

**GUIDE FOR PREPERATION OF
VEGETABLES, HERBS AND BERRIES**

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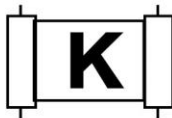
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October 28, 2018

We are pleased to present our updated "Guide to Preparing Fruit, Herbs and Vegetables". This guide is based upon the lectures giving by Rabbi Yoseph Eisen, Rabbinical Administrator of Vaad Hakashrus of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway, Long Island, New York. All the information was reviewed and amended by Rabbi Eisen, for which we thank him. After some years, it became necessary to update the list once more. This was recently done based on the rulings and advice of our Rabbinical Administrator, Rabbi Rosskamm.

The guide includes the procedures for preparing many varieties of products, some of which will only be practical to do with small quantities while others are feasible to do even on a large scale. Some of the more complex cleaning/inspections are unpractical for larger events, including Scroll K certified catered events. We recommend that you allow ample time when preparing any of the products requiring cleaning/inspection, to assure that they will be prepared properly.

With best wishes for a kosher and healthy appetite,

Rabbi Elchonon Joseph, Kashrus Administrator

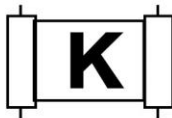
Rabbi Yisroel Rosskamm, Rabbinical Administrator

A BRIEF HALACHIC OVERVIEW

There are three halachic categories of produce:

1. Produce in which insects are found very infrequently *are called Miut Sheaino Matzui* – (e.g., peppers, cucumbers, carrots, etc.), and it is unlikely for an insect to be found again. **Such types of produce need not be checked for insects.**
2. Produce that is not infested with insects, but insects are spotted regularly *are called Miut Hamatzui* - (e.g., lettuce, cabbage, etc.), at least 10% of the time. **Such types of produce must be properly inspected for insects before use.**
3. Produce that is infested with insects *are called Muchzak Bitolaim* -, i.e., at least 51% of the produce is found to contain insects (e.g., raspberries). **Such types of produce must be checked individually in a very meticulous manner.**

The practical manner in which we categorize our produce is based upon a written *Teshuva* (Halachic responsa) from Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l. In this *Teshuva*, R' Shlomo Zalman presents his view that produce should be assessed as units. A cabbage head, a lettuce head, a box of strawberries, and a bunch of asparagus (as opposed to a single strawberry and a single stem of asparagus) all share the feature of being sold as a unit.



OUR FINDINGS

Many, many years of checking large quantities of an array of commonly-used produce have yielded the information that will be presented in this document. The percentage used to define the most common category of produce requiring inspection is 10%, as per the psak of the Mishkinos Yaakov. Thus, if 10% of the units of produce are found to contain insects, that type of produce is categorized as a Miut Hamatzui and must be properly inspected for insects before use. For instance, in our checking insects were found in at least 10 out of every 100 boxes of strawberries checked; strawberries are therefore considered a Miut Hamatzui and must be properly inspected before use. Most of the strawberries inside the 10 boxes that were found to contain insects were actually clean of insects; nonetheless, the strawberries are considered a Miut Hamatzui because 10% of the units, in this case the boxes, contain insects.

Using this same gauge, raspberries should be categorized as Muchzak Bitolaim because it has been found, statistically, that out of every 10 cartons of raspberries inspected for insects 5-6 cartons contain insects. Because at least 51% of the boxes are found to contain insects, raspberries are considered infested.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR

There are three types of insects that are commonly found:

1. **Aphid** – a round, green insect that can pierce the vegetable and stay firmly attached to it. Aphids are able to grip the flesh of the produce very firmly because of a proboscis (tentacle) that protrudes from the front of their bodies and hooks onto the produce. Aphids are not effectively dislodged from the vegetable’s surface by water, but soaking the produce in a soapy solution and then rinsing the produce under a heavy stream of water effectively dislodges aphids from the surfaces of the produce.



2. **Thrips** – a long wings to jump vegetable.



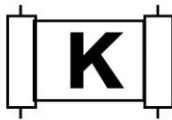
insect that is black or brown and at times even green. Thrips have but are incapable of gripping and attaching themselves to the Thrips tend to dislodge from produce upon thorough rinsing.

3. **Leaf miner** – a can pierce the outside of the vegetable and eat its way through the flesh of the vegetable, creating very visible tunnel-like lines (often speckled with black dots). Leaf miners leave a clearly and easily discernible trail on the vegetable’s surface.



NOTE: A partial list of produce that are prone to contain leaf miners is: basil, celery, parsley leaves (at times), Romaine lettuce during the summer months, scallions, and spinach.

The *Chachmas Adam* (by Rabbi Avraham Danzig, 1748–1820) writes, as a general guideline, it is recommendable for one to look at the food on their plate before eating in order to avoid the many transgressions that might result should one mistakenly eat an insect.



VEGETABLES

This list covers fresh vegetables only. For dried products, please see our [‘Does it Need a Hechsher \(Certification\)?’ list](#). Freeze dried products require a reliable kosher certification.

ARTICHOKE

Artichokes are comprised of three parts: a solid bottom, the artichoke leaves, and the artichoke heart.

1. The **artichoke bottom** can be used without any inspection.
2. The **artichoke leaves** can contain aphids and thrips. They should be plucked from the artichoke heart, washed in a soapy solution, dried, and then inspected carefully for insects.
3. The **artichoke heart** has several layers, and insects can be embedded between these layers. Therefore, it is not recommended to use the artichoke hearts.

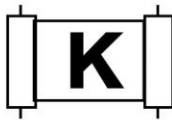
ARUGULA

Steps for cleaning arugula:

1. Separate leaves.
2. Fill a pan with water and a soapy solution. The pan should be large enough to accommodate the amount of product you are using and still enable you to vigorously agitate the leaves, as described below. The amount of soap should be enough to make the water feel slippery and be sudsy.
3. Submerge leaves in the pan of water for 3-5 minutes.
4. Agitate the leaves in the water so that the soapy solution loosens insects that are gripping the leaves' surface.
5. Under a **heavy stream of water**, rinse the leaves in a colander, shaking the colander in such a way that the water covers all of the leaves held within it.
6. Examine samples of the leaves for surface insects and leaf miners.
NOTE: *At first one will need to check as much as 50% of the leaves. Once a person masters this procedure, however, he can decrease the quantity of leaves that he checks.*
7. If the samples are completely clean of insects, all of the produce can be used.
8. If insects are found in the samples, all of the produce should be checked.

ASPARAGUS

Asparagus can contain thrips in the tip of the asparagus and under the triangles along the sides of the stem. Therefore, it is recommended to cut off the top of the asparagus and peel the sides.



White asparagus:

White asparagus is not prone to insects and can be used without inspection.

BASIL

See below in **HERB** section

BROCCOLI

Broccoli can be heavily infested with aphids. In fact, it is possible to find even more than a dozen aphids in a single floret! It is important to note that raw broccoli **cannot be effectively inspected**. Insects are embedded in the very depths of the floret, and it is impossible to inspect the depths of a raw broccoli floret without ruining and breaking apart the floret.

Steps for cleaning broccoli:

1. Par-boil the broccoli or microwave it for 2-3 minutes. (The advantage of par-boiling is that it makes the broccoli florets more pliable and it often causes the insects to turn brown, thereby allowing one to sight the insects easily.)
2. Inspect the under-part and inside the depths of the florets for insects.
3. **Each and every floret must be carefully inspected.**

Broccoli Slaw:

Broccoli slaw does not need to be checked for insects.

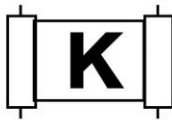
BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Brussels sprouts can be infested with insects and cannot be properly inspected while keeping the sprouts intact. Therefore, Brussels sprouts are not recommended.

CABBAGE

Green or Red Cabbage:

Cabbage has a waxy texture; therefore, thrips slide off of cabbage even more easily than they slide off of other vegetables. In order to check cabbage, one must inspect the surfaces of the cabbage leaves thoroughly. Unlike Romaine lettuce, cabbage that grows in the form of a tight ball needs to have only its first few layers checked. (Each layer consists of two leaves.) The procedure is as follows: the first 4 leaves (two layers) should be discarded and then the next 3-4 layers should be checked. If one finds that they are entirely free of insects, no further checking is required and one



can safely assume that the rest of the cabbage head is free of insects, too. If, however, one finds insects in the outer layers, one will need to inspect the cabbage leaves almost until the core of the head.

Stuffed cabbage:

Steps for cleaning cabbage for the use of stuffed cabbage:

1. Freeze the cabbage for 48 hours.
2. Thaw the cabbage enough to enable you to remove the leaves.
3. Under a heavy stream of running water, open **ALL folds and crevices** in the cabbage leaves and rinse thoroughly.

After one has performed these steps, the cabbage need not be checked.

Prewashed cabbage:

Prewashed cabbage coming from a national company such as Dole® can be used.

NOTE: This pertains only to cabbage and not to any other prewashed produce.

CAULIFLOWER

In cauliflower insects are often wedged between the tightly-packed florets. Because the florets are so tightly packed, it is difficult for one to check raw cauliflower for insects.

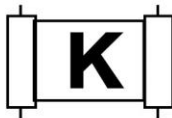
Steps for cleaning cauliflower:

1. Par-boil the cauliflower or microwave it for 2-3 minutes.
2. After removing the cauliflower from the water, examine the water for black insects.
3. If no insects are found in the water, take several florets and examine them for insect presence by opening up the tightly-packed floret and examining the under-part and inside several of the florets.
4. If, upon examining a sample of the cauliflower, no insects are found, the entire cauliflower can be used.
5. If insects are found in the water, the cauliflower should not be used.

Cauliflower rice - Commercially sold riced cauliflower that is raw, plain and was pre-washed after being riced, is permitted to be used without certification. The cRc (Chicago) has determined that plain riced cauliflower from Trader Joes, Birdseye and Green Giant meet this criteria and are acceptable at this time.

CELERY

Celery can contain insects in both its leaves and its stem. To render celery insect-free, one should remove the celery leaves and then, with one's thumb or a vegetable brush, follow through the canal on the outside of the celery under a stream of running water.



Although in the past years celery has been known to be a vegetable that is very easy to inspect (one would simply run his/her thumb or use vegetable wash to clean the celery's surface), in recent years celery has been found to contain leaf miners. Therefore, before washing the celery stalk, one should examine both the inside and the outside of the stalk for leaf miner trails. If a tunnel is found, one should cut that part off of the celery stalk or discard the whole stalk.

NOTE: *Leaf miner trails can indicate the presence of an actual leaf miner in the celery. Therefore, celery should be checked for leaf miner trails.*

CORN

Although for the most part corn is not considered a *Miut Hamatzui*, it is recommended that after cooking the corn one should examine the top of the water for insects. If one finds insects in the water, one should not use the corn.

LEEK

It is recommend to separate leaves and wash each leaf under running water. No further checking required.

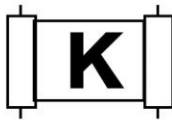
LETTUCE

Hearts of Romaine:

The following process has been proven effective in removing insects from leafy vegetables. This process only works when the steps discussed below are followed exactly, **patiently**, and very thoroughly. Because Hearts of Romaine is a premium product that companies watch carefully, it is less prone to infestation; nonetheless, Hearts of Romaine still contain insects.

Steps for cleaning Hearts of Romaine:

1. Separate leaves from the stem.
2. Fill a pan with water and a soapy solution. The pan should be large enough to accommodate the amount of product you are using and still enable you to vigorously agitate the leaves, as described below. The amount of soap should be enough to make the water feel slippery and be sudsy.
3. Submerge leaves in the pan of water for 5 minutes.
4. Agitate the leaves in the water so that the soapy solution loosens insects that are gripping the leaves' surface.
5. Under a **heavy stream of water**, thoroughly rinse each leaf individually. Every leaf must be totally opened when rinsing, exposing **ALL folds and crevices**.
6. To confirm that the leaves are insect-free it is recommended that after removing the leaves from the water but before rinsing the leaves one should look at the water to see how many insects are floating there. If one finds insects, this is indicative that the rinsing must be done more aggressively and that the amount of leaves to be checked must be increased. At the beginning one must check a large portion of the leaves, up to almost 50%, to ascertain that one has followed all of the steps satisfactorily and that the washing process has been so effective that it is in lieu of checking every



single leaf. (As time progresses and one masters the washing procedure, one can reduce the amount of leaves that one checks.)

7. If, upon checking a random sample of leaves, one finds even one insect, one must repeat steps 1-5 more carefully. The above procedure must be repeated as many times as is necessary until the inspected leaves are completely free of insects.
8. Because Hearts of Romaine are less prone to insects than other types of lettuce, one who has mastered the procedure does not need to check more than 20% of the leaves for insects after performing the procedure carefully and meticulously. If, after randomly checking 20% of the cleaned leaves, one finds no insects, one can be rest assured that the other 80% is insect-free, too.

NOTE: Nowadays small and convenient light-boxes are sold. It would be worthwhile to use a light-box to check leaves efficiently and comprehensively. An alternative to a light-box is inspecting the leaves in such a manner that the leaves are illuminated from below rather than from above.

Whole Romaine lettuce:

In contrast to Hearts of Romaine, ordinary Romaine lettuce is more prone to insects. Therefore, after one performs the procedure detailed above (under *Hearts of Romaine*), one must check **all** of the leaves before one can be sure that the batch is insect-free. It is recommended not to purchase Organic Romaine, due to greater insect infestation.

Iceberg lettuce:

Use the same washing procedure as **Hearts of Romaine**

Other lettuces: Bib, Boston, Green-Leaf, and Red-Leaf:

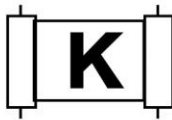
These lettuces are curlier than Hearts of Romaine. Therefore, when dealing with these lettuces, one should follow the procedure described above, (under Hearts of Romaine), and then inspect a high percentage of the leaves. Until one becomes proficient, one will need to inspect at least 50% of the lettuce leaves before one can be absolutely certain that the washing procedure has yielded a totally clean product. **NOTE:** *As insects tend to hide in folds and crevices, curlier leaves are more difficult to clean. Therefore, whenever possible one should avoid curlier leaves (e.g., use flat-leaf spinach and flat-leaf parsley instead of the curlier leaves).*

MUSHROOMS

Fresh mushrooms must be rinsed and a cursory inspection is needed. If they originate from China, they may be infested with insects, and should be avoided.

Portobello mushrooms:

Portobello mushrooms can contain flies in the fan beneath the cap of the mushrooms. Therefore, one should scoop out the fan from the Portobello mushrooms and wash the mushrooms thoroughly before using them.



ONIONS

Onions have, at times, been found to contain thrips. The outer, paper-like layer should be removed together with the second layer of the onion. Alternatively, one can wash the onion after removing the outer, paper-like layer. Onions that are softer than usual or show signs of decay or rotting are more likely to contain insects. Such onions should be inspected by examining several layers of the onion for thrips. (Thrips are dark and therefore quite discernible on the surface of an onion.)

RADICCHIO

Radicchio is a bitter-tasting lettuce that is not infested with insects. Therefore, one can use radicchio after separating leaves & washing it thoroughly.

SCALLIONS/GREEN ONIONS

The insects most commonly found in scallions are translucent thrips, which are often found near the area where the chutes emerge from the scallion's stem (starting from where the chutes come out of the stem and descending 1-1.5 inches below this point). Thrips can also be found crawling along the outer side of the green chutes. A second type of insect that scallions contain is the leaf miner. The presence of a leaf miner would be marked by zigzag trail patterns found on the scallion chutes.

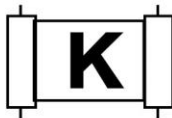
Steps for cleaning scallions:

1. Cut the entire scallion vertically, from top to bottom. (Preferably, one should also slip open the green chutes.)
2. With your finger, take apart the thin layers at the bottom of the scallion.
3. Thoroughly rinse the scallion, allowing a **heavy stream of water** to run over the scallion and in between the scallion chutes; the layers at the bottom of the scallion must be loosened and run under heavy stream water.
4. Additionally, look for zigzagging trail patterns on the scallion chutes.
5. If such a trail is found, the affected area must be cut off of the chute and discarded.

SPINACH

Steps for cleaning spinach:

1. Separate leaves from the stem.
2. Fill a pan with water and a soapy solution. The pan should be large enough to accommodate the amount of product you are using and still enable you to vigorously agitate the leaves, as described below. The amount of soap should be enough to make the water feel slippery and be sudsy.
3. Submerge leaves in the pan of water for 3-5 minutes.
4. Agitate the leaves in the water so that the soapy solution loosens insects that are gripping the leaves' surface.



5. Under a heavy stream of water, rinse the leaves in a colander, shaking the colander in such a way that the water covers all of the leaves held within it.
6. Examine samples of the leaves for surface insects and leaf miners.
NOTE: At first one will need to check as much as 50% of the leaves. Once a person masters this procedure, however, he can decrease the quantity of leaves that he checks to about 40%.
7. If the samples are completely clean of insects, all of the produce can be used.
8. If insects are found in the samples, all of the produce should be checked.

HERBS

FRESH

DILL, PARSLEY, ROSEMARY, THYME, SAGE, AND CORIANDER:

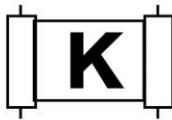
It is recommended that before cleaning herbs, one should ascertain that they are worthwhile to clean and not too heavily infested. To do this, one should bang the herbs vigorously on a white surface, such as a paper towel. If insects crawl out of the herb upon the first one or two bangs, one should not use these herbs. Oftentimes dill and parsley are wet because they are sprayed for freshness in the supermarket. *If the herbs are wet, banging the herbs will not be effective.* Only if the herbs are dry should one bang them to determine whether they are very infested.

Steps for cleaning fresh herbs:

1. Fill a pan with water and a soapy solution. The pan should be large enough to accommodate the amount of product you are using and still enable you to vigorously agitate the herbs, as described below. The amount of soap should be enough to make the water feel slippery and be sudsy.
2. Submerge herbs in the pan of water for 3-5 minutes.
3. Agitate the herbs in the water so that the soapy solution loosens insects that are gripping the herbs' surface.
4. Place a white cloth (similar to a white cloth diaper) between 2 colanders, and pour the water out of the pan through this cloth (thereby using the cloth as a sieve).
5. Place the cloth onto the light-box and examine it for insects.
6. If the cloth contains no insects, the herbs are ready to be used.
7. If the cloth contains at least one insect, one must repeat the washing.

If one finds insects, one must repeat the entire procedure as many times as is necessary until the water (or cloth) is completely free of insects. At times it can be necessary for a person to repeat the entire procedure 2-3 times before the herbs become insect-free!

One who merely wishes to flavor a soup with herbs can wash the herbs and then place them inside a filter bag (also called a Bodek bag), which can be placed inside the soup.



BASIL

Fresh:

Steps for cleaning fresh basil:

1. Separate leaves from the stem.
2. Fill a pan with water and a soapy solution. The pan should be large enough to accommodate the amount of product you are using and still enable you to vigorously agitate the leaves, as described below. The amount of soap should be enough to make the water feel slippery and be sudsy.
3. Submerge leaves in the pan of water for 3-5 minutes.
4. Agitate the leaves in the water so that the soapy solution loosens insects that are gripping the leaves' surface.
5. Under a **heavy stream of water**, rinse the leaves in a colander, shaking the colander in such a way that the water covers all of the leaves held within it.
6. Examine samples of the leaves for surface insects and leaf miners.
NOTE: At first one will need to check as much as 50% of the leaves. Once a person masters this procedure, however, he can decrease the quantity of leaves that he checks.
7. If the samples are completely clean of insects, all of the produce can be used.
8. If insects are found in the samples, all of the produce should be checked.

Dried: See dried herbs section below.

DRIED HERBS AND SPICES

Dried herbs and spices do not require a hechsher unless they are from Israel.

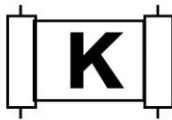
Spice blends generally require a hechsher because of additives. They generally do not require any inspection.

BERRIES

STRAWBERRIES

Steps for cleaning strawberries:

1. Carefully cut off the green leaf on top of the strawberry without making a hole in the top of the berry. (If the hole is exposed, one should cut the strawberry in half.)
2. Take approximately one teaspoon of concentrated vegetable wash for every half-gallon of water. (The amount of water and vegetable wash will vary depending on the amount of berries being washed.)



3. Place strawberries into the soapy solution and vigorously agitate them in the water.
4. After all of the berries have been vigorously agitated in the water, allow the berries to soak in the soapy solution for 5 minutes.
5. While holding each strawberry in your hand, place the berry under a heavy stream of water, completely rotating the berry from top to bottom and from side to side. When a strawberry has a crevice or indentation, the strawberry should be cut in half and then washed. (Alternatively, that area can be cut away.)

After this procedure, and primarily the rinsing of the strawberries, has been followed meticulously, the berries can be dried and eaten, and no inspection will be necessary.

RASPBERRIES

It has been found that most raspberry cartons contain insects. Therefore, raspberries fall into the category of *Muchzak Bitolaim*. The only way to serve raspberries is by splitting each raspberry in half and then examining each carefully for thrips. This is generally not practical.

BLACKBERRIES

Blackberries are similar to raspberries and should preferably be avoided.

BLUEBERRIES

Cultivated Blueberries (non-wild) only need a simple washing before use. If the package doesn't state wild, it can be assumed to be cultivated.

Wild Blueberries should be rinsed in soapy water, then washed off with water.