

Kosher – definition

Kosher foods are divided into three categories: meat, dairy and pareve.

Kosher meats must come from ruminants (cud chewing, split hooves) including cattle, sheep and goats. Kosher fowl include domesticated chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese.

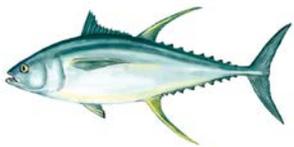
Kosher dairy products must originate from a kosher animal, must contain only kosher ingredients and must be free of animal co-products (gelatin, rennet, etc).

Foods that are neither meat nor dairy are known as *pareve* and include (but are not limited to): fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables, tea, coffee and soft drinks. Fish with scales and fins are kosher – all other seafood (shellfish, fish with skin) are forbidden. Eggs must be free of blood spots. Fruits and vegetables must be free of insects.

Production, processing, packaging and preparation must be done on kosher equipment and with kosher utensils.

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Kosher focuses on the slaughter, preparation and consumption of meat, dairy and other foods.



The Kosher Process

To qualify as kosher, animals must be well cared for and preferably without blemish (scars or injuries). The feeding of animal by-products is prohibited. Animals should have access to drinking water until slaughtered.

Following are guidelines (*shechitah*) for kosher slaughter.

- Slaughter is supervised by a *shochet*.
- The knife must be very sharp and the edge of the blade perfectly smooth (no nicks).
- Kosher slaughter involves one pass of the blade across the throat of the animal, severing the carotid arteries, jugular vein and trachea. Research (Schultz, Hanover University, Germany) indicates this process involves very little pain. Animals lose consciousness

very quickly, yet the heart helps rid the body of blood.

- The animal must be allowed to bleed completely out. Blood is not kosher.
- The meat must be soaked and salted (*kasher*) within 72 hours of slaughter to remove all remaining blood.
- The sciatic nerve and associated blood vessels may not be eaten; most hindquarters are sold for non-kosher processing and sale.
- The appearance of a 'K' on a product does not infer kosher certification. Several third-party kosher certification organizations (each with their trademarked symbol) are recognized in the US.