

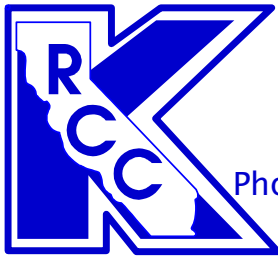
The RCC Home Guide to Preparing Fruits and Vegetables

ועד הרבנים דקליפארניא
Rabbinical Council of California

3780 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 420
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Phone: (213) 389 3382
Website: www.rccvaad.org
Email: info@rccvaad.org

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Rabbinical Council of California

3780 Wilshire Blvd Suite 420

Los Angeles, CA. 90010

Phone (213) 389-3382

Fax (562)286-5235

www.rccvaad.org

The Rabbinical Council of California is pleased to present this Guide to vegetable, herb and fruit to the Los Angeles Jewish community. This guide is the product of countless hours of research, consultation and careful study of the data.

The Torah forbids the consumption of insects, dead or alive. Certain fruits, vegetables or herbs are so infested that even the most intense washing procedures are ineffective. We have gone to great lengths to include produce where tests have proven that insect problems can be resolved.

Some people ask why has this suddenly become a major concern. There are several reasons why this problem has become more serious in recent years. One is that modern agriculture has changed drastically as science has discovered the harmful effects of some previously used pesticides. Secondly, we have become accustomed to fruits and vegetables from around the world that were not regularly available to earlier generations. Furthermore, it is not true that this is a new problem. The great poskim have repeatedly warned about the problem of insect infestation and the need to take precautions to avoid violating these transgressions.

The RCC has spent hundreds of hours researching and developing methods for growing of bug free salad products right here in Southern California. We currently supervise California Kosher Farms that is growing insect-free vegetables. This farm uses special netting from Israel, as well as meticulous Gush Katif style methods to ensure the produce remains insect free. These extraordinary methods of growing bug free produce involve significantly higher costs. The RCC and its employees do not have any business interest or financial gain from the sale of produce from the farm. We are proud that we are able to provide the community with superior Kashrus along with high quality and healthy produce.

We encourage you to check our website at rccvaad.org for future updates and information. We welcome your questions, comments and suggestions. Our findings and recommendations are specific to the West Coast of the United States. Other geographic locations may or may not be the same. Please check with your local Vaad. The RCC would like to acknowledge Rabbi Yossi Eisen of the Vaad of the Five Towns and Rabbi Tzvi Heber of the COR of Toronto for their assistance in gathering information for this guide.

We fervently hope that our efforts will be crowned with success in enabling a kosher diet for both body and soul.

Yakov Vann

Rabbi Yakov Vann

Director of Kashrut Services

Nissim Davidi

Rabbi Nissim Davidi

Kashrut Administrator

Yosef Caplan

Yosef Caplan

Assistant Director

Home Guide to Preparing Vegetables and Fruits

This guide will deal with fresh fruit and vegetables. Please note the following three rules for canned, frozen and Israeli produce.

Canned Items: All canned vegetable products must be reliably certified. Fruit items that contain no natural flavors or other additives other than sugar and or corn syrup are acceptable without certification except when packed in China.

Frozen items: Frozen vegetables that are free of insect infestation concerns may be used without a hashgacha excluding those packed in China. All vegetables that have infestation issues may not be used without a hashgachah specifically testifying that they were packed insect-free.

Israel: All produce from Israel (fresh, frozen or canned) must have a proper hashgachah to ensure proper Terumos and Maasros and Shemitah concerns were addressed.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WASHING AND CHECKING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Video demonstrations of many of the washing procedures outlined below will be available on our website at rccvaad.org.
- When soaking or rinsing, it is best to use cold water to help preserve the lettuces.
- After washing, it is recommended to use a salad spinner to help dry the vegetables and prevent spoilage.
- When a soapy solution or vegetable wash is called for, the soap or wash should be added AFTER the water and sufficient soap or wash must be added giving the water a greasy soapy feel.
- Soapy water should be used to wash vegetables within 10 minutes of adding soap to water as soap dissipates over time.
- A clear glass bowl is best for checking the water when required especially when placed above a light box.
- A recommended light box for checking is the Porta-Trace 10" x 12" Stainless Steel Frame Lightbox with Two 5000K Lamps which can be purchased online at amazon.com.

FRESH VEGETABLES	TYPE OF INSECT	LOCATION OF INSECT	METHOD OF INSPECTION
Artichoke	Aphids and thrips	On the surface and lodged deep between the leaves	<p>Leaves and Heart of the Artichoke: Should not be used even with hashgacha</p> <p>Solid Artichoke Bottom:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rinse prior to use 2. Make certain that no leaves are attached <p>No further checking is necessary</p>

Arugula	Thrips or leaf miner worms (indicated by trails)	In the leaf curls and inside the leaf	See Mesclun procedures below
Asparagus	Thrips	Under triangle parts, along the stem, and in the tips at the top of the asparagus	<p>Green Asparagus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shave down or cut the tips located on the head 2. Nine spears of lower triangles should be checked. If a bug is present all must be shaved. If no bug is found all may be used. 3. Wash thoroughly <p>No further checking is necessary</p> <p>White Asparagus: Wash thoroughly before use; no further checking is necessary</p>
Broccoli	Aphids, thrips, spider mites, or broccoli worm;	Lodged in the floret head or at the base of the under-part area connecting the floret to the stem	<p>Florets: Fresh broccoli may only be used with careful checking. This checking requires careful training and is beyond the scope of this guide.</p> <p>Stems <u>only</u>: Wash thoroughly; no further checking is necessary</p>
Brussels Sprouts	Aphids, thrips	Inside the leaf layers	Should not be used
Cabbage	Thrips and cabbageworms	Most often in the outermost three layers (6 leaves i.e. 2 leaves on each layer) of the cabbage head	<p>Green Cabbage:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Detach outer loose leaves (“wrapper leaves”) and discard 2. Core the cabbage and if desired split the head in half or quarters 3. Check the first three leaves of each of the halves or quarters on a light box 4. Check both sides of each leaf <p>If no insects are found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No further checking is necessary ▪ Remaining leaves must be washed before use <p>NOTE: For use in coleslaw, wash after shredding</p> <p>If one or two insects are found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional 3 layers must be checked and entire process repeated <p>If three or more insects are found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All remaining leaves must be carefully checked on a light box before use, even after washing is done <p>Purple Cabbage:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Detach wrapper leaves and discard 2. Core and split the cabbage in half 3. Wash leaves of the cabbage thoroughly in soap and water 4. If being shredded, cabbage must be washed after shredding <p>No further checking is necessary</p> <p>Stuffed Cabbage: Where stuffed cabbage is desired, an easier method may be employed as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place heads of cabbage in the freezer for 48 hours 2. Allow cabbage to defrost and then wash both sides of each leaf under a strong stream of running water 3. Ensure that the running water has reached all folds and crevices of the cabbage

			No further checking is necessary
Cauliflower	Thrips, cabbageworms or mites	Surface of cauliflower or between the tightly small packed florets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clean the outside of the cauliflower of all leaves and flies or insects that appear on its head. 2. Quarter or half each floret to ensure that the entire inside of each floret is visible. 3. Check 3 small pieces per head of cauliflower under strong light. 4. If even one insect is found, the <u>entire</u> head must be checked for more insects. 5. If three insects are found, the head of cauliflower is deemed to be infested and must be discarded; further washing is not permitted 6. Place cauliflower in cold water to which a sufficient amount of vegetable wash or soapy solution has been added. 7. Check an additional 3 samples of the cauliflower after washing to ensure that no insects remain. <p>NOTE: This procedure <u>must</u> be performed on each individual head by itself.</p>
Celery	Thrips, flies or leaf miner worms (indicated by trails)	On inside and outside of stalk, or buried in flesh of the celery	<p>Cleaning Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove all side branches containing leaves 2. Clean celery vigorously to remove all dirt and insects <p>Check samples for a worm trail which may indicate the presence of a leaf minor If spotted slit open the celery stalk and remove worm and the entire leaf miner trail Wash thoroughly</p>
Edible Flowers	Thrips	At the base of each flower and between the flowers	<p>May be infested and are not recommended except:</p> <p>Purple orchids: Check by thoroughly examining each individual orchid for the presence of thrips which must be removed</p>
Belgian Endives	Thrips	On the surface of the leaf	<p>Remove leaves and wash thoroughly No further checking necessary</p>
Frisee			See Mesclun below
Iceberg Lettuce	Aphids, thrips or spider mites	In the fold and crevices, generally on the first four outer layers (can be deeper inside)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add cold water and sufficient amount of vegetable wash or other similar soapy solution to sink or container. The proper amount of vegetable wash has been added when some bubbles are observed in the water. 2. Place lettuce in water so that all areas are open and exposed. Lettuce must be thoroughly agitated while assuring that entire lettuce has been immersed in the water. 3. Remove lettuce from water. All crevices and folds of the leaves must be opened while rinsing them under a strong stream of water. This washing process should be done to both sides of the leaf. <p>Most name brand pre-washed iceberg lettuces i.e. Fresh Express and Redi-Pak are acceptable. For other brands, please contact the RCC office.</p>
Kale			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add cold water and sufficient amount of vegetable wash or other similar soapy solution to sink or container. The proper amount of vegetable wash has been added when some bubbles are

			<p>observed in the water.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Place kale in water. Kale must be thoroughly agitated while assuring that entire vegetable has been immersed in the water. Remove kale from water. All crevices and folds of the leaves must be opened while rinsing them under a strong stream of water. This washing process should be done to both sides of the leaf. Three samples (larger quantities require more checking) should be checked over a light box to verify that the washing procedure has been effective.
Mesclun/Spring Mixes/Mixed Greens			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Soak in soapy solution with agitation for five minutes. Leaves should not be packed in sink but should have enough room to allow water to permeate. Remove lettuce from the soapy water and then drain. Place the lettuce in a second soak of fresh water for three minutes Agitate and remove lettuce from the fresh water bath. (Do not drain the water until after lettuce has been removed and the fresh water of the second soak has been checked for insects.) Check surface of fresh water soak for insect presence. If none found, check at least three handfuls preferably over a light box. If insects are found either in the water or on the lettuce, you may repeat entire washing process. If insects are found after repeating the above process, the entire batch may not be used.
Mushrooms	Flies, White and Red Worms	Embedded in under part or in inner sections of the mushroom	<p>Shitake and Button: Wash thoroughly; no further checking is necessary</p> <p>Oyster: May not be used</p> <p>Portobello: May be used after the following procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Remove entire brown fanlike under-part (which can be easily done with a metal teaspoon) Wash thoroughly and use
Onions (i.e., Red, Yellow, and Spanish)	Thrips and spider mites	Found on the outside layers of the onions	<p>Cleaning Procedure:</p> <p>All soft areas of onion must be removed as that often indicates presence of insects</p>
Open Leaf Lettuce (e.g. green/red leaf, Boston, chicory, curly endive, bok choy, romaine, Napa {Chinese cabbage} etc.)	Aphids, thrips, mites or leaf miners (during warmer months on outer leaves)	On the surface of the leaf, inside the leaf (leaf miners) or in the inner leaves	<p>See Mesclun guidelines above</p> <p>Bok Choy: In addition to the above guidelines, the bottom must be cut off.</p> <p>Romaine:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended to use only hearts of romaine. In addition to the above guidelines, EVERY leaf must be checked preferably over a light box.
Radicchio			See Iceberg lettuce cleaning procedures above
Scallion/Green Onions Leeks	Light green or light brown thrips or leaf miner worms (indicated by trails)	The upper area of the bottom portion of the scallion, where shoots branch off and on the outside part of the green shoots where leaf miner trails can also be found	<p>Cleaning Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slit open all scallions or leek from top to bottom Separate each individual layer Rinse the entire layer of the scallion or leek under a stream of water <p>Check samples for the presence of a leaf minor If a worm trail is spotted it must be removed.</p>

Spinach	Thrips, mites or leaf miner worms	In the leaf curls on the surface or inside of the leaf	Curly Leaf Spinach: May not be used Flat leaf or Baby Spinach: See Mesclun washing and checking procedures above.
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HERBS	TYPE OF INSECT	LOCATION OF INSECT	METHOD OF INSPECTION
All Fresh Herbs for use in soup net			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wash herbs thoroughly with vegetable wash or a similar soapy solution and rinse thoroughly 2. Place in a gourmet or cooking bag and tie tightly No further checking is necessary
Dehydrated Herbs			All dehydrated herbs may be used without checking NOTE: A reliable hashgacha is often necessary
Basil	Thrips or leaf miner worms (indicated by trails)	In the leaf curls and inside the leaf	See Mesclun washing and checking procedures above.
<p>Fresh Herbs: Cilantro, coriander, flat parsley, mint, oregano</p> <p>Specialty Herbs: dill, rosemary, sage, tarragon</p>	Aphids, thrips, or spider mites	On surface of the leaves	<p>Cleaning Procedure: A cursory check by tapping on white surface should be performed to determine if obvious infestation is present. If infested entire batch may not be used. If no insects are found then the following MUST be performed prior to using:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add cold water and sufficient amount of vegetable wash or other similar soapy solution to a clean sink that has already been plugged or to a glass container. 2. Place herbs in water. Herbs must be thoroughly agitated in the water. Care must be taken to ensure that the container is not over-stuffed with herbs so that the water can clean the herbs properly. 3. Remove herbs from soapy water and place them in a fresh water soak. 4. Remove herbs from the fresh water soak and pour fresh water through a fine screen or white cloth. A coffee filter may be used as an alternative 5. In a well-lit area, put the screen or cloth on a light box and carefully examine screen or cloth for the presence of thrips <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) If no insects are found proceed to step 6. b) If one or two insects are found then the entire washing procedure must be repeated. c) If three or more insects are found, the herbs may not be used as they are considered infested. 6. Herbs should be held in a downward position under a heavy stream of water. Herbs should be spread out or pulled apart to allow the water to pass through all of the herbs. <p>Important Note: In order to be sure that the insects that may be found in the herbs are washed away, a special focus must be maintained to carefully pull apart all the tightly clustered herbs. Spread out the herbs in hand, and allow water to thoroughly wash away all foreign matter that can be caught in the top of the herbs.</p>
Thyme, Curley Parsley	Aphids, thrips, or spider mites	On surface of the leaves	Should not be used

FRESH BERRIES	TYPE OF INSECT	LOCATION OF INSECT	METHOD OF INSPECTION
Blackberry	Thrips or mites	On surface of berry, nestled in crevices	Should not be used
Blueberry	Generally insect- free		Cultivated: Place in a strainer or colander and wash thoroughly under running water. No further checking is necessary. NOTE: If the blueberry is bruised or blemished then it must be checked for infestation
Strawberry	Aphids, thrips, or mites	Under green leaf or on surface of berry	Strawberries: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As strawberries are often infested, great care must be taken to follow these procedures with diligence. This is not a job to assign to children or kitchen help. 2. Carefully remove green leaf without making a hole in the top. There is no need to cut the top just pull off the green lightly. 3. Place in a clean plugged up sink with cold water while adding a sufficient amount of vegetable wash or similar soapy solution 4. Allow to soak for 3-5 minutes 5. While soaking, agitate in water vigorously; the surface of each strawberry should be rubbed with your fingers 6. Carefully wash off the entire surface of each strawberry, one by one, under a heavy stream of water ensuring that the water hits the entire surface area of the strawberry directly.
Raspberry	Thrips or Mites	Nestled on the surface of the berry as well as inside the open cavity	Should not be used

RICE	TYPE OF INSECT	LOCATION OF INSECT	METHOD OF INSPECTION
Basmati/ Wild rice	Thrips and Worms	On top of the rice grain	When soaking rice prior to cooking, carefully examine the water for insects, which will normally float to the top. If insects are found, the entire bag is likely to be infested and must be checked.
GRAINS AND BEANS	Check for obvious signs of infestation		
Flour	When properly stored in a cool, dry place or in the refrigerator, it is unusual to find worms in flour. If worms are found, the entire bag must be discarded. Worms may develop when stored in warm areas or for longer periods than usual such as yoshon flour. If needed, the flour must be sifted through a very fine filter or discarded. Care must be taken to thoroughly clean the container when adding flour from a new bag.		

FRUIT	TYPE OF INSECT	LOCATION OF INSECT	METHOD OF INSPECTION
Date	Worms	Inside of date	Whole Dried Dates with Pits: Take 3-5 dates from container, slice lengthwise and examine, opening up the date completely, examining for worms. Dried and Pitted require no checking
Fig	Wasps or worms	Inside of fig	Fresh: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cut stem off the fig 2. Slice 3-5 figs from each package and turn inside out 3. Look for webbing when examining seeded section Dried: Cut fig horizontally and split in half; check for obvious signs of insect damage or dark colored worms
Nuts	Worms		Check for obvious signs of infestation
Dried Fruit			Look for obvious signs of infestation
SEAWEED/ NORI SHEETS	Sea insects- mini scorpions and mini seahorses as well as other small mites.	On the surface of the leaf. Resembles small white seahorses or white worms.	Seaweed/Nori Sheets must carry a reliable hashgacha. Spot check from time to time.