



The Mystery of Matzah



Matzah is a food-meditation of direct connection, a total unity experienced through primal food. Not a moment of hesitation. No limits. The Red Sea opens. When you know something so deep that you are totally there in a flash moment; *Kvitzat ha'Derech*¹. On the other hand, *chametz*; the slow process of fermentation, is a natural process. Transformation slowly in nature time; walking the journey. The Torah allows the plain yeast used to make wine, and leavening agents such as baking soda. Although all leavened bread is *chametz*, not all *chametz* is leavened bread. Pasta or beer from the five grains are *chametz*. Kosher wine and kosher cheese produced through fermentation are allowed on Passover. Matzah meal cake or cookies containing Passover baking soda or baking powder are allowed.

Baking Matzah: On Passover it is a *mitzvah* to eat matzah (454:2). *Chametz* is forbidden. Emmer, einkorn, durum, bread wheat, barley, oats, rye, or spelt (453:1-2) may only be eaten in the form of matzah. Ashkenazic Jews have the custom of not eating food of other grains or legumes on Passover (see 453:1). To prevent grain from becoming *chametz*, the grain used for matzah should be clean (see 453:3) and protected against contact with water from the time it is harvested (453:4). It must not be washed before being ground (453:5). It should be stored in clean sacks (see 453:6) and transported carefully (see 453:7). The mill should be cleaned. The grinding supervised, preferably before the day that the flour is made into dough (453:8-9).



¹ *Kvitzat ha'Derech* is when you go to something so important that the journey takes a split second.

The flour should not be mixed with hot water (see 454:3). The water should be drawn at the end of the day *as if it is from Miriam's Well*² and should stand covered overnight in a cool place (see 455:1-4). Salt or spices should not be added to the dough (454:5-6;462:7). The 'challah' dough-offering should be taken. 455:1-2. The water, flour and dough should not be transported out of doors uncovered. The dough should be made indoors, away from open windows and fire (459:1,5). The dough should not stand without kneading even for a moment. It should be put in the oven within 18 minutes of the time it has contact with water (see 459:2). The utensils should be cleaned constantly so no dough sticks to them.

The baking should be done by an adult Jew (460:1), should be supervised (460:2), and should be done quickly as one deed (460:4). The matzah should have a simple shape (460:4) and nothing should be baked with it (460:6-7). The oven should be heated to burn out any traces of chametz, and then should be lit evenly (461:1) so that the matzah bakes quickly and completely (see 461:3). Dough made with liquids other than water does not become chametz, but matzah baked from it is called "rich matzah " and does not fulfill the requirement of eating matzah on the first night (462:1,3,6;463:1-2;466:5).³

Sephardic soft matza can be Shmura Matza. The difference is that it is rolled out thicker and when baked is soft instead of crunchy. In general, people of Sephardic lineage have a tradition to eat soft Matzot on Passover. According to Rabbi Yosef Karo - Shulchan Aruch, a Matza may be baked up to 'one Tefah' (approximately 3-4 inches) thick. People from Ashkenazic lineage have a tradition to eat Matza that is as thin as possible, Sephardic Matza, that is about 1/3 - 1/2 of an inch thick.



² Miriam's Well – water directly from the Source, the Well that followed the Jews in the desert by merit of Miriam's holy song and deeds.

³ Shulchan Aruch, I: Orach Chayim Ch 34 – Matzah
torah.org/advanced/shulchan-aruch/classes/orachchayim/chapter34.html