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LIS 520 – Collection Management “Top 10”

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### **Prime Reference Resources for Following Kosher Dietary Laws**

Traditional Judaism requires following a strict kosher diet. Students attending Jewish private liberal arts colleges are not expected to follow these dietary guidelines, but in the course of their studies are often compelled to learn more about a scant understood aspect of a kosher lifestyle. The ready availability of ten high-quality reference sources on the topic, which students may even consider obtaining for personal use, will likely increase the depth of their knowledge on Jewish dietary laws. This in turn may result in students' heightened level of observance, as well as a more varied culinary experience and potentially healthier lifestyle. Therefore, we present a selected bibliography of *kashrut* related books for the student community living in the dormitories of the aforementioned colleges, such as the University of Judaism in Los Angeles or Brandeis University in Massachusetts.

According to the Second National Jewish Population survey in 1990 about one percent of the American Jews became orthodox as adults, i.e., they did not grow up in the orthodox tradition. An additional 5% of the examined populace is conservative (in terms of religious observance), although they were either not brought up in the reform tradition or brought up in lack of observance of any religion (Lazerwitz, 1995). This suggests that there is some recognizable movement toward greater observance. The most visible movement is of the newly Orthodox Jews, the *Baal Teshuvah*. The term, literally meaning "master of return," indicates that they have returned to a traditional lifestyle and system of values and beliefs. People convert to

orthodoxy or move towards stricter interpretation of *kashrut* rules most often in the formative college years. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the respective student community would be interested in consulting such a collection in order to decide whether the more traditional practice of *kashrut* is for them or not. If they indeed decide that it is, then these books will be of value as references in college and beyond.

A few contextual notes on the terminology may be necessary for the generic audience. In order to understand the implications and terminology of the previous paragraph one needs to be aware that following *kashrut* is prescribed and socially enforced behavior for orthodox Jews, observed in most conservative communities and is of lesser relevance for reform and non-affiliated Jews. *Kashrut*, the noun, refers to the whole of Jewish dietary laws and customs. It covers what kind of food Jews are allowed to eat, how the meat animals must be butchered, how food must be prepared, and how food-related objects must be handled. *Kosher*, as an adjective designates what food is allowed to be eaten and objects that are permissible to use for food preparation.

Students attending Jewish institutions of higher academic learning receive education focusing on liberal arts with a Jewish angle. However, they may be taught *kashrut* only to a limited extent. Therefore those students who would like to know more about the topic may be required to do their own research. Our collection is intended to satisfy their information needs.

In traditional Jewish households women are in charge of the domestic realm. As *kashrut* is most relevant for kitchen related activities the target audience of this collection could be considered the female students. We need to add, however, that it is increasingly common for men to be involved in the kitchen as well, even in the most traditional home. Therefore the collection will be useful for the whole student populace.

Selection criteria were formulated in consideration of the characteristics of the mostly female audience, in their twenties, with varying degrees of commitment to Judaism. In addition, sources chosen for inclusion were judged to be practical (as in practice oriented) and easily comprehensible. The audience's primary need in this regard is to have a practical reference for the daily activity of cooking meals. College students read extensively for their classes. They have limited time to read outside the scope of what is required from them. This aspect, combined with the alleged shortening attention span of the generation, the onslaught of distractions coming through various information channels (text messages, cellular phones, instant messages, etc.), and the ensuing information overload make it a necessity that any recommended reference work must be easily and quickly accessible to them.

A combination of three kinds of reference books would satisfy the above needs and cover the whole spectrum of *kashrut*-related information needs. First, reference books about Judaism are required to place the practice of *kashrut* into context. To cover several different contexts, a dictionary on Judaism related terms is included to help with words users may encounter in the other books or in their practice, as well as one providing a contextual understanding of the past folklore.

A second category is needed to provide reference about *kashrut* itself. One book serves as an encyclopedia of practices and rules, another is a guide on how to shop *kosher*, and a third extends the concept of *kashrut* beyond food.

The final and probably most often used category is reserved for cookbooks and a cooking website. The importance of this category requires a wider range of coverage and is comprised of five resources. Selections include the following: an extensive volume of 800 recipes; an attractive cookbook with pictures; a gourmet cookbook with recipes requiring a short preparation

time; a cookbook with international offerings; and an online site covering the basics of *kosher* cooking.

These high-quality reference resources can help Jewish students of both genders at liberal colleges to familiarize themselves with *kosher* cooking and lifestyle. Regardless of whether the goal is to simply lose the "Freshman 15" pounds, or conversely the first step toward a permanent lifelong commitment, this collection of reference resources will accommodate a wide variety of needs.

## Top Ten Kashrut Reference Resources

### Contextual reference books

Eisenberg, J. and Scolnic, E. (2006). *Dictionary of Jewish words*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society.

The range of this dictionary extends to over 1200 entries and the scope includes terms related to scriptures, holidays, culture, and history. Looking up unknown words will be a breeze because this volume contains words related to both modern and ancient Israel/Judaica. Clarification of Yiddish terms—which are common in Jewish cookbooks—that have entered the vernacular will be particularly handy for understanding the deeper connotations. The straightforward alphabetical organization of the entries will speed up finding terms. The pronunciation guide will also help students to articulate the written word correctly. Students with a limited Jewish background will appreciate the word references they encounter in the process of becoming familiar with tradition and cooking.

Unterman, A.(1997). *Dictionary of Jewish lore and legend*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Unterman's dictionary is conducive to understanding the context of customs and the history of tradition in short easy to read chunks. The book's 222 illustrations make it even more enjoyable to read the wide scope of entries, covering all segments of millennia of Jewish history (e.g. literature, community life, law, mysticism, etc.). The alphabetical entries provide pleasant narratives and stories to elucidate both well and lesser known terms. Unterman, a professor of comparative religion and a minister at a synagogue, possesses the knowledge, experience and authority to write such an ambitious book.

### Kashrut reference books

Eidlitz, E. (2004). *Is it kosher?: Encyclopedia of kosher foods, facts & fallacies*. Jerusalem: Feldheim.

Following Jewish dietary laws involves much more than relying solely on *kosher* recipes. Rabbi Eliezer Eidlitz's *Is it Kosher?* provides the other part of the bigger picture of following a *kosher* diet. Indexed alphabetically by subject, one can easily locate answers to nearly any question relating to kashrut. An example of entries includes the following: a list of food additives categorized by their derivation and uses, as well as their status (*kosher*, *non-kosher*, *pareve*); proper use of kitchen equipment, cooking utensils, and procedures for *kashering*; guidelines for inspection of vegetables for purchase; and general laws of kashrut. The Rabbi addresses the challenges of identifying foods that can be reliably considered *kosher*. In this regard, an extensive list of reliable certifications/symbols is provided, arranged alphabetically by country. Rabbi Eliezer Eidlitz (Director of Development at Emek Hebrew Academy) provides an indispensable guide for adherence to the religious tenets of kashrut with his encyclopedia.

Garfunkel, J. (2004). *Kosher for everybody: The complete guide to understanding, shopping, cooking, and eating the kosher way*. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass.

*Kosher for Everybody* is an introductory guide to kosher dietary laws that is applicable to college students on the go. The layout of the book is constructed in four sections. The first part provides a historical context of kosher foods in America, a description of how to interpret kosher labels on food products, and a list of kosher goods. The second part differentiates between kosher and non-kosher cuts of meats and poultry. The third part of the book lists fifty-five easy-to-prepare kosher recipes. The last portion of the book provides an extensive list of kosher-friendly businesses that is separated by type of service and geographic region. This is a great reference for college students who have just left their hometown and are unfamiliar with kosher services around campus. Garfunkel's work caters to people who are health conscious but may be pressed for time to do extensive research on this subject.

Isaacs, R. (2005) *Kosher living: it's more than just the food*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

This book, covering all facets of life and everyday occurrences, is beneficial for any young Jewish adult who is just embarking upon learning more about *kosher* laws. Isaacs' list of forty-four different topics range from lighthearted issues including friendship, shopping, and sex to more serious issues including visiting the sick, death and dying, and war. Isaacs answers common questions--both from modern and traditional viewpoints--within each topic that may be difficult for college students with limited knowledge to formulate; he even answers questions that the user may not have thought to ask. *Kosher Living* is a valuable reference book that can be an asset to young people throughout their lives.

### Cookbooks

Gilletz, N. (2004). *Healthy helpings: 800 fast and fabulous recipes for the kosher (or not) cook*.

Orem, UT: Woodland Publishing.

Those who wish to cook *kosher*, presumably our target audience, need to be able to select from a wide variety of recipes. This 430-page book (recipes comprise 411 pages), offering a range of 800 entries, enables one to choose a recipe based on any one of several criteria. The nutritional analysis, accompanying each recipe, will also be welcomed by the modern users, conscious of their food intake. Most items can be prepared fast, which is a key criterion nowadays when deciding what to cook. The book accommodates every level of expertise from beginner to expert level cooks. This is Ms. Gilletz's (a Certified Culinary Professional) fourth book; therefore, she has the necessary skills to create not only a well-balanced meal but also a well-balanced book.

Fishbein, S. (2003). *Kosher by design: picture-perfect food for the holidays & every day*.

Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications.

This gorgeous book will be appreciated by people who need visual impetus. The 250 recipes on its 300 plus pages are organized chronologically, as the Jewish holidays follow each other throughout the year. Not only are there recipes for each holiday, but also culinary explanations of

the events and such varied items as wine lists, meal planning and table arrangement. The 120 appetite-inducing images supply a unique treatment. The index is organized by ingredients allowing for the easy location of a recipe based on what one has available in one's kitchen. This book rounds up any young person's collection, because it caters to the special occasions, as opposed to the other volumes that meet the everyday needs.

Kirschenbaum, L. (2002). *Levana's table: kosher cooking for everyone*. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang.

Levana Kirshchenbaum provides *kosher* recipes that have been inspired by her Moroccan upbringing and extensive knowledge of Moroccan, Mediterranean, Italian, Indian, Chinese, and vegetarian cuisine. The end result is a compilation of nontraditional *kosher* meals with an international flavor. Some of these delicious creations include Syrian Rice with Apricots and Almonds, Stir-Fried Tofu and Vegetables on Soba Noodles, Paratha (Indian Skillet Flatbread), Salmon Teriyaki, and Champagne Risotto with Arugula, Peas, and Asparagus. Jewish college students, who have just left the nest and the steady stream of rugelach and matzo balls, may be anxious to try new and interesting cuisines. Kirshchenbaum satisfies this curiosity without compromising Jewish dietary laws.

Kosher Express. Maintained by MarketNet, Inc. (1998) *Kosher cooking: Recipes, cooking resources and more!* <http://www.koshercooking.com/index.html> (Accessed March 9, 2007)

Hundreds of recipes making up the main content of this website are available by the "Recipes" link from the main page. (The other two sections are "What's cooking," featuring newer or "hot" recipes, and "Resources," including three excerpts from Marcy Goldman's book *A Treasury of Jewish Holiday Baking* (1998) and dozens of links.) The recipes themselves are categorized as *Holidays*, *Everyday*, and *From the Pros*, each containing numerous subsections. The source of the recipes is both professional offerings and a compilation of submissions from viewers of the site.

Therefore, these recipes are "tried and true," most requiring only a few basic ingredients involving simple preparation, often using only one pot or pan, making cleanup a breeze. This handy site can help expand one's kosher cooking repertoire, while avoiding the uptake of valuable space in the potentially cramped quarters of a dormitory.

Zeidler, J.(1999). *The 30-minute kosher cook : more than 130 quick and easy gourmet recipes*.

New York: William Morrow.

For anyone short on time or cooking skills, this no-nonsense book holds the answers—130 of them, to be exact. Divided into ten menu categories (e.g., vegetables, pastas, fish, desserts, etc.), most recipes require only basic ingredients and very few steps in preparation. Several are contributed by gourmet chefs and include the author's award-winning Perfect Potato Latkes. Zeidler draws on the many short cuts she developed over the years, cooking for her family. Chapter one offers time-saving tips such as a list of staples for the pantry, refrigerator, and freezer, as well as ideas for using the blender or food processor. Although the author admits a distinct Italian influence for many of the entries, a final chapter is reserved for traditional Jewish fare and prefaced with a description of various Jewish holidays, including menu suggestions for each. With many credits to her name—restaurateur, newspaper columnist, author, television host/chef—Zeidler may be regarded as an authority on preparing quick, nutritious *kosher* meals. Conveniently indexed for easy reference, *The 30-minute kosher cook* is a lifesaver for a college student with limited resources, seeking a *kosher* alternative to fast food or take-out, common to the campus lifestyle.

**Bibliography**

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