

**SAMS Kashrut Policy** / Approved by SAMS Trustees November 2020

*For use of SAMS kitchen and for any event, meeting, simchah etc. that takes place inside our building.*

## Food and Fellowship | אין קמח אין תורה

*Ein kemach ein Torah* – without flour (food) there's no Torah. [Avot 3:17] This quote from the Mishnah emphasises something which is likely already obvious to many of us: Judaism is centred around food. Rituals around food abound, family celebrations around a table are aplenty, and the iconography and symbolism of food is spread throughout Jewish culture. Food is a central part of who we are and what we do together as a Jewish community. It is an integral part of our communal activities and a fundamental part of daily Jewish observance. Therefore, we want our Kashrut policy to reflect the values of SAMS and to enable as many people as possible to be able to enjoy its catering facilities.

Sometimes being inclusive means that we lean towards leniency. In the case of Kashrut, however, inclusivity involves maintaining a clear policy with which observant Jews both within and beyond our community feel comfortable, so that the maximum range of people are able to share meals and *s'machot* in our Synagogue.

While we understand that members may get frustrated that (for example) home-cooked food is not permitted in the SAMS kitchen or for provision on SAMS' premises, we recognise that some members would feel unable to attend SAMS events or consume food provided by SAMS were home-cooked food to be provided. We also understand that some members may feel that their kitchen meets the highest standards of *kashrut* observance and may feel offended that these guidelines appear to suggest that somehow their kitchen is "not good enough", but we also recognise that permitting food cooked in one member's kitchen and not in another's would be divisive, and that any person tasked with deciding whose kitchen did meet our standards and whose did not would be placed in an impossible position. **For these reasons SAMS does not accept any home-cooked food in its kitchen or for supply in SAMS' premises.**

Lastly, we have endorsed below the notion that vegetarian and vegan food is often *already* kosher even without being certified by a Kashrut agency *per se*. This is based on the fact that Kashrut is actually about a lot more than what the food *is*.

## Soul Food | אוכל נפש

Many of us, especially those raised in contemporary Britain, make the mistake of thinking that *kasher* = KLBD (Kosher according to the London Beth Din). It often seems as though *kashrut* is about some rabbinical blessing or the involvement of Jewish people in producing the food. However, *kashrut* as conceived of by the Sages who constructed the Judaism we practise was far more inclusive than simply the things to be found on 'The List'. In fact, the idea of *hechsherim* (kosher symbols and certification) is a distinctly modern one – as prior to industrial food production, Jews were reliant on communal opinion and their own common sense to make sure they were eating, and living, according to the dictates of the Torah.



*Kashrut*, in the eyes of our Sages, is about one of three things: 1) what animals we can eat, 2) how we can eat them, and 3) social and cultural cross-contamination between Jews and non-Jews. The first two are conditions easily met: a vegetarian (or better even, vegan) diet ensures that the essential issues of *kashrut* are moot. Arguably, the entire project of *kashrut* as established by our Sages, is an obtuse effort to incentivise people to eat a less meat-based diet. As a result, the easiest way to keep *kashrut* today is to pursue a plant-based diet. Assuming one is able to do so, the only concern regarding whether food is acceptable is 3) above: social and cultural cross-contamination between Jews and non-Jews.

This category includes a variety of rabbinic rulings (ie. not explicit in the Torah) about not allowing non-Jews to cook food for Jews (*bishul akum*), and not allowing non-Jews to make foods which were considered to be at a high risk of being used in polytheistic worship, including wine, bread, and milk. As Masorti Jews, we're often willing to reevaluate many of these rabbinic prohibitions in light of contemporary society. For example, the risk that the bottle of wine you might buy in the corner shop has previously been poured as a libation sacrifice in dedication to Bacchus, is appreciably small. As a result, Masorti halachic decisors have often ruled permissively regarding the elements of *kashrut* which derive from concern about non-Jews involvement in food processing and food usage for idolatrous purposes. In being lenient, our *poskim* have not gone outside the boundary of the halachic system, but have instead worked within it to utilise leniencies which are meant to address the changing nature of society– Jewish and non.

**Following from this, all food used at SAMS' has to be either:**

1. From a commercial establishment which is under reputable kosher supervision

**or**

2. Packaged food which meets the following criteria:

- a. All food must be either *chalavi* (dairy) or *pareve* (neither meat nor dairy)

**and**

- b. Food provided for Shabbat or Yom Tov must be purchased and delivered to SAMS prior to the start of Shabbat or Yom Tov, as the case may be

**and**

- c. Food must be in its original packaging so that anyone can verify ingredients for allergies and for *kashrut* purposes. Food which would not normally be packaged (fresh fruits and vegetables) are an exception

**and**

- d. It must bear one of the following features:

- i. It must be certified *kasher* by a reputable Kashrut authority (KLBD, SKA, OU, etc.)– meaning that either it will bear a *hechsher* or more likely, it can be found on the up-to-date lists published by these agencies

**or**

- ii. It bears the symbol of one of the vegetarian or vegan certifications (vegshers) which are acceptable at SAMS (see Appendix I)

---

<sup>1</sup> This policy does not apply to Pesach, in which different considerations have to be weighed.



**NB: if buying vegetarian or vegan food, a simple green V or the words 'suitable for vegetarians' is not good enough.<sup>2</sup> It must bear one of the six veg\*n certification symbols (AKA. 'Vegshers') found in Appendix I.**

iii. Exceptions to this include:

A. *Wine and grape juice* – Wine and grape juice, including uncooked products derived from wine and grape juice (such as wine-vinegar) must have a kosher symbol (*hechsher*) from one of the generally recognised *kashrut* authorities. This requirement does not apply to fresh grapes or raisins, or to cooked grape products.<sup>3</sup>

B. *Fish and fish products* – fresh or frozen fish can be bought when a) the scales are on and b) the species is easily identifiable (ie. skin-on salmon). Any processed fish products must bear the symbol of a recognised *kashrut* certification agency.

C. *Milk* – Fresh milk (cow, goat or sheep milk) from a commercial supplier is acceptable in SAMS notwithstanding the absence of any kosher or veg\*n certification symbol (*hechsher*).

D. *Cheese* – Cheese is acceptable at SAMS if it is *either* kosher-certified or vegetarian and therefore must comply with one of the following requirements:

- a. the original sealed packaging must include a kosher symbol (*hechsher*) from one of the generally recognised *kashrut* authorities;
- or**
- b. the original sealed packaging must include a vegetarian or vegan mark **or**
- c. the original sealed packaging includes the words “suitable for vegetarians”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Except for plain cheese, (see iii.D) as it only contains milk and rennet, and *any* vegetarian label certifies that the rennet is microbial and not animal.

<sup>3</sup> Although this may appear to contradict our embrace of the leniencies around *chalav yisra'el*, *pat yisra'el*, and *g'vinat yisra'el*, this is in accordance with the *teshuvah* of Rabbi Eliot Dorff (1985, Committee on Jewish Law and Standards) which permitted individuals to use any wines without concern for *kashrut*, but still suggested that synagogues use wines under kosher supervision to be inclusive of all people in the community, especially as most wine used at synagogue is for a primarily sacramental purpose (*kiddush*, *havdallah*, etc.)

<sup>4</sup> This is because cheese is not likely to have any contact with meat-based equipment or ingredients. The traditional designation of some cheese being *g'vinat yisra'el* (Jewish cheese) is purely about rennet. As you can see from the OU ([How does one make g'vinat Yisrael?](#)), the only thing which that label ensures is that the factory used microbial rennet rather than animal-based rennet. That same distinction can easily be made in contemporary cheeses which are labelled as 'vegetarian' or by reading the ingredients– as now all major producers are required to indicate the source of the rennet used. For more on this discussion see here: [Vegetarian Cheese](#). Our position follows that quoted of the Tosafot, who described situations in which it was known that cheese-producers were using herbal agents to produce cheese, and therefore accepted it.



## SAMS Events at Members' Homes

Anyone preparing food to be consumed at a SAMS event in a member's home must ensure it is vegetarian by ingredients (not necessarily by certification) and should discuss with the hosting member any additional requirements that they may have, whether around *kashrut* or other dietary restrictions.

## Meat

Meat is not permitted in the SAMS kitchen and is only permitted on SAMS premises with the approval of the SAMS Rabbi. If approved, meat is only permitted when bought from a butcher under the supervision of one of the generally recognised *kashrut* authorities or in sealed packaging bearing a kosher symbol (*hechsher*) from one of the generally recognised *kashrut* authorities. This is not an option at SAMS events in the building, but may be an option at events off-premises. In the case of any SAMS event where meat is permitted, a vegetarian option *must* be made available as well.

## Catered Events

In the case of any event that is catered by a caterer under the supervision of one of the generally recognised *kashrut* authorities, SAMS will regard the caterer as meeting its *kashrut* requirements. Any other caterer must meet the same requirements for food and ingredients brought onto the premises as apply for *kiddush* above and all food preparation in the SAMS kitchen will be supervised by the SAMS Rabbi or a SAMS member designated for the purpose by the SAMS Rabbi.

## Appendix I

This is intended as a quick guide to shopping. Part of our embrace of vegetarian and vegan labelling is to encourage those providing food at SAMS to shop local. To do so, look for the following symbols. These certifications all verify that not only are the ingredients vegetarian or vegan but also that the utensils and manufacturing processes are as well. Although many foods labelled simply 'vegetarian' or 'suitable for vegetarians' are vegetarian in ingredients, they are not supervised as such, and they may be made in manufacturing settings which would prevent them from being considered *kasher*. Therefore these are the **only** symbols which we can reliably say fit with the policy of SAMS:



European Vegetarian Union (new) Vegan Certification



European Vegetarian Union (new) Certification



Vegan Society (UK)



Vegetarian Society (UK)



Vegan Action (UK)