KASHRUT: PLANTS

KASHRUT: PLANTS: BUGS

INTRODUCTION TO KASHRUT: PLANTS: BUGS

Why Bugs May Not Be Eaten

Bugs are not *kosher* and may not be eaten for two main reasons:

- First, the *Torah* forbids the "*sheretz ha'shoreitz al ha'aretz*" ("creeping thing that creeps on the ground").
- Second, if people consider bugs disgusting to eat, the bugs are forbidden.

NOTE Eating a bug causes more infractions of *halacha* than eating pork!

General Rules: *Kashrut* and Bugs

Three basic principles govern bugs/insects in food:

a. **Partial-Bug Nullification**
A whole bug or insect cannot be nullified, even when it makes up less than 1/60th of the volume of the food in which it is found.

NOTE Any bug that is missing even a tiny part of its body may be nullified if less than 1/60th of the volume of the food in which it is found, but only if:

- You cannot remove the bug, and
- You cannot see it.

NOTE If you can remove the bug, you must remove it.

b. **The Three-Bug Rule**
Any time you find three bugs in food, you must assume there are more bugs to be found and you must therefore check every piece of that food before eating any of it.

c. **The Still-*Kosher* Food-and-Pot Rule**
Even if the bugs were cooked in the food, as long as you later remove all the bugs, the food and the utensil in which they were cooked remain *kosher*.

EXCEPTION If bugs make up 50% or more of the total volume, the food is not *kosher*.
WHAT TO DO In this case, you should consult a *rabbi* about whether the utensil is *kosher*.

KASHRUT: PLANTS: BUGS: FOR WHAT TO CHECK

KASHRUT: PLANTS: BUGS: FOR WHAT TO CHECK: VISIBILITY

Invisible Organisms

You are not forbidden from eating any life form that cannot be seen with the naked eye, such as micro-organisms.

Checking Bugs by Normal Eyesight

When checking edible plants for bugs, only bugs that are visible to a person with normal eyesight may not be eaten.

NOTE If you have poor vision, you must have someone else do the checking or use a magnifier.

KASHRUT: PLANTS: THE THREE-BUG RULES

KASHRUT: PLANTS: THREE-BUG RULES: COOKED FOOD

Introduction to Finding Three or More Bugs in Cooked Food

If you find three or more bugs cooked in otherwise *kosher* food, you must throw out the food, because you must assume that there are more bugs in the food and that the food is therefore not *kosher*.

Finding One or Two Bugs in Cooked Food

SITUATION You find one or two bugs in cooked food.
WHAT TO DO Just remove the bugs and eat the food.

Finding Bugs in Cooking Water

SITUATION You are cooking food and you find even three or more bugs floating in the cooking water.
WHAT TO DO You may simply pour out the bugs and continue cooking with the water and ingredients that were there, but ONLY if you are certain that there are no more bugs anywhere in the food in that utensil.

KASHRUT: PLANTS: THREE-BUG RULES: RAW FOOD

Three or More Bugs in Raw Food

SITUATION You find three or more bugs in raw food.
WHAT TO DO Go through all the food. If you can remove all bugs that are mixed in the food, you may eat the food.

KASHRUT: PLANTS: BUGS: WHICH FOODS TO CHECK

Checking Fresh Vegetables Depending on Locale

Vegetables, herbs, and other edible plants that may have bugs must be checked only if those plants commonly have bugs in the locale in which they are grown.

NOTE Bug infestations vary from locale to locale where the vegetables were grown; even if bugs are a problem in one place, they may not be in others.
NOTE You must check all of that particular fruit or vegetable for bugs if there would commonly be a bug in 10% or more of samples.

Checking Triple-Washed Greens for Bugs

For vegetables that commonly have bugs in them, you must check even triple-washed lettuces and other greens, even if they have been cut and packaged, unless they have a *hechsher* stating that they have been checked.

Which Foods Commonly Have Bug Infestations

The most common foods with bug infestations are raw vegetables, but bugs may also infest grains, some fruits, spices, and nuts.

All Herbs Need Checking

Many fresh herbs might contain bugs and therefore must be checked before use.

Difficult-To-Check Vegetables

Eating closed vegetables from which bugs won't be washed out, such as artichokes and Brussels sprouts, is not recommended.

NOTE For a way to use artichokes, see Checking Raw Artichokes for Bugs.

Checking Frozen Vegetables for Bugs

You may eat any and all frozen vegetables and you do not need to soak them first or check them for bugs since the manufacturer washes the vegetables to remove bugs before cooking. If, however, you do find bugs, don't eat the vegetables. *Kosher* supervision is recommended.

No Need To Check Most Frozen Fruits for Bugs

You may eat all frozen berries, except strawberries, without checking for bugs.

KASHRUT: PLANTS: BUGS: HOW TO CHECK

KASHRUT: PLANTS: BUGS: HOW TO CHECK VEGETABLES

CHECKING FOR BUGS IF BUGS NOT COMMON

If Bugs NOT Common on That Plant Grown in That Area

If less than one bug is usually found in 10 servings, you may simply wash the vegetables and then use them. If you happen to find a bug, you must remove it and you do not need to check the others.

NOTE If you find three bugs, you must check all of the food.

CHECKING FOR BUGS IF BUGS ARE COMMON

If Bugs Are Common on That Plant Grown in That Area

The presence of insects on fruits, vegetables, grains, etc., depends on season, location, crop type, year, and current conditions in the growing area. If more than one bug is usually found in 10 servings, you must wash or soak (preferably in salt water or soapy water) all of the food and carefully check a quantity equal to three servings. You may check the food or the water in which the food was soaked, if such soaking will remove the bugs.

NOTE Soapy water may be required to remove all bugs.

If You Do Not Find Any Bugs

If you do not find any bugs by this procedure, you may use all of the other (uninspected) food.

If You Do Find Bugs

If you find even one bug, you must either check each piece of vegetable OR soak (preferably in salt water or soapy water) or rinse the entire batch. Then check three more servings and continue until no bugs have been found after one cycle of washing and inspecting.

NOTE You may keep washing vegetables multiple times, without limit, until there are no more bugs**.**

CHECKING FOR BUGS USING CHAZAKA

Checking for Bugs Using Chazaka

Soak vegetables (preferably in salt water or soapy water) and check three servings from same batch of vegetables. If you find no bugs, you may employ a *chazaka* to allow use of the remaining vegetables without checking them.

KASHRUT: PLANTS: BUGS: HOW TO CHECK GRAINS

Checking Grains for Bugs

To check grain for insects, spread the grains on a flat surface.

KASHRUT: PLANTS: BUGS: CHECKING INDIVIDUAL PRODUCE

ARTICHOKES

Checking Raw Artichokes for Bugs

Artichokes frequently have bugs that cannot be washed out. To use artichokes, you must generally remove all the leaves before cooking. You may then:

- Just cook and eat the artichoke hearts, which infrequently have bugs, OR
- Check all the leaves, remove any bugs, and then cook and eat the leaves.

NOTE If you are preparing many artichokes, you could:

- Remove the leaves of three artichokes,
- Check all the leaves, and, if there are no bugs,
- Cook and eat the remaining whole artichokes in that batch without removing the leaves.

Finding Bug in Cooked Artichoke

If you cook an artichoke and then find a bug in it, the entire artichoke is not *kosher* and may not be eaten, even if you cut away the part with the bug in it.

REASON We assume that there are more bugs inside.

ASPARAGUS

Asparagus

Asparagus, whether fresh or frozen, is OK to eat:

- **Fresh Asparagus:** You must wash fresh asparagus and check for bugs.
- **Frozen Asparagus:** You do not need to wash frozen asparagus.

BROCCOLI

Broccoli

Fresh broccoli must be soaked (preferably in a solution of chlorine in water) and the water checked until no bugs are found.

NOTE You may wash indefinitely until the bugs are gone.

FIGS

Figs

Figs must be checked.

REASON Fig worms sometimes grow in the fruit while the fruit is still on the tree.

NOTE Worms may only be eaten if they grew in the fruit after it was picked and never came out (and even then, only if they are not considered disgusting).

MUSHROOMS

Mushroom

You must check mushroom gills for bugs and you must remove them if present.

NOTE This is normally not a problem in US-grown mushrooms but is a problem in mushrooms grown in China and other countries.

PARSLEY

Parsley

Parsley's bugs can be removed by hitting the parsley on a table, but you must still check the parsley after hitting.

RASPBERRIES

Raspberries

Raspberries and other hollow berries: Blow into them to remove bugs.

ROMAINE

Romaine

Romaine can have green or black bugs, which must be removed.

SEA VEGETABLES

Sea Vegetables

Sea vegetables are OK whether raw/fresh, dried, or toasted, but you must check for small crustaceans and other sea life.

SPICES

Spices

Spices (pure) are OK everywhere but beware of bugs. If the spices are ground, you may use them.

REASON Any bugs would be ground up and not visible.
NOTE Spices from China, even if ground, need a *hechsher*.
NOTE Spices from *Eretz Yisrael* may have *teruma* or *ma'aser* issues.

SPINACH

Spinach

Fresh spinach may have bugs and must be checked.
Frozen spinach does not need to be checked, especially if chopped.

NOTE Although chopped spinach may not be chopped finely enough to grind up very small bugs such as aphids, you may still eat the spinach.

STRAWBERRIES

Strawberries

To eat strawberries:

- Cut off the green at the top, and
- Soak the remaining strawberry in mildly soapy water.

NOTE This applies to fresh or frozen strawberries since bugs can burrow into the surface. (Defrost frozen strawberries before trying to remove bugs.)

VINEGAR

Vinegar

Vinegar has “eels” in it during production, but the eels are typically filtered out and you may use the vinegar.

KASHRUT: GRAPE JUICE AND WINE

KASHRUT: WINE SUPERVISION

When No Wine Mashgiach Needed

No *mashgiach* is needed if:

- The owner of wine production and all of the workers are *shomer Shabbat*, and
- No non-Jews or non-*shomer Shabbat* Jews come in contact with the wine or grape juice.

KASHRUT: UNCOOKED GRAPE JUICE/WINE

Kashrut: Open, Uncooked Wine: Drinking or Benefiting From

You may not DRINK or DERIVE ANY BENEFIT FROM open (unsealed), non-*mevushal* (uncooked, previously *kosher*) wine or grape juice that has been handled by:

- A non-Jew, or
- Any Jew who intentionally does not observe the laws of *Shabbat*.

NOTE Even though some people are not stringent about this, they should be since the prohibition is from the *Talmud*.

NOTE “Deriving benefit” includes that you may not sell it, feed it to an animal, etc.

NOTE There may be exceptions for cases involving large losses. A large loss is subjective to the individual's actual wealth and also to that person's perception of what is a large loss. Consult a *rabbi*.

Kashrut: Open, Uncooked Wine: From When May a Non-Observant Person Not Handle?

A non-Jew or non-*shomer Shabbat* Jew may not handle wine (or grape juice) once the juice has been separated from the lees (the remaining solid parts of the grapes).

NOTE Once ANY juice has been removed from the vat, all of the remaining grape juice or wine becomes subject to becoming non-*kosher* if contacted by anyone other than a *shomer-Shabbat* Jew.

KASHRUT: KILAYIM

Kashrut: Kilayim

See Forbidden Mixtures (*Kilayim*): Plants.

KASHRUT: ORLA

Kashrut: Orla

See *Orla*.

KASHRUT: PAT AKUM

When You May Eat Pat Akum

You may eat bread that was not baked by Jews (*pat akum*) as long as you know that it is *kosher* or it was supervised as being *kosher* by a reliable source.

KASHRUT: YASHAN

Kashrut: Yashan

See *Yashan*.

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