

HOW TO CHECK MATZOS

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The production of *Kosher l'Pesach* (KFP) *matzos* involves a great deal of meticulous work. The process begins with the inspection of wheat kernels to ensure that they have not been adversely affected by moisture in the air or prematurely sprouted. Grinding of the grain must be performed according to the dictates of Halacha, which precludes any pre-grind soaking of the grain and requires special preparation of the milling equipment to ensure that no contamination exists from non-Passover flour in the grinders and filters. The KFP flour is then loaded onto trucks, either pneumatically or in bags under controlled conditions, and shipped to the bakeries.

A bakery which has been *kashered* for Pesach will have already prepared special water (*mayim shelanu*) to be used for Pesach *matzos*. Hand matzah bakeries do not use regular municipal water for fear that the chemicals added to the water may affect the leavening qualities of the dough. After the dough has been mixed, rolled out and perforated the *matzos* go into ovens for baking. This entire process, from the time that water first comes into contact with the flour until the matzah is completely baked, takes just a few minutes. Unquestionably, on Pesach every conscientious Jew would use only *matzos* made under the supervision of a reliable *hashgacha*.

Despite all the precautions and attention to detail by the bakeries involved in making *matzos*, it is possible for the consumer to purchase *matzos* that may still have issues. The following is a brief discussion of some problem areas. It should be noted that these problems can exist in both hand and machine-baked *matzos*, although they are more prevalent in the hand-baked *matzos* than machine-baked *matzos*.

1. Matzah Kefula

If there is an area on the matzah that is bent over, the doubled over portion is not *Kosher l'Pesach* (see Fig. 1a). One must remove and discard this area together with a one inch margin of regular matzah. This is required, even if the bent over part is very small. However, if a matzah is bent over but the two layers do not actually touch one another, then the matzah remains kosher and removal of this area is not required (see Fig. 1b).

In handmade *matzos*, the dough is rolled out manually. At



Fig. 1a: Note the two layers of matzah are touching.

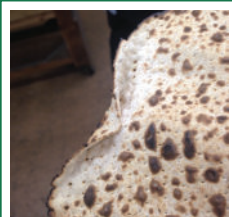


Fig. 1b: Note the two layers of matzah are not touching.

times during the rolling process, some dough may get slightly doubled over, creating a crease in the dough. As the rolling process continues, the crease gets flattened, and a noticeable line remains where the crease had been. If one finds a matzah with a line on one side of the matzah *and* a corresponding line on the other side, one should assume that the dough probably doubled over during the rolling process, creating the crease. Although this is not a true *matzah kefula*, as the creased matzah was rolled further until it had uniform thickness, it is customary to remove and discard the creased area (see Fig. 1c).

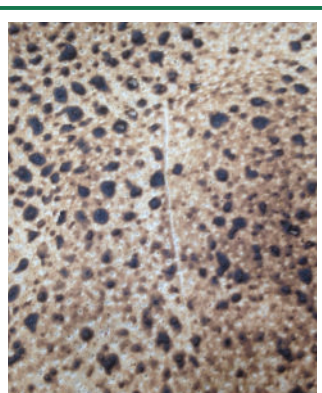


Fig 1c. Note the remnant of the crease indicated by the line.

An important difference between a true *matzah kefula* that is doubled over and a matzah that is only creased on both sides is that in the former case, the doubled over portion must be disposed of as though it were chometz as soon as it is discovered, while in the latter situation the creased matzah may be kept in one's possession. If the creased matzah is a *shaleim* (complete), one may use it for *lechem mishneh*. After reciting the *bracha*, one should put aside the creased area so it will not be eaten.

To avoid any problems on Shabbos regarding the *melachah* of *Borer*, separating, the non-kosher part of the matzah (the *kefula*) should be held in one hand and the kosher part in the other. The matzah should be broken, and the good part should be removed from the bad part. If it is a real *kefula*, it is considered to be chometz. Since one sold his chometz before Pesach, technically this *kefula* belongs to the non-Jew. One may not discard the non-Jew's chometz on Pesach, and it must be put away until the conclusion of the *chag*. If it is just a *chashash* chometz, the custom is not to discard it in the garbage. It may be placed in the non-Pesachdig sink after it has been broken into small pieces and washed down the drain.

2. Matzah Nefucha

During the baking of a matzah, the dough may balloon, forming a closed pocket of air akin to a blister (see Fig. 2). This blister requires special examination and handling. If the blister formed is so small that an average sized hazelnut (with its shell) cannot fit inside of the blister, between the upper and lower layers, then the matzah is kosher. Certainly, *matzos* that have not formed any blisters but are merely uneven in appearance are kosher. *Matzos* which do not have small holes all over them should not be used.



Fig. 2. Side view of matzah with an air pocket.

3. Underbaked Matzos

A matzah that is completely white on both sides should not be used, since it may not have been thoroughly baked. Matzah meal should be slightly brown in color, which indicates a better bake on the *matzos* that were used for the matzah meal.

4. Chipped Matzos/A Missing Shaleim

In order for *matzos* to be considered *shaleim*, complete (so they can be used for *lechem mishneh*), no more than one forty-eighth (1/48, approximately 2%) of the matzah may be missing. Hand *matzos* that are irregularly shaped are still considered whole, as long as no pieces broke off after baking.

Matzos left over from previous years that were stored in places free of chometz may be used. TIP: If your oven has been *kashered* for Pesach, simply put them in the oven for a few minutes so the *matzos* will regain their crispness.

Through our meticulous observance of the mitzvah of eating matzah, and all the other laws of Pesach, may *Hashem* soon grant our most fervent wish - the coming of *Mashiach* - so that we may once again eat our matzah together with the *Korban Pesach in Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh*.