

# Meyerland Minyan Kashrut Standards

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## Part 1: Kosher - General

### Why Standards?

It cannot be emphasized enough that everyone's individual growth in his or her connection to Judaism, Torah, and Halacha is something that has to follow a logical and personal pattern. And it goes without saying that all Jews are welcome at Meyerland Minyan irrespective of their observance level. However, please bear in mind that your fellow shul members will assume that by inviting them for a Shabbos meal or by them accepting foods prepared by you, that you are indeed keeping these standards. By having standards that we all keep to, we can rest assured that eating out by one another will not present an ethical dilemma, but can rather be a comfortable and enjoyable experience.

### Why Kosher?

We keep Kosher, because the Torah explicitly commands us to do so. But the commentators explain that the benefits of doing so are clearly apparent. The self-control exhibited by thinking before we pop something in our mouths is an act of refining our baser sides. It builds the human spirit. Furthermore, there is a deeper aspect as well. Just as there are foods that are poisonous for our bodies, and if we were to eat them we would only be doing ourselves harm, all the more so the same is true of our souls. There are foods that are 'naturally' damaging to our souls. Such foods in effect weaken the luster of our souls and ultimately bring in their wake only negativity.

### What is Kosher?

What is kosher, anyhow? Firstly, it has nothing to do with the Rabbi blessing it, and it is not limited to all foods other than pork and shell fish!

Simply speaking, a food is Kosher when it does not have any non-Kosher ingredients nor has it gone through any non-kosher processes. Non-Kosher ingredients would include things like products from non-kosher animals, insects, wine from a non-Jewish source and much much more. Non Kosher processes would include animals that are considered kosher animals (for example beef) that were then slaughtered incorrectly. Another non-kosher process would be food that Jewish law considers necessary to be cooked by a Jew that was in fact cooked by a non-Jew. For a more complete list and understanding of what makes something non-kosher, please refer to any of the many quality books on the subject, such as "Kosher for the Curious but Clueless" by Rabbi Apisdorf, or "Is it Kosher" by Rabbi Eidelitz.

### Kosher Symbols

One might ask, can we just simply read the ingredients to determine if there are any non-kosher items added? This may have been possible in the past, but today with all the new and very complicated ingredients that go into something as simple as a potato chip, just reading the ingredients is really not all that effective.

For example do Mono-and Diglycerides need supervision?<sup>1</sup> What about Monosodium Glutamate?<sup>2</sup> Magnesium Stearate? Gum Arabic? Gum Base? Emulsifiers?<sup>3</sup> These are just a few

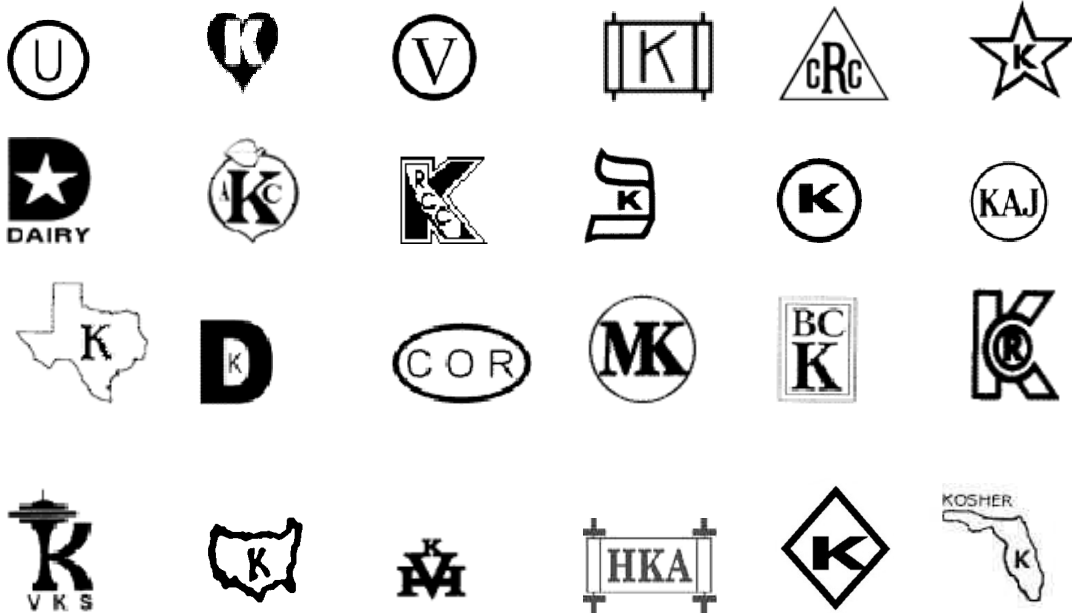
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<sup>1</sup> Yes! Most are animal derived, and would need to come from a kosher, properly slaughtered animal.

examples of some common ingredients, and if one is not familiar with the ins and outs of the food industry, kosher certification and symbols are a must!<sup>4</sup>

## Valid Symbols

(If a symbol is not listed below that does not necessarily mean it is invalid. Please inquire. **Please note that a plain K and a triangle-k are NOT-valid on most items.** A plain K is valid on Kellogg's Cereals, and on Starbucks bottled products):



### Some Items that do not require certification

Corn syrup, plain dried fruits, fresh fruits and vegetables (please see appendix), eggs, plain flour, Canned fruit (even with citric acid, and ascorbic acid – but not with natural flavors), pure honey, extra virgin olive oil, pure juice [apple, grapefruit, orange, pineapple with no additives], lemon juice, canned peas, carrots, and mushrooms (even with citric acid – but not from China), pure sugar, pure spices, plain tea, rice (no added ingredients), plain seltzer or water. (This list is not exhaustive. Please inquire with Rabbi Moskowitz regarding other items).

## Non-Alcoholic Beverages

There are a great many varieties of sodas (soft drinks) today under Kosher supervision, even though no symbol appears on the container. Please refer to the following website for an updated list:

<sup>2</sup> Does not need supervision

<sup>3</sup> Magnesium Stearate - yes – can be animal derived.

Gum Arabic - no – from trees

Gum Base - yes – can be animal derived

Emulsifiers - yes – it is fat!

<sup>4</sup> Even something as innocuous as “Kosher Pickles” requires supervision, since a label can legally have the words “kosher pickles” so long as garlic was added!

<http://www.crcweb.org/kosher/consumer/beverageList.html>

## Liquors and Wine

Wines all need valid certification.<sup>5</sup> As for liquors and other alcoholic beverages it will depend on the particular type. The following do NOT require certification:

- ◆ Beer - Unflavored (with no additives listed on the ingredient label. This applies to both USA and imported beers, including non-alcoholic and dark beers.)
- ◆ Bourbon
- ◆ Canadian Whiskey (straight)
- ◆ Gin (all except Sloe Gin)
- ◆ Irish Whiskey (all)
- ◆ Rum (all except flavored rum)
- ◆ Rye (all)
- ◆ Scotch (all, except when label states aged exclusively in sherry casks, sherry finish, port finish or dual cask finish)
- ◆ Tennessee Whiskey (all)
- ◆ Tequila (all except Mezcal with worm in bottles)
- ◆ Vodka (domestic, all except those listing whey alcohol or flavored vodka)

As for all other liquors, please refer to the following website for an updated list:

<http://www.crcweb.org/kosher/consumer/liquorList.html>

## Bugs

The presence of bugs in certain types of fruits and vegetables are more likely than in others. Those that are more likely to be infested require some form of checking/cleaning before eating as detailed in Appendix #3. Please keep in mind that the eating of a single insect is a violation of anywhere between 4 to 6 biblical negative prohibitions (depending on whether it is a land, water, or flying insect).

## Kosher Utensils

If we don't eat the pot, so then who cares if it was once used for non-Kosher? The reality is that in Halacha it matters very much! Pots have absorptions on their surface, and often in their material substance of whatever food was previously cooked in there. (Try boiling water for coffee in your spaghetti pot, it will not be so tasty!). Thus when keeping a kosher kitchen one must not only assure that the ingredients are kosher, but that the pots and utensils are all kosher as well.

If one has reason to believe that a pot or other utensil (or appliance) was used for non-Kosher foods, or that a dairy pot was used for meat (or visa versa) please call Rabbi Moskovitz. The situation is almost always 'fixable' through kashering.

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<sup>5</sup> Please note that any wine that has not been homogenized or otherwise 'cooked' ("Mevushal"), should not be handled by a non-Jew once it has been opened.

## Toiveling (Immersing) Utensils

There is a biblical requirement to immerse food utensils that were at one point owned by a non-Jew in a valid Mikva or any other natural body of water.<sup>6</sup> This requirement applies to metal utensils, and on a Rabbinic level glass ones as well. Thus, any glass or metal utensils that come in *direct contact* with food must be immersed. **This is true both for new utensils as well as old utensils** that were never immersed for whatever reason.

This includes, but is not limited to, toaster oven racks, (regular oven racks for those who heat up bread and the like directly on it), glass salt shakers, cutlery, glasses, blender blades etc...

If food came in contact with a non-immersed utensil, it remains permitted, but there is a separate prohibition of eating directly off (or otherwise allowing your food to be prepared in) such utensils. Therefore, eating with one's non-immersed cutlery, for example, would be prohibited.

## Bishul Akum – (Non-Jewish Help)

The laws of Bishul Akum (Non-Jewish Cooking) are very relevant for anyone who has non-Jewish help in the home. The Halacha requires that any 'significant'<sup>7</sup> food item that is not normally eaten raw needs to be cooked, at least in part, by a Jew. Thus, **even if all the ingredients in your chicken cutlets are Kosher, if they were made by your non-Jewish cleaning help they are in effect not Kosher**, and the frying pan should be kashered!

To get around this issue, one simply needs to turn the fire on, and let the non-Jew do the rest. By turning on the fire one has in effect done a very significant part of the cooking to the extent that the food is now no longer considered a non-Jew's creation.

## Taking Challah

When baking bread or bread-like items one must keep in mind that if the dough is large enough, there is a requirement to take off a small portion of the dough to be destroyed.

The basic rules of Challah are as follows:

- If you use 2.31 or more pounds of flour, the dough is obligated in Challah. (However, a blessing should only be recited when 3.66 or more pounds of flour are used and at least some water is used – as opposed to exclusively kneading with fruit juice in which case no blessing is made over the removal of the challah).
- Procedure: After kneading the dough, stand up, look at the spot from which you will remove a small piece to be designated as Challah, make the blessing, then remove an olive's worth of dough and say "Ha'ray Zu Challah" ("this is challah").
  - The Challah should be wrapped in aluminum and burned in the oven (or elsewhere) without other food there. If that is not possible just discard by double wrapping it and throwing it in the trash bin.

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<sup>6</sup> Because the requirement is biblical, it must be done or supervised by an adult Jew. Children below bar/bat Mitzvah should not be sent to immerse the utensils on their own.

<sup>7</sup> The definition of "significant" is too complex to discuss in a work of this kind. Please direct any inquiries to Rabbi Moskovitz.

## Part 2: Meat & Milk

### The Prohibition of Milk and Meat

The Torah in three separate verses<sup>8</sup> records the prohibition to cook meat and milk together. The oral tradition defines the three verses as in fact teaching us three separate prohibitions with regard to mixtures of meat and milk, as follows: 1) Eating 2) Benefit or 3) Cooking such mixtures.

Doing any of the above 3 with meat and milk together is expressly prohibited. One may not even eat chicken or other fowl with milk.<sup>9</sup>

### Avoiding Eating Meat and Milk Together

So as to protect us from unwittingly violating any of the above prohibitions, the Rabbis put certain safeguards in place. In short those safeguards are as follows:

- Don't have one on the table while eating the other.
  - *Example: Don't have cheese sitting on the same table on which you are eating chicken cutlets.*
- Two people may eat at the same table, where one is eating meat and the other milk, so long as there is some 'reminder' placed between the two (to remind them not to share food).
  - *Example: You and your friend may eat at the same table notwithstanding the fact that you are eating chilli and she is eating cornflakes and milk so long as there is a reminder – such as one of you eating off of a place mat.*
- Rules of eating one type after the other:
  - When meat is eaten first there are different customs vis-à-vis how much time one needs to wait before partaking of milk. The more standard custom is to wait an entire 6 hours.<sup>10</sup>
  - When dairy is eaten first, one who wants to partake of meat must make sure:
    - Their hands are clean, and
    - They must rinse out their mouths, and eat a bit of something to wipe the palate clean. Alternatively, one may just brush his or her teeth. Some have the custom to wait a half hour, as well.
  - The above applies to actual meat or dairy foods. One who eats pareve food cooked in a meat or dairy pot is not required to wait or to clean his palate before

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<sup>8</sup> Shmos 23:19, 34:26, Devorim 14:21

<sup>9</sup> Although on a biblical level the prohibition only includes domesticated animals and kosher milk, the Rabbis extended the prohibition to include milk and fowl as well as milk and non-domesticated animals. Thus for example, beef cooked with dairy is prohibited on a biblical level, while chicken or deer meat cooked with dairy would also be prohibited but on a Rabbinical level.

Furthermore the biblical prohibition only extends to meat and milk that were cooked together – not a simple cold mixture. Again the latter is prohibited on a Rabbinic level.

<sup>10</sup> Other valid customs include waiting one hour, 3 hours, five hours and a minute, or five and a half hours.

partaking of the opposite type. However, in many cases the food itself should not be mixed together with the food of the opposite type and eaten as such.<sup>11</sup>

- Example: If one eats rice cooked in a dairy pot he will not have to brush his teeth before eating meat. However, in many cases it will be forbidden to put a meat sauce over that rice to eat it as such.

### **Rules of Bread:**

- Leftover bread from a meat meal may not be served at a dairy meal (or visa versa) unless caution was taken that it not get dirtied at that first meal.
- Dairy or Meat bread is considered not kosher unless made for a single meal or in a peculiar shape. Barring those exceptions, bread must be neither meat nor dairy but rather neutral ('pareve').

### **Fish and Meat:**

Please note that there is a separate prohibition against eating meat and fish together – due to health risks that such mixtures cause. Thus between eating fish and meat one must make sure to clean out one's mouth and to use different cutlery (or wash off the cutlery in between the usages). For example: after having fish as a first course make sure to take a drink or eat some bread before eating the second course of chicken. Also make sure not to use the same fork for the fish as you will use for your chicken unless you wash it in between.

## **Meat and Milk and The Kosher Kitchen**

### **Ovens**

- Designate the oven for one type (e.g. meat), and then you may cook that type uncovered and without any preparation to the oven. For use of the oven for the other type (e.g. milk), you must either
  - Make sure to cover the food while it is cooking in the oven and that the rack is clean OR
  - You may even cook it uncovered after you thoroughly clean out the oven and rack and run it at highest temp for about a half hour.
  - Better yet, you can cook the other type uncovered if you first run the oven through a self-clean cycle.

### **Stove tops**

- Don't let pots of one type boil/steam into the other type
- Burners do not have to be designated as either milk or meat, and can be used for either one without any preparation beforehand. (This applies to glass top ranges as well – however any noticeable spilling of one type (e.g. milk) should be wiped up before setting the opposite (e.g. meat) on top of it.)

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<sup>11</sup> See example. Note, the prohibition of mixing meat into a pareve food cooked in a dairy pot applies only if the pot was used for dairy within the last 24 hours. If it was not (or if you are unsure) the food may indeed be eaten with meat! (The same rule applies in the opposite direction. Pareve food cooked in a meat pot is forbidden to be mixed with milk if the pot was indeed used for meat within the last 24 hours).

This 24 hour rule does not apply to sharp foods like onions or radishes or the like. Please see below.

Also note that the rules for Sfarim are less restrictive, and they in fact may always eat the pareve food cooked in a dairy pot with meat and visa versa.

- Hoods: Since the steam of meat and milk can each build there and drip back down into your pot, one should try and keep it clean. Furthermore, if the hood so close to the stove top that the steam is still very hot when it hits it, it may cause kashrut issues even when clean. (In such cases, please consult Rabbi Moskovitz).

### **Microwaves**

- May be used for both meat and dairy so long as each time they are cooked they are covered well, and you use separate bottom plates. (Suggestion: have a large microwave safe bin for dairy and one for meat and punch holes in the top big enough for the steam to evaporate but small enough that the condensation does not drip back in).

### **Sink(s)**

- Either have separate sinks for dairy and meat (Pareve may be washed on either side so long as the sink is clean from any meat or milk residues)
- If you have only one sink (or your double sink is treif) use separate grates or bins for milk and meat
- Have separate sponges for meat, dairy, and pareve

### **Dishwasher –**

- Best to designate it for use of only one type (either meat or dairy).

### **Dishes, Pots, Cutlery, Dishtowels, tablecloths –**

- Have separate for dairy and meat

## **Sharp Foods (radishes, onions, scallions, lemons...)**

- If one cuts sharp foods like onions or even lemons, with a meat knife, the onion or lemon must be viewed as meaty and may not be eaten with dairy. The same applies visa versa (onions cut with a milk knife may never be eaten with meat).
- The same applies to onions or the like fried in a meat frying pan (or dairy frying pan). Those onions are now considered meaty (or dairy as the case may be). As for bland pareve food cooked in a meat or milk pot please see footnote #11.
  - Examples: Onions cut with a dairy knife may not be placed on one's chicken. If it were, the chicken is now non-kosher (and the pot and oven would need to be kashered).

## **Mess Ups & Asking a Question**

Whenever the wrong utensil was used to prepare one's food, (such as when a dairy food is heated in a meat pan or the like), the food may or may not be forbidden, and the pot may or may not need to be kashered. The same goes for the myriad of other mistakes that can happen in a kitchen. Whenever you are unsure, please be in touch and ask.

## Part 3: Shabbat Food Preparation

### Before Shabbat

When putting your food up on Friday afternoon the following rules must be kept in mind. Under certain circumstances, violation of these rules can make the food forbidden to be eaten (at least for the duration of that Shabbat):

Any food that is **not half-way cooked may not be left directly on the heating element**, but rather needs a blech.<sup>12</sup> A 'Blech' refers to a cover (such as a metal sheet) that covers the exposed element or fire. The knobs too must be covered.

This includes food left in a crock-pot or oven. (As blechs for ovens are not readily available, one must make sure to verify that his food is indeed half-way cooked whenever leaving it in the oven at the outset of Shabbat). For a crock-pot if the food is not half-way cooked one should at least cover the knob with some aluminum foil or the like and preferably line the inside of the metal heating pot with aluminum foil as well before placing the earthenware pot inside it.

Furthermore, there is another law to be kept in mind on Friday afternoon that has to do with insulation of foodstuffs. That is, one may not fully insulate foods in a heat producing situation. For example, one may not place a towel around a pot sitting on the blech and thereby fully surround it. The same goes for placing some sort of sleeve over one's water urn if the sleeve does indeed surround the urn completely.

### On Shabbat

#### The Do's and Don'ts of warming food and dealing with it on the Blech:

##### The Don'ts:

- Don't stir food over the fire. This goes for any food sitting on the fire, even if the fire is covered (even off the fire food should not be stirred in its original cooking utensil unless it is fully cooked.<sup>13</sup>)
- Don't put the lid on a pot while it is over the fire – even if the fire is covered
- Don't put cold food directly on a blech
- Don't wrap food to insulate once Shabbat has begun even in a non-heat producing situation. (Example: Don't take a warm Challah and wrap it in a towel or blanket to keep it warm even if it is sitting on your counter).
- Don't place any cool liquid or any solid food *with some liquid content* that have cooled to room temperature<sup>14</sup> – into a situation where it can get hot – (i.e. 110° F). This is true whether or not the liquid was previously cooked.

<sup>12</sup> Please note that the rule for Sfarim is more strict. Sfarim will require a blech in almost all circumstances of leaving food on the fire – even beyond ½ cooked

<sup>13</sup> Even then it is best to avoid stirring in the pot if possible, and instead to save all stirring for after the food is transferred to a serving dish or the like.

- This includes putting it on the warming tray, on a pot, near any heat source etc. where it can reach that temperature.
- Example: One *may not* heat up cold green beans (even though they were fully cooked before Shabbat) that are sitting in a pool of sauce or water by placing them on the warming tray. (If the green beans are removed from the sauce and placed in a separate pan, they may indeed be placed on a warming tray or pot that is sitting on a blech or the like as explained below.)

*Note: If these rules are violated – even accidentally - the food may be forbidden until some time after Shabbat, depending on the circumstances (please inquire)*

#### The Do's:

- Do *return* warm food to the blech if it is FULLY cooked, and you intended to return it, and preferably without having let go of the pot in-between.
  - Example: A pot of soup may be returned to the blech assuming that when you removed it you had planned to return it and it is still warm. It is preferable to hold the handle of the pot while serving and not let go until it is returned to the blech.
- Do warm up cold fully cooked solids by placing them on top of a pot, which is itself on the fire (or blech or the like), or by placing the solid directly on your warming tray/draw.
  - Make sure that if the warming tray or draw has different settings (e.g. high, low etc.) that the controls are covered before returning any food to it.
- Do move fully cooked foods around on top of your warming tray or even your blech as you see fit.

## Do's and Don'ts of hot food

#### Don'ts:

- No raw or baked foods should be placed in a Kli Sheini (except water and olive oil). A 'Kli Sheini' (lit. a "secondary utensil") – is defined as the utensil into which the hot food/liquid from the original cooking utensil has been transferred. A mug that you pour water into from your kettle is a good example of a Kli Sheini.
  - *Example: One may not place a tea bag into such a mug.*

#### Do's:

- Previously cooked foods and liquids may be put into a Kli Sheini even if those foods have cooled, and even if the contents of the Kli Sheini are very hot.
  - *Example: One may place milk into the above discussed mug, since milk is homogenized and thus considered cooked.*
- Raw or baked foods may be placed in a Kli Shlishi. A 'Kli Shlishi' (lit. – a "third utensil") is defined as the utensil into which the hot food/liquid from the Kli Sheini has been transferred. In the above example, if the contents of the mug are poured into a second mug, the second mug is a Kli Shlishi.
  - *Example: One may put the tea bag into the secondary mug (and it goes without saying that milk may be added).*

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<sup>14</sup> Once again the rule here is more strict for Sfardim; for sfardim if the liquid has cooled to the point where it is not hot it can no longer be re-warmed (that is considerably hotter than the Ashkenazi cut off point which is just above room temp).

## Appendix - Checking Vegetables

Based on Star-K requirements. Please visit <http://www.star-k.com/cons-appr-vegetables.htm> for periodic updates due to shifts in bug populations.

### **Leafy Vegetables** (E.g. Lettuce, Cabbage<sup>15</sup>)

Mustard Leaves, Spinach Greens etc.)

One of two methods may be used:

#### A. Leaf by Leaf Inspection:

1. Separate leaves.
2. Soak in water.
3. Make a complete, leaf by leaf inspection.
4. Wash off any insects prior to using.

#### B. Chazaka Check for Large Volumes of Leafy Vegetables:

1. Throw out outer leaves.
2. Separate leaves of three heads of the vegetable.
3. Do NOT wash leaves.
4. Check the three heads leaf by leaf.
5. If one bug is found in the test heads, all the produce in the consignment must be checked leaf by leaf.
6. If no bugs are found, the rest of the shipment does not require checking and may be used after pulling off the outer leaves of the heads of the remaining consignment.

C. Another Method is to put a nice squirt of dish soap in a bowl in which they are soaking after which the bugs release their hold on the leaves and are easy to wash off. Do a quick visual inspection while washing off (- Rabbi Moskovitz)

### **Floreted Vegetables** (Fresh Broccoli and Cauliflower) & Fresh Stem Herbs (**Basil, Cilantro, Dill, Mint Leaves, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage**)

Wash florets or herbs thoroughly under a strong stream of water.

Agitate florets or herbs in a white bowl. (Note: It may be helpful to add some dishwashing liquid\* to the water, as it aids in removal of insects.)

Examine the water to see that it is insect free.

If it is insect free you may use the vegetable.

5. If insects are found, you may redo this procedure up to three times in total. If there are still insects, the whole batch must be discarded.

### **Scallions**

Examine three scallions in a bunch as follows: Slit scallion tubes and examine inside of tube closest to bulb.

If no insects are found scallions may be used.

3. If one insect is found, then all the scallions must be checked.

### **Asparagus**

Examine three stalks in a bunch as follows:

Checking Asparagus Leaves:

Check under a few of the triangular-shaped leaves on the side of the asparagus.

If one insect is found, then all the stalks must be checked.

If no insects are found, proceed to check tips.

Checking Asparagus Tips: After checking leaves, follow the above 5-step procedure for herbs and floreted vegetables

### **Celery Stalks**

Cut off leaves and wash stalks well under a stream of water.

### **Corn on the Cob**

Only requires a visual check

### **Vegetables that Cannot be Checked**

Artichoke Hearts Brussel Sprouts

## FRUITS

### **Strawberries**

1. Fill basin with water and some dishwashing liquid\*. 2. Soak strawberries in soapy water. 3. Wash strawberries under a stream of water. 4. Strawberries may now be used.

### **Raspberries**

1. Take three raspberries out of a pint. 2. Check outside of raspberry. 3. Blow into cavity of raspberry. 4. Check for insects crawling out. 5. If no insects are found, all berries may be eaten. If one insect is found, then all berries must be checked

<sup>15</sup> If it is **purple cabbage** you will only have to check the outer leaves. The rest is tightly closed and is unpleasant to insects.