

Know your קטניות - Beans

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There are many customs that permeate the Yom Tov of Pesach. One that seems to affect the plate and palate is the custom of not eating legumes or קטניות.

Origins of Custom – The custom dates back to the Gaonim era with the following reasons: Chometz grains and kitniyos were processed in close proximity. There was the possibility of chometz grain being mixed inadvertently into the kitniyos grain. Another reason suggested is, if corn flour or rice flour were permitted some people might confuse it for wheat flour and permit that also. Although the custom was only accepted in Ashkenazic communities, there are important ramifications that apply to those of Sephardic origin as well. Rice may be fortified with vitamins that contain chometz. Corn syrup may contain enzymes that were grown on chometz.

What is Forbidden – Kitniyos and their direct derivatives are forbidden for oral consumption by a healthy person. However, it is permitted to benefit from kitniyos on Pesach i.e. using the oil as a fuel for light or heat. Also, it is permitted for oral consumption by the ill and infirm, provided that separate utensils are used.

Kitniyos Shenishtanu – There are a number of ingredients that are derived from kitniyos. Some, such as soybean oil are direct derivatives while others such as citric acid, ascorbic acid, aspartame, sodium erythorbate and xanthan gum are more distant derivatives. According to most opinions, Kitniyos based oils are considered a kitniyos product and are not permitted for Pesach use (see Maharsham 1:183 for a dissenting opinion).

Aspartame on the other hand goes through a complete transformation from its original state of corn. The halachic background for this distinction is based on the Rosh (Brochos 6:35) and Rabbeinu Yonah. There was a certain scent used in cooking that was derived from the gland of a non-kosher animal. Rabbeinu Yonah permitted its use, as there was a complete transformation from its original state as a gland. The Rosh on the other hand considered the transformation to be non-consequential and therefore ruled that the scent remained forbidden as before. The general consensus (Mishna Brurah 216:7) among the poskim is to be stringent when an ingredient involves an issur Torah and to be lenient when the ingredient involves an issur D'Rabbonon. Some poskim therefore permit kitniyos based ingredients that have gone through such a transformation. Others rule that the transformation only permits usage *b'dieved*, not *l'chatchila*. It's important to note that most of these ingredients can be produced special for Pesach without getting involved in kitniyos at all.

The following items are either kitniyos, kitniyos shenishtanu or spices that are customarily not used by some people:

Alfalfa
Anise*
Ascorbic Acid**
Bean Sprouts
BHT, BHA in corn oil
Buckwheat
Canola Oil
Caraway Seeds*
Chickpeas
Citric Acid**
Coriander*

Corn
Cumin*
Dextrose**
Dill Seeds*
Fennel Seed*
Fenugreek
Glucose
Green Bean
Lecithin
Lentils
Malto Dextrin**

Millet
Mustard Seed
Navy Beans
Peanuts
Peas
Pinto Beans
Poppy Seeds
Rapeseed Oil
Rice**
Sesame Seeds
Snow peas

Soybeans
Sugar Snap-Peas
Sunflower Seeds
Tofu

* There are different customs pertaining to spices. Those who use these spices, should only purchase them with reliable certification.

** These items may sometimes have a chometz issue.