



WISCONSIN SCHOOL NUTRITION
IN A NUTSHELL

Kosher Meals in the USDA School Nutrition Program

This document is not intended to be an instruction on kosher dietary law. It is designed to provide a general overview, as it relates to meals provided in the USDA school nutrition programs.

Kosher Diets

The term, “kosher,” means to be pure, proper, or suitable for consumption. It is used to describe food products that comply with dietary guidelines set by traditional Jewish law. There are three main kosher food categories:

- **Meat (fleishig):** Kosher guidelines permit the consumption of animal-based foods to specific animals that are slaughtered and prepared in a particular manner. Kosher diets require a kosher certification on beef, poultry, fish and fish products, and other animal meats. Mammals or fowl, as well as products derived from them are permitted. Pork products and products derived from pork are not permitted.

Kosher guidelines strictly prohibit the pairing of any meat and dairy products. This also means all utensils and equipment used to prepare meat and dairy must always be kept separate.

- **Dairy (milchig):** Milk, cheese, butter, and yogurt are permitted. However, they must never be mixed with any meat-based derivatives, such as gelatin or rennet (an animal-derived enzyme), which is often the case with hard cheeses and other processed cheese products.
- **Pareve:** Food that is not meat or dairy, including fish, eggs, and plant-based foods are permitted. Shellfish products and products derived from shellfish are not permitted. With few exceptions that must be authorized by experts in kosher food requirements, kosher certification is required on any product that has been processed and/or packaged.

Observance may vary between communities, so it is important to work with the family to understand their specific beliefs and practices regarding the types of foods that are permissible. This helps to build trust and shows a commitment to a culturally respectful and inclusive environment.

Kosher Menu

What to Purchase

Purchase certified kosher foods to ensure food products comply with dietary guidelines set by traditional Jewish law.

The following foods may be considered kosher without certification if they do not come into contact with non-kosher ingredients:

- **Fresh produce:** Fruits and vegetables are usually kosher if they're free of non-kosher substances like insects and insecticides.
- **Dry legumes:** Dry legumes like chickpeas, lentils, and lima beans are usually kosher.
- **Eggs:** Eggs in their shells are usually kosher.
- **Dried fruit:** Dried fruit with no oil or other ingredients is usually kosher.

Where to Purchase

Many of the items being served are likely kosher, offering a convenient option for those who follow kosher dietary guidelines.

Additional kosher foods may be found at:

- Food distributor – many food distributors carry certified kosher foods. They will indicate this on their website or have staff that can help you identify certified kosher foods.
- Local supermarket
- Local ethnic specialty grocer
- Online ethnic retailer

Note: [Crediting](#) documentation showing how individual food items contribute to the Child Nutrition Program meal pattern is required.

Making a Menu

Kosher meals can be provided upon request or provided to all students. Offering kosher foods to all students provides a culturally inclusive environment, reduces the chance of cross contact, and may increase participation.

Keep ingredient labels available for families to identify foods that are not acceptable, as levels of observance may vary between communities.

Service

Providing a certified kosher entrée to all children is the best way to create a culturally inclusive environment. For example, if hot dogs are on the menu, provide a certified kosher beef hot dog to all students.

If providing kosher meals to specific students upon request, work with the family and student to identify strategic and respectful ways to serve the kosher meal.

Food Storage and Preparation

Store and prepare certified kosher foods separate from non-certified kosher foods. Safely storing and preparing kosher foods can be accomplished the same way it is for allergen free foods.

Storage

Provide kosher specific storage containers and clearly label them to indicate the product is a certified kosher food. Additionally store kosher food items separately such as in a dedicated space or on a separate shelf.

Preparation

Prepare certified kosher foods separate from foods that are not permissible to ensure there is no cross contact. When preparing generally permissible food such as fruits and vegetables, ensure they do not come in contact with non-permissible food. This can be accomplished by washing, rinsing, and sanitizing preparation areas, cutting boards, and utensils.

Variations in Meal Requirements for Jewish Schools

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) have provided Instruction 783-13 Rev. 3, [Variations in Meal Requirements for Religious Reasons: Jewish Schools, Institutions, and Sponsors](#). FNS may approve variations in the food components of meals served in Jewish facilities participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). This may include variations of the grain, dark green vegetable subgroup, and milk requirements.

Jewish schools may request this variance by emailing DPIFNS@dpi.wi.gov.