



For your seder plate

Min haMishnah (traditional items)

Z'roa: shankbone of a lamb, roasted. Sefardi custom calls for a leg of lamb with the meat still on, which seder participants will eat, emulating the first Pesach seder in Sh'mot (Exodus). Vegetarian seders may use a roasted beet, for its blood-red color and delicious flavor.

Beitzah: egg, hardboiled or roasted. The second “cooked food” of a Mishnaic seder, the egg also symbolizes the fertility and new life beginning that our spring Pesach seder heralds—the birth of freedom from within the hard shell of oppression.

Maror: horseradish, for the bitter taste of slavery. Any form works; the strong of heart (and tear ducts) may wish to grate their own.

Karpas: parsley, preferably curly. Parsley is one of the first edible greens to come up in the spring season. It also handily collects the salt water that symbolizes the Israelites' sweat and tears.

Chazeret: a second leafy green, the chazeret should have a slightly bitter taste (though not compete with the horseradish). Endive and romaine are two popular choices.

Charoset: a sweet, sticky paste, symbolizing the mortar the Israelites were forced to slather onto Pharaoh's bricks as they built the pyramids of Egypt. Charoset reminds us that we need sweetness, as well as sweat, to build institutions and customs that will last. Ashkenazi (eastern European) charoset features chopped apples, walnuts, and honey; Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) charoset uses dates and nuts as a base, often with a bit of citrus or pomegranate thrown in.

Modern additions (optional)

Orange: for the inclusion of people of all sexual orientations in our Jewish ritual and home life. An orange's first appearance on the seder plate is attributed to Susanna Heschel.

Tomato: People who work with food produce are often subject to human rights abuses in the fields, in their pay, and sometimes in actual slavery. The [Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#) (CIW) in Florida began organizing tomato workers to know their rights and protest human rights abuses in 1993; since then, they have developed the Fair Food Program, which obligates participating buyers to buy only from growers with zero tolerance for human rights abuses in their farms and production and bars offending growers from selling their product. Ninety percent of tomato growers in Florida now participate in the Fair Food Program, and the CIW's model of worker-driven social responsibility has helped workers in many industries (most recently, Lee Jeans) organize for and win better protection of their human rights.

Shoelace: for the millions (over 70 million in 2020) of refugees, and victims of human trafficking, who are in and trying to leave Mitzrayim in our world today.

Choose your own: what food, or item, symbolizes an essential part of the Pesach story for you? What helps you see this story as part of your own life?

For your seder table

Candles: if it's the first or second night of the holiday, two candles

Elijah's and Miriam's cups: one extra cup which will be filled with wine/grape juice late in the seder, and one with water, for Elijah of redemption and Miryam of sweet, sustaining water

Salt water: in which your guests can dip their karpas

Matzah: at least three pieces, enough for every guest to get a mouthful

Fruit of the vine: wine/grape juice, enough that every guest can have four cups in the course of the evening

Water for washing: a pitcher of water and/or a two-handled cup, as well as a basin to receive it, for the two ritual handwashings. In some families, the water is brought around the table to each guest, so that they feel like royalty reclining, and they're offered a towel with which to dry their hands.

Scallions (optional): to beat one another with during Dayyeinu (Middle Eastern custom)