

## Emanuel Synagogue Kashrut Policy

March 2011

**Background and Purpose.** Emanuel Synagogue is a multi-denominational congregation serving Jewish families from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. We recognise that the synagogue is a sacred, public place, a communal space where Jewish values must be taught, considered, and practised. We learn our values through *Talmud Torah*, study of Torah, which teaches us *mitzvot*, the ways of our ancestors, and *halachot*, how we practice those ways in our times. Emanuel Synagogue's pluralist nature affiliates us with Masorti Judaism, which commits us to the observance of mitzvah and halacha, and also Progressive Judaism, which commits us as well to think about core values and ranges of observance, and also to Renewal Judaism which calls us to consider the spirit and intention behind each mitzvah. It is important to know the development of dietary practice in Judaism, known as kashrut, in order to understand how Emanuel has established its kashrut policy. The following Kashrut Policy is being instituted in accordance with the principles of Jewish tradition, to heighten awareness of "ethical eating", and to encourage our community to regard eating as a spiritual, reflective exercise that in addition to nourishing our bodies, demonstrates respect for the world in which we live.

The first story that discusses what food is intended for humans is the very first chapter of the Torah (Genesis 1:29): "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you." This vegetarian ideal has been embraced as the ultimate form of kashrut by many rabbinic authorities for thousands of years, while others consider it to be a mitzvah to eat meat. The first story in which animals are permitted is the story of Noah and the flood; extensive dietary laws of which animals are either permitted or prohibited for food is found in Leviticus chapter 11.

In all events, it is clear that the Torah permits the eating of certain types of animals, while establishing many rules to regulate the slaughter of animals and the consumption of meat, particularly the prohibition of the combination of dairy and meat products. The Torah does not give a rationale for these rules, other than saying that we are to be a "holy people". These rules have been elaborated in rabbinic tradition over thousands of years to establish which animals may or may not be eaten, how they may be prepared and so forth, all within a practice termed by the rabbis as "kashrut", meaning that which is fit for consumption.

The Torah, in its system of mitzvah and halachah, also commands that we do not treat animals cruelly and that we preserve the environment. In contemporary times, these principles often clash with the permission to eat animals, leading to a concept known as "eco-kashrut", teaching us that we must not only be concerned how animals are slaughtered, but also how they are raised and the impact that has on the environment. (There are also questions of ethical practices in the workplace as well, see in general [http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/hekhsher%20tzedeck/hekhsher\\_tzedek.html](http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/hekhsher%20tzedeck/hekhsher_tzedek.html).)

In the last few decades, new facts and issues have arisen that impact how we relate to the consumption of animals (including fish):

- Nearly all animals are raised in cruel, factory farms, violating a core mitzvah of Torah "not to act cruelly toward animals".
- The animal industry contributes 20% to greenhouse emissions, as well as being a major source of environmental degradation in general.
- Given the forced feeding of animals, including with antibiotics, major health issues for humans arise (and we are commanded to preserve our health).

Given these issues, we see the ideal at Emanuel Synagogue is to become a vegetarian campus; however, there is understanding that our community is most likely not ready to live this ideal at this time.

Therefore, Emanuel Synagogue will be a dairy campus, which means vegetarian and, until further review, kosher fish is allowed. While we encourage our congregants each to adopt this policy of eating consciously and ethically, avoiding the consumption of animals as much as possible within their diet, we recognize that each home is a “personal sanctuary” and this policy applies only at Emanuel Synagogue.

I. **Meat-Free Campus**

Emanuel Synagogue will hence-forth be identified as a “dairy/vegetarian/kosher fish campus.” All fresh vegetables and fruit are allowed. No meat or poultry and their derivatives, (other than eggs from a kosher animal) may be cooked, consumed, or brought onto the synagogue grounds. Kosher fish and dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt may be used in cooking and consumed on Synagogue premises, under the supervision of the Synagogue’s Mashgiach (supervising authority).

II. **Products**

Only products identified as kosher by the Kashrut Association of New South Wales (from time to time), or by a hechsher from another kashrut authority recognised by Emanuel Synagogue’s Rabbis, or food approved by the Vegan Society of Australia may be brought onto synagogue grounds, or cooked and consumed on these premises.

To check if a product is kosher, please visit the Kashrut Authority website ([www.ka.org.au](http://www.ka.org.au)), or contact the Synagogue. The Senior Rabbi, or in his absence, one of his rabbinic colleagues, is regarded as the final arbiter on the kashrut of a particular item.

III. **Catered Synagogue Functions**

The synagogue will maintain a list of approved caterers, as determined by the rabbis, in conjunction with the Board of Governance. Kosher caterers, approved by the Kashrut Authority of New South Wales, are welcome to serve as caterers for synagogue functions, provided that the catered meal or kiddush is *vegetarian/fish (no meat or poultry whatsoever)*.

IV. **Non-Catered Synagogue Functions**

From time-to-time, the synagogue may wish to hold pot-luck functions. The kitchen is to remain closed and locked during these functions, and no Synagogue kitchenware or utensils may be used. All items that are brought for a pot-luck function are to be strictly vegetarian, containing no animal products. All congregants and guests participating in pot-luck functions are to bring their own crockery and/or serving utensils, and be advised that they will not be permitted to wash their crockery at the Synagogue.

V. **Use of Kitchen**

Emanuel Synagogue’s Mashgiach (supervising authority) will determine who is to be given access to the kitchen, and will also ensure all activities carried out in the kitchen are in line with the Kashrut Policy. A record of kitchen usage will be kept at the reception desk and reviewed by the Senior Rabbi or his delegate from time-to-time.

VI. **Informing the Community**

The Synagogue will endeavour to notify the community of this policy by all available means – through the TELL, and a copy of this policy will be available on the synagogue website.

In the event that the Kashrut Policy of the campus is broken, the Senior Rabbi, or one of his colleagues, will be responsible for rectifying the matter. In the event that a congregant or staff member brings an item to the synagogue deemed to be unsuitable for use on the campus, the congregant will be addressed respectfully, and informed of the synagogue’s Kashrut Policy. Such items will be removed from the campus immediately.