The Scroll K/Vaad Hakashrus of Denver
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בס"ד

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PRODUCE GUIDE

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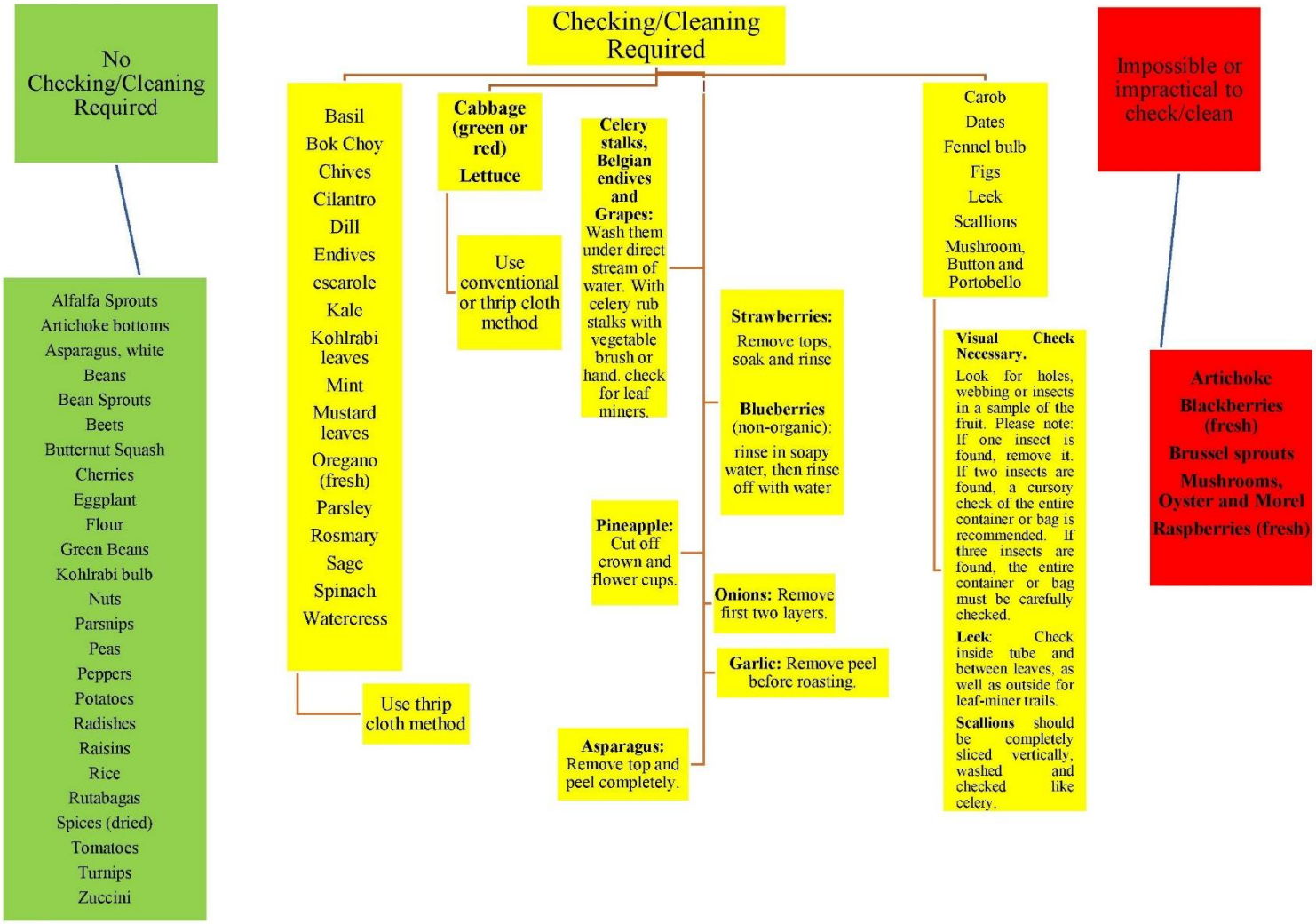
QUICK GUIDE: What and How

This quick guide is for use of produce in North America only. For further information, refer to individual entries in this guide.



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Dear Friend,

We are pleased to present our updated "Guide to Preparing Fruit, Herbs and Vegetables". This guide is based upon the lectures given 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. Over the years, it became necessary to update the list. This was done based on the rulings and advice of our Rabbinical Administrator, Rabbi Rosskamm. We are also grateful to Rabbi Sholom Tendler of Star-K, Baltimore for his recent workshops on this topic. His knowledge and research were a tremendous aid.

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***. Examples are peppers, cucumbers, and carrots. It is unlikely for an insect to be found in these items. **Such types of produce need not be checked for insects.**
2. Produce which has insects spotted regularly are called ***Miut Hamatzui***. We follow the ruling that the threshold for this category is between 10% and 50% of the time, as elaborated below. Examples of such items are lettuce and cabbage. **These varieties must be properly inspected for insects before use.**
3. Produce generally infested with insects (at least 51% of the produce is found to contain insects) are called ***Muchzak B'tolaim*** - **These items have a biblically mandated requirement of checking and often are not practical to clean and check.**

The practical manner in which we categorize our produce is based upon a written *teshuva* (Halachic responsa) from Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l. Rabbi Auerbach 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 *miut hamatzui* is 10%, as per the ruling of the Mishkenos Yaakov (Rabbi Yaakov Bruchin of Karlin, 1780-1844). Thus, if 10% of the units of produce contain insects, that type of produce is categorized as a *miut hamatzui* and must be properly cleaned and/or inspected for insects before use. For instance, insects were found in at least 10 out of every 100 boxes of strawberries we checked; strawberries are therefore considered a *miut hamatzui* and must be properly cleaned before use. Most of the strawberries inside the 10 infested boxes were actually clean of insects; nonetheless, 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 highly infested.

A few important pointers:

1. The information in this document is accurate for North America only, and is subject to change based on developments in agricultural standards and other factors.
2. **Organic produce** generally has higher rates of infestation due to minimal usage of pesticides. One should be hesitant to purchase organic varieties of produce which generally requires cleaning and/or checking.
3. **Greenhouse or hothouse** grown produce does not necessarily indicate less infestation.
4. 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 varieties). Curly kale should preferably be avoided as well.

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

3. **Leaf miner** – a less commonly found type of insect that 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. A partial list of produce that are prone to contain leaf miners is leek and scallions.

THE THRIP CLOTH METHOD

There is an alternate method for checking many items, referred to as the thrip cloth method. This method differs from the conventional method in a basic way. Instead of checking each item for insects, the cleaning solution is analyzed to ascertain the clean status of the produce. This method is especially useful for smaller herbs and large quantities of produce. After an initial thorough wash, the produce is rinsed again and the water filtered through the thrip cloth*. If no insects are found, we are assured that the initial rinse did its job properly. It is prudent to familiarize yourself with the insects in order to accurately identify them on the cloth; this may take a few tries. For information on obtaining a thrip cloth, contact our office.

1. Wash produce well with soapy solution. We recommend mixing water and a non-bleach and non-toxic dishwasher detergent solution. Use enough dishwasher detergent that the water feels slippery, approximately 2 tablespoons per gallon of water. Liquid dishwasher detergent is recommended over dish soap, as dish soap produces a substantial amount of suds. Seventh Generation™ is an available and recommended dishwasher detergent.
2. Agitate the produce well in the solution. This will allow the solution to loosen the insects' grip on the produce, as well as enter into all creases and crevices.
3. Dispose of the solution.
4. Prepare the same solution again. Soak and agitate the produce in the solution for 15 seconds.
5. Remove the produce from the basin and shake off excess water over the basin.
6. Pour water through the thrip cloth. **Note:** If one does not have a thrip cloth, the water may be checked for infestation by placing a white basin over a light box.
7. Check the thrip cloth over a light box for any insects.
8. If insects are found, repeat steps 1-7. This can be done up to three times.
9. If insects are still found on the third try, the produce should not be used.

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* Technically, the solution used for the initial rinse can be filtered, and if clean, will assure us of the produces' clean status. This is not recommended, however, as finding insects at this point are to be expected.

In conclusion, 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

BOK CHOY

Use the THRIP CLOTH METHOD described above.

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:
Regular broccoli slaw does not need to be checked for insects. **Organic** broccoli slaw requires proper certification, due to infestation concerns.

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, Red or Napa Cabbage:

Cabbage has a waxy texture; therefore, thrips slide off of cabbage more easily than they slide off of other vegetables. The first few leaves of each head should be removed and discarded. The rest of the leaves should be completely taken apart and checked with the THRIP CLOTH METHOD (see above). Although the head of cabbage may seem extremely tight and unlikely for insects to exist, the cabbage actually grows ‘open’. Only later does it ‘close’, trapping insects inside!

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 or cole slaw mix may be used without further checking.
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.*

CHIVES

Use the THRIP CLOTH METHOD described above.

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.

ENDIVES

Use the THRIP CLOTH METHOD described above.

ESCAROLE

Use the THRIP CLOTH METHOD described above.

GARLIC

Remove peel before roasting the garlic as there may be insects under the peel.

LEEK

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

LETTUCE

Hearts of Romaine:

UPDATED: As detailed below, there are two alternative effective checking methods, the conventional and thrip cloth method.
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. After the initial rinse, **choose from the two checking options below:**

Thrip Cloth Method:

This method will require an extra wash and filter the water for inspection. For a bit more information on this method, see the paragraph with this title towards the beginning of this document.

a) After steps 1-4 above, prepare a basin with water and a non-bleach and non-toxic dishwasher detergent solution. The water should feel slippery. Liquid dishwasher detergent is recommended over dish soap, as dish soap produces a substantial amount of suds. Seventh Generation™ is an available and recommended dishwasher detergent.
b) Agitate the produce in the solution for 15 seconds.
c) Remove the produce from the basin and shake off excess water over the basin.
d) Pour water through the thrip cloth. **Note:** If one does not have a thrip cloth, the water may be checked for infestation by placing a white basin over a light box.
e) Check the thrip cloth over a light box for any insects.
f) If insects are found, repeat steps a-e. This can be done up to three times.
g) If insects are still found on the third try, the produce should not be used.

Conventional Method:

This method will require an actual inspection of large percentage of the produce.

a) After steps 1-4 above, under a **heavy stream of water**, thoroughly rinse each leaf individually. Every leaf must be totally opened when rinsing, exposing **ALL folds and crevices**.
b) All leaves must be examined. Initially, 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.)
c) If, upon checking a random sample of leaves, one finds even one insect, one must repeat steps 2-5 more carefully. The above procedure must be repeated as many times as is necessary until the inspected leaves are completely free of insects.
d) **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, if one utilizes the conventional method of checking 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 if choosing to use the conventional method (as opposed to the thrip cloth method), inspect a high percentage of the leaves. Until one becomes proficient, one will need to inspect all the lettuce leaves to be absolutely certain that the washing procedure has yielded a totally clean product. As one gets more proficient, they can reduce the checking to 50%.

KALE

Use the THRIP CLOTH METHOD described above. It is recommended to avoid curly kale, as it is more difficult to clean and check.

MUSHROOMS

Fresh mushrooms should visually inspected for anything unusual. If they originate from China, they may be infested with insects, and should be avoided. Morel and Oyster mushrooms should be avoided.

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.)

PINEAPPLE

Mites are often found in the crown and outer rind, and also the inside the blossom cups and crevices if the pineapple is not peeled properly. The pineapple should be peeled until only yellow fruit is visible. The fruit and cutting board should be rinsed after peeling since the insects often crawl onto the cutting board. The crown and rind should not be used on decorative platters since the insects can transfer to other fruit.

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

Use the THRIP CLOTH METHOD described above. It is recommended to avoid curly varieties (e.g. savoy), as they are more difficult to clean and check.

HERBS

FRESH

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.

To clean herbs, the THRIP CLOTH METHOD is used. The procedure is listed below; for a bit more information on this method, see the paragraph with this title towards the beginning of this document.

1. Wash produce well with soapy solution. We recommend mixing water and a non-bleach and non-toxic dishwasher detergent solution. Use enough dishwasher detergent that the water feels slippery, approximately 2 tablespoons per gallon of water. Liquid dishwasher detergent is recommended over dish soap, as dish soap produces a substantial amount of suds. Seventh Generation™ is an available and recommended dishwasher detergent.
2. Agitate the produce well in the solution. This will allow the solution to loosen the insects' grip on the produce, as well as enter into all creases and crevices.
3. Dispose of the solution.
4. Prepare the same solution again. Soak and agitate the produce in the solution for 15 seconds.
5. Remove the produce from the basin and shake off excess water over the basin.

6. Pour water through the thrip cloth. **Note:** If one does not have a thrip cloth, the water may be checked for infestation by placing a white basin over a light box.
7. Check the thrip cloth over a light box for any insects.
8. If insects are found, repeat steps 1-7. This can be done up to three times.
9. If insects are still found on the third try, the produce should not be used.

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.

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 soap for every half-gallon of water. (The amount of water and soap 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.)
6. After this procedure, and primarily the rinsing of the strawberries, has been followed meticulously, the berries can be dried and eaten, and no inspection is necessary.

RASPBERRIES

It has been found that most raspberry cartons contain insects. Therefore, raspberries fall into the category of *muchzak bitolaim* and should preferably be avoided.

BLACKBERRIES

Blackberries are similar to raspberries and should preferably be avoided.

BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries (Wild and Cultivated) should be rinsed in soapy water, then rinsed off with water. Organic and U-pick blueberries are not recommended.

FRUIT

FRESH FRUIT are acceptable without certification unless it is imported from Eretz Yisroel. All produce from Eretz Yisroel requires certification to ensure that all appropriate halachos were observed.

FREEZE DRIED AND SPRAY DRIED FRUIT generally require certification.

NAME OF FRUIT	KOSHER CERTIFICATION REQUIRED?	COMMENTS
Apple, dried	**Required**	
Apricot, dried	Without additives, do not require certification	Sulfur dioxide is not a concern
Banana, dried	**Required**	
Blueberries, dried	**Required**	
Carob	No certification required	Requires inspection for insects. Powdered carob does not require inspection.
Cherry, dried	**Required**	
Cranberry, dried	**Required**	
Currant	**Required**	
Date	Without additives, do not require certification	Whole or imported dates require inspection; Domestic pitted dates do not require inspection
Fig	Without additives, do not require certification	Require inspection by turning the fig inside out and looking for noticeable webbing. If you check a few fruit in a package and there is no webbing, the rest may be used without inspection.
Mandarin Orange, canned	Do not require certification, unless they originate from China	
Mango, dried	Without additives, do not require certification	
Nectarine, dried	Without additives, do not require certification	Sulfur dioxide is not a concern
Papaya, dried	**Required**	
Peach, dried	Without additives, do not require certification	Sulfur dioxide is not a concern
Pear, dried	Without additives, do not require certification	Sulfur dioxide is not a concern
Pineapple, dried	Without additives, do not require certification	Sulfur dioxide is not a concern
Prunes	Without additives, do not require certification	Sulfur dioxide is not a concern

NAME OF FRUIT	KOSHER CERTIFICATION REQUIRED?	COMMENTS
Raisins	Domestic raisins do not require certification unless they are oil treated.	