

## Temple Ner Ami and Keeping Kosher

Jewish dietary laws, or Kashrut, have been a part of traditional Judaism for literally thousands of years. Although much has been written concerning the purpose of these laws (from their possible medical benefits to their social impact in preventing intermingling of Jews and non-Jews), traditional Jews observe Kashrut as they do other commandments from the Torah and from Rabbinic law.

Many Reform Jews believe that the Reform policy regarding Kashrut is simply that "Reform Jews are not Kosher." This is not the case. Reform Judaism treats Kashrut as it does other ritual laws, as practices that are meaningful in our tradition, which may be meaningful to individual Reform Jews, but which are not binding to individual Reform Jews. Moreover, Reform Jews are encouraged to experiment with their observance of the Dietary Laws just as they should with other Jewish traditions. Significantly, Reform Judaism does not take an "all or nothing" approach to Kashrut. While cherishing the freedom and respect for individual choice that is central to Reform observance, Temple Ner Ami's policy on Kashrut reflects our Congregation's respect and love for Jewish tradition and our concern not to insult the sensibilities of those members who observe Kashrut. We therefore have adopted the policy that follows, a policy that is largely focused on the Dietary Laws that are specifically identified in the Torah rather than those that were added during the Rabbinic Period in the Talmud.

Those interest in learning more about Kashrut and the Traditional Dietary Laws are referred to *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, Edited by W- Gunther Plaut, pages 972-975, or any of the fine books and articles written on this subject.

**Temple Ner Ami observes a modified kashrut which prohibits use of pork products, shellfish products and other foods prohibited by the Torah as well as blatant mixing of milk and meat products. Therefore, Temple Ner Ami prohibits use of same at any function on the Temple grounds or at official Temple functions anywhere.**

The following discussion is designed to explain this policy. Any questions should be referred to the Rabbi.

**Prohibited Foods:** Any meat containing pork or pork products including such foods as ham, bacon, hot dogs with pork, etc. Any meat from an animal that does not have both cleft hoofs and chews its cud (note that this prohibits any reptile such as turtle, snake, etc. or such animals as rabbit). Also generally prohibited is poultry other than chicken, duck, geese, turkey and pigeons. Fish other than those having both fins and

scales are prohibited; these include all shellfish, shrimp, lobster, scallops, crab, catfish, shark, snails, eels, sturgeon, etc. All insects are prohibited.

**Kosher Meat and Labeling:** The policy does not require that meat be purchased from a Kosher butcher, only that it meet the requirements above. Similarly, a Kosher label is not required on any other food product.

**Milk and Meat:** The policy prohibits blatant mixing of milk and meat such as serving dishes clearly containing both (e.g., meat lasagna with cheese) or even serving both at the same time (hamburgers and cheese pizza at the same event). The policy does not, however, require items to be certified parve in order to be served with meat dishes.

**Passover:** The policy requires that no leaven be used on Temple grounds or at Temple events during the Passover holiday period.

**Where the Policy Applies:** The policy applies at all events on the Temple grounds whether or not the event is a Temple event. For example, a scout meeting or even a Church group meeting using a Temple facility would be expected to comply with the policy. In addition the policy would apply at Temple events off-site.

**Try It, You Just Might Like It!** Although many of us rebel at the thought of religious law, we understand and relate to the idea of spiritual discipline. I encourage you to try introducing some form of dietary discipline into your life and see how it feels. If you are like many, you may just find that it deepens your sense of being Jewish and your relationship with God.