

Your own Passover Seder

Your Passover may be anything from a simple supper to an elaborate meal. Either is suitable, as at different times of their history Jewish people would have experienced both. I have included a short Haggadah for you to use at your Passover Seder. It follows the ancient order of a Jewish Passover, but I have also included New Testament references to help you make the link to the Last Supper. This should be read at the meal table, with part of it coming before the meal and part after. You can choose your readers for different parts.

Participants

There needs to be a main father and mother. The mother's role is to light the candles and say a prayer. The father's part is the largest and can be shared, especially if you are not in a family group. There also needs to be a youngest child who has a small part to read. There are six short passages from the Bible and these can be shared around the table.

Setting the Table

Your table should have:

- A white tablecloth
- Two candlesticks with white candles and matches
- A matzah cover containing three pieces of matzah
- A large white napkin
- A Seder plate with the ceremonial food
- Red wine or grape juice
- A small bowl of salt water
- A small plate and a glass for each person, for the ceremonial part of the Seder
- A large bowl and a jug of water with a towel near the table.

A Seder plate can easily be made out of a large platter or else a round tray. This needs to be small enough to fit on your table but large enough easily to fit five small bowls in a circle. Those bowls are each filled with a different ceremonial food: horseradish, horseradish, parsley, a roasted egg and lettuce. There should also be room to fit a lamb bone among the circle of dishes.

The Seder Plate

Most seder plates have six dishes for the six symbols of the Passover seder. These are:

- Maror (bitter herbs)
- Karpas (vegetable)
- Chazeret (bitter vegetable)
- Charoset (apple, nut, spice and wine mixture)
- Zeroa (shankbone)
- Beitzah (egg)



Maror (bitter herbs)

Bitter Herbs (usually horseradish) symbolize the bitterness of Egyptian slavery. The *maror* is often dipped in *charoset* to reduce its sharpness. *Maror* is used in the seder because of the commandment (in Numbers 9:11) to eat the paschal lamb "with unleavened bread and bitter herbs." Some prefer mild horseradish at the seder; others say that it doesn't serve its purpose (to remind us of the bitterness of slavery) unless it's hot enough to bring tears to the eyes.

Karpas (vegetable)

Vegetable (usually parsley) is dipped into salt water during the *seder*. The salt water represents the tears shed during Egyptian slavery. The dipping of a vegetable as an appetizer is said to date back to biblical times. It may now be identified with biblical description of the Hebrew slaves marking their doorposts at the time of the first Passover. A bunch of hyssop was to be dipped in the blood of the paschal lamb and used to strike the lintel and the doorposts (Exodus 12:22) so that the tenth plague (death of the firstborn) would not be visited upon their households.

Chazeret (bitter vegetable)

Bitter Vegetable (often lettuce) is often used in addition to the *maror* as a bitter herb. The authorities are divided on the requirement of *chazeret*, so not all communities use it. Since the commandment (in Numbers 9:11) to eat the paschal lamb "with unleavened bread and bitter herbs" uses the plural ("bitter herbs") most seder plates have a place for *chazeret*. Some use a green vegetable (such as lettuce - as long as lettuce is not also used for *karpas*), some use the green top of a bitter herb, while some use a second bitter (such as raddish) for the *chazeret*.

Charoset (apple, nut, spice and wine mixture)

Apple, nuts, and spices ground together and mixed with wine are symbolic of the mortar used by Hebrew slaves to build Egyptian structures. There are several variations in the recipe for charoset. The *Mishna* describes a mixture of fruits, nuts, and vinegar, for example. In order to enhance the symbolism of mortar, it is customary in some communities to mix in a small amount of sand. The *charoset* is sweet because sweetness is symbolic of God's kindness, which was able to make even slavery more bearable. According to legend, the use of apples in *charoset* stems from Pharaoh's decree that all male Hebrew children were to be killed at birth. Mothers would go out to the orchards to give birth, and thus save their babies (at least temporarily) from the Egyptian soldiers.

Zeroa (shankbone)

The **Shankbone** is symbolic of the Paschal lamb offered as the Passover sacrifice in biblical times. In some communities, it is common to use a chicken neck in place of the shankbone. Vegetarian households often use beets for the shankbone on the seder plate. The red beets symbolize the blood of the Paschal lamb, which was used to mark the lintel and doorposts of the houses during the first Passover (Exodus 12:22).

Beitzah (egg)

The **Roasted Egg** is symbolic of the festival sacrifice made in biblical times. On Passover, an additional sacrifice (the Paschal lamb) was offered as well. The egg is also a traditional symbol of mourning, and has been interpreted by some as a symbolic mourning for the loss of the Temple. Since the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 C.E., neither the festival sacrifice nor the special passover sacrifice could be offered. It is also a symbol of spring - the season in which Passover is always celebrated. In many households, it is customary to use a brown egg on the seder plate. The egg should be baked or roasted if possible.

Ceremonial food for Passover

How to make haroset

- 1 apple, grated
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons sweet red wine or grape juice
- 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts
- 1 teaspoon honey

Prepare all the ingredients and then mix together well. The resulting mixture should be lumpy and of a similar consistency to heavy porridge or moist stuffing. If you have a food processor, the easiest way to make haroset is to blend it all roughly in one go, adding the apple at the end. The proportions are not exact but are based on a family meal for six to eight people.

Roasted egg

The easiest way to create a roasted egg effect is to oil an egg and then light a match under it when it is cool.

Parsley and lettuce

Have enough so that each person can have a couple of pieces each.

Horseradish

Freshly grated horseradish is not authentic but very hot. It is traditional to grate it together with cooked beetroot and this lessens the intensity. Horseradish sauce is more easily available and is perfectly acceptable.

Lamb bone

This should be a shank bone. Roast a leg of lamb in the weeks coming up to Passover. After your meal, boil the remaining meat off the bone and then leave it in the bottom of your oven for a few weeks to totally dry it off. This should remove all of the meat. If a real bone is impractical or you are a vegetarian, make one out of cardboard or modeling clay.

Matzah

This should be available in most supermarkets. It is the modern unleavened bread that is more like a large biscuit. Sometimes they are in boxes that say 'Not Kosher for Passover'. There are subtle differences but, unless you are in a Jewish home using special Passover crockery and a kosher kitchen, your Passover will not be technically kosher anyway, so these matzahs are fine. There are fourteen in an average box. You will only need about half a piece per person. Place three in the matzah cover and any others on a plate on the table. It is important that they are not broken beforehand.

Red wine or grape juice

There are four 'cups', so about one bottle is needed for every six people. Each 'cup' needs only be enough for a toast to be drunk.

Binding – the sandwich

Take unleavened bread and bitter herbs and eat them together with the Paschal lamb that you might perform what is said, 'With unleavened bread and with bitter herbs shall they eat it.'

Each person should take two pieces of Matzah and put bitter herbs between them to make a sandwich, which they eat.

For many, the cost of a Paschal lamb was beyond them. Households would come together and share a lamb between them. There was a minimum amount of lamb that you had to eat to say that you had taken part in the Passover, but this was only the size of an olive. This meant that one Paschal lamb could be used for a very large number of people, but it would not be sufficient for the meal itself.

Hillel, the famous rabbi of Jesus' childhood said that there were three things that were essential to a Passover celebration. These were the Paschal lamb, unleavened bread (matzah) and bitter herbs. He suggested that these

were eaten ('bound') together, making a kind of sandwich. It is thought that this might have been the method used to eat the very small piece of Paschal lamb. Each of these things was to remind the descendants of those who came out of Egypt of what God had done for Israel. The lamb would remind them that God had passed over their homes; the unleavened bread would remind Israel that God had redeemed them; and the bitter herbs would remind them of the bitterness of slavery under the Egyptians.

It became traditional for the leaders of the Passover to give this sandwich, as a special privilege, to someone on whom he wanted to confer a blessing and show his regard. We cannot be certain if this tradition was established in Jesus' day, but it is thought by some to be the origins of the sop given to Judas. If this were the case it would reveal the deep unconditional love of Jesus even to the one whom he knew would betray him.

A Passover menu

If you want to approximate a kosher meal there are certain details to remember. No flour, bread or raising agent can be used in any part of the meal. If meat makes up part of the meal, milk, cream or other dairy products must not be used in any part of the meal. No pork or seafood should ever be used. Do think through how the meal will be served. It will not be easy to do much last minute preparation just before you serve (this is where slow cookers and heated trolleys come into their own!). The most solemn part of Passover Seder comes immediately after the meal, so leave the clearing up until the end of the evening.

To start

Boiled eggs served with salad
Binding – the sandwich

Main course suggestions

Chicken in orange sauce
Baked potatoes
Green vegetables

Dessert suggestions

Cinnamon balls and coconut pyramids

Recipes

Chicken in orange sauce

This is an Israeli-style dish and is very good for Passover, as it will keep in a moderate oven for a long time, while you are having the first part of your Seder. If you use a slow cooker, follow the manufacturer's instructions for chicken casseroles.

For 6 people

6 chicken portions
1 large onion, chopped
1 clove of garlic, crushed
Olive Oil
2 tablespoons matzah meal (or potato flour)
Salt
¾ pt (430 ml) orange juice
1 teaspoon cinnamon
4 cloves
2 oz (55 g) almonds (optional)
3 oz (85 g) raisins

Using a frying pan, sauté the onions and seal the chicken pieces in the oil and garlic. Place into a casserole dish or slow cooker. Add the matzah meal (or potato flour), salt, cinnamon and cloves to the fat in the pan and stir to a smooth paste. Add the orange juice slowly, stirring all the time. Bring mixture to the boil and pour over the chicken. Cook at a moderate temperature, 160 degrees C (325 degrees F, gas mark 3) for two hours or until the chicken is cooked. It can remain in the oven for another hour while you have the first part of your Passover Seder.

Binding - The Sandwich

This is an Israeli-style dish and is very good for Passover, as it will keep in a moderate oven for a long time, while you are having the first part of your Seder. If you use a slow cooker, follow the manufacturer's instructions for chicken casseroles.

Olive size piece of roasted lamb
2 - 1 inch X 1 inch pieces of matzah
1 parsley sprout/romaine lettuce leaf dipped in horseradish

Cinnamon balls

Cinnamon balls and coconut pyramids are Ashkenazi Passover recipes, popular among British Jews.

2 large egg whites
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
8 oz (225 g) finely ground almonds
1 tablespoon potato starch

Grease two large baking sheets, then coat them with extra potato starch, tapping off excess. Beat egg whites until foamy, and then beat in the sugar. Continue beating for several minutes until the whites form stiff shiny peaks. Stir in the almonds, cinnamon and potato starch until well combined. Form into small balls and place about 2 inches apart on the sheet. Bake for 15-to-20 minutes in a moderate oven 160 degrees C (325 degrees F, gas mark 3). They should be firm and lightly browned. Store in airtight container.

Coconut pyramids

These are symbolic of the pyramids the Israelites were made to build.

2 egg whites
6 oz (170 g) desiccated coconut
3 oz (85g) caster sugar
1 tablespoon potato starch

Prepare tins as for cinnamon balls. Whisk egg whites stiffly. Add sugar and continue beating until the whites form stiff shiny peaks. Stir in coconut and potato starch and mix well. Form into pyramids and arrange on tins. Bake it in a very moderate oven (140 degrees C, 290 degrees F, gas mark 2) for 20 minutes or until they are slightly golden on the surface.