

Adapted from How to Survive a Seder With Kids by Amy Duetsch www.kveller.com

How to Create Healthy Mishloach Manot

On Purim, we have the custom of sending out *mishloach manot* (gift baskets) to friends and family, neighbors, teachers, and other community members. The idea behind sending gift baskets is to pack them full with goodies to ensure that everyone has enough food to be eaten during the day. Additionally, they are also meant to increase friendship and love between members of the community. Too often, mishloach manot are stocked full of sugary snacks. Here are some ideas to spread love and health to your community.

- 1. Edible Groggers** – Another Purim *mitzvah* is to make noise whenever we hear Haman's name in the book of Esther. In your mishloach manot basket, you can include a healthy crunchy snack like carrots, celery, or pita chips.
- 2. Send Fair Trade Chocolate** – Chocolate is sweet and nourishing, and some people even say it's healthy. In keeping with one of the themes of the holiday, it's important to think about who might be producing this sweet treat. Look for Fair Trade chocolates to include.
- 3. Add Color** – Tuck in a few beautiful locally grown apples, beets, carrots, or other fruits and veggies into your basket, right next to your hamentaschen. Spring is right around the corner, so Purim is a great time to celebrate the winter harvest.
- 4. Make a recycled mask** – Any time before you are ready to send out your baskets, you can have your little ones decorate masks out of used or recyclable materials, like newspapers and magazines. Add these into your basket for an extra special gift.
- 5. Send Seeds** – Purim is one month before Passover, so pick up some seed packets like parsley or micro-greens so that your community can start growing their *karpas* in time for Passover.
- 6. Bonus For Grown Ups: Drink Sustainably** - Don't forget to drink sustainably this Purim. For some celebratory Whiskey for Purim, check out the Koval Distillery in Chicago for organic spirits. Or mix your drinks using freshly-squeezed juices (orange, grapefruit, carrot/ginger, wheat grass – it's up to you!), natural sodas, ginger beer, or even homemade seltzer. And if you're going alcohol-free, these delicious mixers taste just as great on their own.

Offering Gratitude Before and After Meals

In Jewish tradition, there is an idea to try to say 100 blessings every day. There are plenty of opportunities to say brachot (blessings); they are said traditionally during prayer, upon seeing a beautiful and wondrous sight, even after going to the bathroom. Most commonly, however, are the blessings said before and after eating. The idea behind these blessings is to offer gratitude and say thank you for the food on our plate. As a family, try to think of everyone who was involved in bringing the food to your table – from the person that planted the seed to the person who set the table. You can also practice saying the traditional brachot:

The following blessings start with the formula:	
Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, ruler of the universe <i>Baruch ata adonai elobeinu melech ha'olam</i>	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם.
Before eating bread:	
who brings forth bread from the earth <i>ha-motzi lechem min ha'aretz</i>	הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ
Before eating grains:	
creator of types of nourishment <i>borei minei mezonot</i>	בוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מִזּוֹנוֹת
Before drinking wine or grape juice:	
creator of the fruit of the vine <i>borei p·ri ha-gafen</i>	בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.
Before eating fruit from trees:	
creator of fruit of the tree <i>borei p·ri ha'eitz</i>	בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ
Before eating fruit or vegetables from the earth:	
creator of fruit of the ground <i>borei p·ri ha'adamah</i>	בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה
Before eating meat, dairy, fish, and all non-grape based drinks:	
by whose word all things came to be <i>she-ba-kol nehiyeh bid·varo</i>	שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ

Eat the Rainbow

Eating the rainbow is a great tool to encourage kids to eat lots of different fruits and veggies, and gently encourage them to try new foods. Ask your child to identify their favorite foods in each color section, and during meal times ask them to fit as many colors as they can on their plate. Kids will get excited about how many colors they can eat!

Blue/ Purple	Green	White	Orange/ Yellow	Red
Blackberries	Avocado	Bananas	Bananas	Apples
Blueberries	Apples	Pears	Apples	Cherries
Cabbage	Grapes	Nectarines	Apricots	Cranberries
Currants	Honeydew Melon	White Peaches	Cantaloupe	Raspberries
Eggplant	Kiwi	Cauliflower	Grapefruit	Watermelon
Grapes	Limes	Garlic	Oranges	Strawberries
Plums	Pears	Ginger	Mangoes	Pomegranate
Raisins	Artichoke	Artichoke	Nectarines	Peppers
Purple Potatoes	Arugula	Jicama	Peaches	Tomatoes
Figs	Asparagus	Mushrooms	Pineapple	Radishes
Beets	Broccoli	Onions	Tangerine	Rhubarb
Purple Asparagus	Brussels Sprouts	Parsnips	Melon	Red Onion
	Cabbage	Coconut	Beets	Red Potatoes
	Celery	Shallots	Squash	Red Pears
	Cucumber	Turnips	Corn	
	Lettuce	Corn	Peppers	
	Peas		Carrots	
	Peppers		Pumpkin	
	Spinach		Sweet Potatoes	
	Zucchini		Pears	

How to Create a Rainbow on Your Plate

1. Make a rainbow fruit salad with fruits of each color: oranges, strawberries, kiwi, bananas, purple grapes.
2. Sauté a medley of mixed vegetables using each color: red onions, carrots, corn, broccoli and black beans.
3. Spinach salad with dried cranberries, canned mandarin oranges and red onion with your favorite vinaigrette.
4. Make fruit-slices: Puree your favorite fruit such as melon, peaches, banana, and/or berries with 100% fruit juice. Freeze in ice cube trays or paper cups or popsicle molds for a refreshing treat. Use fresh, frozen or canned.
5. Make a Greek-inspired salad: romaine lettuce, tomatoes, red onion, chick peas, black olives and artichoke hearts.
6. Make coleslaw: shredded green and red cabbage, grated carrots, julienned kohlrabi and finely chopped red and yellow peppers.
7. Make an open-faced quesadilla with tortillas, refried beans, salsa, red and green peppers and grated low fat jalapeno cheese. Bake.
8. On a busy night, check out the unique combinations of veggies in the frozen section to build a meal - a quick stir-fry, vegetable soup or stew, or a frittata.
9. Top a toasted English muffin with a scrambled egg slice of tomato and fresh spinach. Add grated Mozzarella and melt.
10. Try some different veggie toppings on your pizza: eggplant, olives, red peppers, mushrooms, fresh tomato, spinach, and broccoli

Remember:

5 servings of fruit and vegetables each day

1 serving = ~ 1/2 cup

Make it fun:

- Have kids make their own “rainbow” before grocery shopping. Let them draw a food of each color they would like to eat during the week. Incorporate those foods into their meals throughout the week
- While grocery shopping have kids pick out foods with different colors to create a rainbow
- Create a rainbow chart at home. After each meals kids can color in boxes using the color of the food they ate
- Have older kids find recipes that use as many different colors as they can find

Kids in the Kitchen: Prepping and Cooking

From the time they are just learning to sit up, these little explorers manage to find their way into all of the nooks and crannies of the kitchen – whether it’s banging pots and pans or making a mess on the floor. With just a little bit forethought, we can find ways to involve even the youngest kids in the kitchen. Try these ideas at home:

Help with menu selection – It can be a helpful tool to plan out your meals for the week on the Sunday before. Spend a few minutes with your child brainstorming ideas for the week and write them down on a chalk- or white-board. If you ask for their input, you will find meals you all can enjoy. All of the recipes included in the Setting the Table curriculum can be made simply for little ones or spiced up for grown-ups.

Put away groceries – Once your child has told you what they want to eat, have them help put away the food as well. Maybe they can arrange pantry products by size or shape or color. Inviting children into the kitchen, rather than telling them to stay away, is a great way to ensure lifelong healthy eating processes.

Pick herbs and veggies from the garden – Whether you have a full blown backyard garden or a few windowsill herbs, have your toddler pick herbs to add to the meal. Have them smell, touch, and even taste these herbs and sprinkle them into your dish. Allowing your child to choose what flavors they want will give them ownership over the meal, and more likely to eat it.

Sift flour – Sifting flour is a best practice whenever you’re baking something. It will help the flour, and your batter, to become soft and light. If you have a flour sifter laying around, invite your child to shift the flour into a bowl, which can be really fun for them.

Stir wet and dry ingredients –Especially in baking, recipes usually call for a bowl of wet ingredients and a bowl of dry ingredients. Have your child mix the wet and dry ingredients separately until they are fully combined. This can be a great exercise in counting, but asking them to count 10 times in one direction and 10 in the other. When your child has a little more power, you can have them combine the wet and dry ingredients – though with some dough this can be a tough job.

Spin the salad spinner – Salad spinners are useful tools and can be lots of fun for little ones. They really are just like toys! Once you’ve washed your greens – or for older kids, have them do the washing too— load it into the spinner and have your toddler push the button a few times until the salad is dry.

Tear lettuce or greens into small pieces – It is generally recommended not to cut lettuce or greens with a metal knife because the metal reacts with the nutrients in the greens to produce a bitter taste. In this case, it can be really helpful to have your child help you prepare a raw kale salad (see pg 18) or other leafy salad.

Pour liquids – Once you have measured out your liquids into a measuring cup, allow your child to pour it into a mixing bowl. Older kids can even measure out the liquids themselves. There is a great opportunity here to teach kids about practical math from an early age.

Stamp Cookies – Whether you are making hamentaschen for Purim (see pg 35) or cookies for dessert, offering to have your child help stamp out cookies with a cookie cutter is a great way to involve them in the kitchen. To spice up regular sugar cookies, you can purchase fun cookie cutter shapes online or at a local craft store for a very reasonable cost. When it comes time to learning letters, you can also make cookies in the shapes of different letters, and eventually, words.

Set a timer – by giving your child a responsibility in the kitchen, they will feel like they’ve taken ownership over a piece of the meal. You can purchase a creative timer on the internet or help your child set the timer on the oven. They will let you know when the timer goes off and be more inclined to eat the food you’ve made because they feel they’ve been included in the process.

Kids in the Kitchen: Serving

There are lots of fun ways to involve your child in the main part of the meal, from placemats to dishing out the food. The more that you can make your child feel like a part of the meal, the more they will be inclined to sit down and eat until they are full. These are great practices to start young and will last until your little one is all grown up!

Make placemats – Using construction paper or the inside of an empty cereal box, have your child decorate placemats for themselves and the rest of your family. You can prompt them to think about food and mealtime, or just let their creativity flow. Once they have finished, you can take their art to a local copy center and have it laminated so they will be spill resistant.

Set the Table – When your child is still really little, you can simply have them bring utensils from the drawer to the table. As they get older, and can lift heavier things, you can have them bring plates and cups as well. Additionally, you can have your child fold napkins or stick cloth napkins into fun napkin rings.

Use special cutlery – If your child isn't ready to use more formal (and more breakable) plates just yet, take a trip to pick out special plates and utensils just for them. Having cutlery that your child is excited about, will encourage them to participate more fully in the meal. Using a special straw or bowl that your child has picked out may also encourage them to try new foods.

Share some Torah – Having conversation around the dinner table can be just as important as the meal itself. Maybe your child can share what they have learned in school or help lead a discussion with something interesting they have been learning or thinking. For example, you can make the Red Lentil Soup with Greens (see pg 34) to talk about Jacob and Esau. Whether the content is Jewishly-focused or not, the idea of having conversation around a meal is certainly an important Jewish value.

Make place cards for guests – With all the hustle and bustle of inviting guests over for meals, it's easy for your child to seem like he or she is getting in the way. Assign him or her a special task, like making place cards for guests so they feel like a part of the process. Use holiday-themed stickers, like apples for Rosh HaShana or eggs for Passover, to make this activity extra fun.

Help scoop – With the right utensils, having your child help scoop out portions of food can be a really fun activity. Try using an ice cream scoop instead of a regular spoon to make a mound of polenta or lentils.

Play with Your Food – While this is traditionally not an encouraged practice, having fun with food may make your child a better eater. Use fun cookie cutters to make a regular sandwich into something special. Use raisins, cheeses, or small veggie sticks to make smiley faces on soups or other dishes. A positive association with certain foods or meals will mean they will want to try the food again and again.

Play pretend – Ask your child to use their imagination when thinking about their food. What if the broccoli on your plate was really a forest? What if your mashed potatoes were really a pot of gold? By arranging your food in a way that is visually appealing, your child will be much more likely to eat it. Don't worry – this works well for adults too!

Kids in the Kitchen: Cleaning

If your child has helped you to prepare the meal, then it's not a bad idea to have them help you clean it up either. This way they can learn from an early age what making a meal fully entails. As long as you make clean up fun, your child will likely be excited to help you in the process.

Clear the Table – Starting with their own dish and utensils, you can ask your child to move their dish from the table to the sink. Eventually, they can start to make multiple trips and clear the rest of the dishes as well. Try making clean-up into a contest, or playing fun music and singing songs together to make this an extra fun activity.

Wash the Dishes – Once your child is old enough to reach the sink, you can have them rinse dishes in the sink and load them into the dishwasher. They can also be helpful in drying the dishes. You can determine for yourself when you think this is an appropriate task for your little one.

Unload the dishwasher – If your child isn't ready to unload the entire dishwasher all by his or herself, you can start with small tasks. Take out the utensils a handful at a time and have your child separate the forks from the knives and the spoons. You can also have them separate the dinner forks from the salad forks for an extra challenge!

Sweep up – Some kids really enjoy dancing around the floor with a broom. Kids will be especially excited to try sweeping if they have seen their parents do it before. You can purchase a child-sized broom and dust pan online or at a local hardware store to make this activity even more accessible.

Wipe the Table – Sponges come in lots of pretty colors and even shapes. Once your child is tall enough to reach the table on his or her own, or with a stool, you can teach them how to wipe down the table after a meal – making sure not to drop all the crumbs on the floor, of course!

Recycle – If you have any recyclable materials left from dinner or dinner preparation, like cans of crushed tomatoes or a box of pasta, you can ask your child to help you recycle them. Have them bring it to the recycling bin, making sure any sharp pieces are safely wrapped up. Or, save recyclable materials for art projects like placemats or vases.

Compost scraps – Composting is an easy thing to do at home and there are a growing number of compost drop off and pick up facilities. After the meal, have your child collect the compostable scraps off of everyone's plate and carry them to your compost bin. Not only is this a helpful chore, it's an educational one too!