

Hosting a Passover Seder? Use This Checklist to Prepare



Don't be overwhelmed by hosting your own seder. Use this handy checklist to help you prepare!

Guests

Passover is *the* festival to reach out and invite anyone you know who needs a seder invitation. It is the holiday when hosts borrow folding chairs to squeeze as many people as possible around their tables. There is a well-known verse in the Passover Haggadah, *Kol dichfin yeitei v'yechul*, let all who are hungry come in and eat.

CDs or iPod playlist

Liven up your seder with music!

Fresh flowers

Brighten your seder table with colorful spring flowers. If guests ask what they can bring, flowers are an appropriate item to suggest.

Ritual Items

Feather, wooden spoon, and paper bag

One of the many fun customs associated with Passover is to search for, collect, and destroy any *chametz* (leavening or grain that ferments) in the house. Children are particularly enthusiastic about this “search and destroy” mission. Look any place in the house where *chametz* was used during the year. Or designate one family member to hide 10 pieces of *chametz* (a Kabbalistic tradition) throughout the house (just remember where you put them). Before the search this [blessing](#) is recited. Use the feather to sweep all the crumbs into the spoon and deposit them in the paper bag. The next morning, make one final search and then burn or discard the bag and its contents.

Pillows

Put a pillow on each guest's chair at the seder table to encourage everyone to comfortably recline during the seder. This custom is observed in the spirit of celebrating our freedom. Pillows also soften the impact of sitting for several hours on metal folding chairs.

Haggadot

Each guest will need a Passover Haggadah to use during the seder. Most Reform Jewish Haggadot (plural of Haggadah) include egalitarian language and beautiful illustrations. Two favorites are [A Passover Haggadah](#) and [The Open Door](#). Here are [seder ideas for 2-3 year-olds](#) and for [4-5 year-olds](#). Why not make a [bag of plagues](#) to keep children entertained during the seder.

Seder plate

A [seder plate](#) is an important item for your seder. Shop online or locally; they're available in a wide range of styles and prices. [Watch this video](#) to learn what ritual foods are placed on the seder plate. If your guests will be seated at more than one table, consider preparing a seder plate for each table.

Matzah holder

Three ceremonial boards of matzah are placed in a special holder or on a plate for the seder, and the middle one is broken in half and used for the *afikoman* (dessert; the hidden matzah children search for at the end of the seder). Stack matzah for guests on pretty plates or make a decorative [matzah holder](#).

Three kiddush cups and wine glasses

Use kiddush cups for the seder leader, for the cup of Elijah, and for the cup of Miriam, which honors Moses' sister Miriam, who played a vital role in the history of our people. Pour wine for your guests into regular wine glasses.

Candles and candlesticks

The blessing over the festival candles is recited as the seder begins. On the first night of Passover the *Shehecheyanu* is also recited.

Afikoman holder

Shop online or in Judaica stores for a bag especially designed to hold the *afikoman*. The *afikoman* can also be wrapped in a paper or cloth dinner napkin. A quick and inexpensive way to hide more than one afikoman for the kids (see below) is to use mailing envelopes with each child's name written on the front.

Pitcher or two-handled cup, big bowl, and dish towel (or wash n dries)

These supplies are used for the ritual hand washing (and drying) during the seder. If you prefer, wash n' dries can be used.

☐ **Afikoman prizes**

For most kids, the seder's high point is searching for the *afikoman*. Why not hide more than one *afikoman* and award fun prizes to every child at your seder? The prizes can be Passover candy, crafts or small toys, like scented markers, Legos, sculpting clay, travel-sized games, or joke books.

Ritual Foods and Drinks

☐ **Kosher-for-Passover wine and grape juice**

During the seder, we drink wine in a formalized ritual. It is considered a mitzvah to drink four cups of wine at the seder. Grape juice may be substituted for wine. The kosher-for-Passover wine selection today is a far cry from the sweet red wines that were once a mainstay of Passover. Wine is another appropriate item for guests to provide.

☐ **Matzah**

Regular *matzot* (plural of matzah) specially baked for Passover are widely available and are used at the seder and throughout the week of Passover.

☐ **Parsley, celery, or other greens (*karpas*)**

Used to represent spring, the *karpas* is "dipped" into salt water to remember the Israelites' tears. Some families follow the *karpas* ritual by serving a variety of vegetables and dips as a first course. Artichokes and other vegetables, hard-boiled eggs, and boiled potatoes may be introduced at this point in the seder.

☐ **Horseradish (*maror*)**

This is the bitter herb eaten before the meal to remind us of the Israelites' suffering as slaves. Use red or white horseradish for the meal, but raw horseradish root for the seder plate. [Use this recipe for grating your own horseradish.](#)

☐ **Bone (*pesach*) or beet**

A roasted shankbone (*z'roa*) is included on the seder plate to symbolize the festival offerings (*chagigah*) that were brought to the ancient Temple. This is a roasted bone used to symbolize the first-born lamb sacrificed as the Passover offering. The lamb's blood was smeared on the Israelites' doorposts to protect them from the tenth plague – the death of the first-born. The bone is called *z'roa* (forearm) reminding us of God's arm that stretch out to save us. Because many have not included lamb as a Passover dish since Talmudic times, many families use chicken or beef bones. Many supermarkets give these out for free at Passover. A beet, which "bleeds" when cut, may also be used and is a great substitute in a vegetarian seder.

☐ **Charoset ingredients**

Apples, nuts, raisins, cinnamon, and sweet red wine are ingredients you'll need for a [traditional charoset](#). Dried fruits are called for in many Sephardic *charoset* recipes, and in [Israeli Charoset](#), [Turkish Charoset](#), and Panamanian [Jaroset](#).



Eggs

Many seder meals begin with hard-boiled eggs, and a roasted egg (*beitzah*) is included on the seder plate to symbolize the festival offerings (*chagigah*) that were brought to the ancient Temple. Eggs are also a sign of spring.



An orange

Many Jews include a whole [orange on their seder plate to symbolize inclusiveness](#).



Kosher salt

This ingredient is used to make the salt water for dipping, symbolizing the tears of the Israelites.

Seder Extras



Clear plastic tablecloth protector

The sign of a spirited seder is spilled red wine! Use a washable tablecloth or a protective cover.



Egg platter

For those whose tradition includes serving hard boiled eggs, egg plates are widely available.



Crumb sweeper

After the meal has been served, before you finish the seder, kids especially enjoy sweeping up the matzah crumbs.

<http://www.reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/passover/hosting-passover-seder-use-checklist-prepare>