

A Practical Guide to Cleaning Out the Leaven for Chag HaMatzot

by Esther Geoffrey

The three main leavening agents are:

(see comments on baking soda, baking powder and de-activated yeast below)

Yeast

Baking Soda (Sodium Bicarbonate)

Baking Powder

Other names of leavening agents:

ammonium carbonate
ammonium bicarbonate
baker's ammonia
baking ammonia
bicarbonate of ammonia
bicarbonate of soda
bicarb
bread soda
carbonate of ammonia
hartshorn (hartzhorn, salt of hartshorn)
hirschhornsalz (hjorthornssalt)
potassium carbonate
potassium bicarbonate
potash (pottasche, pottasch)
powdered baking ammonia
saleratus
triebsalz

Source: "The Cook's Thesaurus" <http://www.foodsubs.com/Leaven.html>

Common household items, which may contain leavening agents (check the labels):

"Kosher for Passover" mixes (for cakes, muffins, etc.)
Seasoning mixes
Pre-packaged foods (including vegetarian meat substitutes)
Health food products (brewer's yeast or nutritional yeast)
Alcoholic beverages (beers, wines) unless they say "Kosher for Passover"
Pet foods (and some cat litters)
Toothpaste
Some bath products
Deodorizers (for shoes, carpets, feminine products, etc.)
Some laundry and dishwasher detergents
Anything made by "Arm and Hammer"

Common places where leaven may be found around the home

Under the refrigerator/stove
Toaster/Toaster Oven
Microwave
Crumbs in the refrigerator/freezer
Spills/crumbs in cabinets/drawers
Garbage cans
Under couches and cushions
Car
Anywhere food may have been eaten or taken
Carpet (under dining room table)

The following excerpts are for further study. Perfect Word does not necessarily agree with the following statements or endorse their sources.

Comments about “Deactivated Yeast”

Sources: <http://www.foodsubs.com/LeavenYeast.html>

You should never eat raw active yeast, since it will continue to grow in your intestine and rob your body of valuable nutrients. However, once deactivated through pasteurization, yeast is a good source of nutrients. Deactivated yeast is stripped of all its fermenting power. Brewer's yeast and nutritional yeast, for example, are sold as nutritional supplements, and Australians are fond of yeast extracts--like Vegemite, Marmite, and Promite--which they spread like peanut butter on bread. Autolyzed yeast extract would also fall into this category, although it is taken a step further by the actual breaking down of the cells.

Comments about “Autolyzed Yeast Extract”

Source: *Cornell University, Division of Nutritional Science*

Autolyzed yeast and autolyzed yeast extract are products made from yeast cells which are allowed to die and break up, a process called autolysis. The remains of the cells contain small amounts of protein, fats, vitamins and minerals, but most importantly for the prepared food industry, autolyzed yeast and its extract (a more highly concentrated form of the yeast) contain monosodium glutamate, also known as MSG.

Glutamate is an amino acid which is a normal component of the proteins in all animals and plants. Usually in yeast (and in other animals and plants) glutamate is found inside cells, and much of it tightly bound to the proteins of which it is a part. When the yeast proteins are broken down by autolysis to form autolyzed yeast, these release "free" glutamate, so that the autolyzed yeast products have high concentrations of "free" glutamate.

"Free" glutamate is a flavor enhancer. It is added to manufactured foods in the form of autolyzed yeast to increase the tastiness of foods. By itself this glutamate has relatively little taste. However when added to foods it enhances flavors, and particularly the savory flavors found in food items such as prepared meats and potato chips (to name just a couple of the hundreds of foods containing glutamate as an additive). This is why manufacturers like to add autolyzed yeast or yeast extract, or other sources of free glutamate, to their products.

Comments about Baking Powder and Baking Soda

Source: *A Treasury of Jewish Holiday Baking*

<http://www.koshercooking.com/resource/kosher.html>

Passover baking powder and Passover Baking Soda? My grandmothers would have had kittens! It seems to fly in the face of what Passover symbolizes. Technically, however, it is leavened goods that are the result of fermentation (as with yeast baking) that are forbidden on Passover. If you are not sure, ask a rabbi - there are many written debates on whether or not "Passover baking powder and baking soda" should be permitted. Baking soda, and baking powder are chemical leaveners so they are not in the regular category of "leaven" goods, if one is going to abide by technicalities. Also, Passover baking powder is made without cornstarch, a carrier in baking powder products, so there is no dispute there. HOWEVER..... my personal feeling is that I can appreciate whipped egg whites to aerate my Passover cakes but somehow once baking soda and baking powder, even okay-for- Passover ones, are introduced, the spirit of the holiday is compromised (never mind that all the big kosher packaged goods companies include these leaveners in their cookies and cakes - just check the ingredient list). Passover cakes that use these products, even though they have no regular flour, approach regular baking, at least in style. Incidentally, if you have always wondered why these packaged items "taste almost normal" it is because they are using these leaveners. In any case, I have not included these them.

Additional Comments about Baking Powder and Baking Soda

Source: www.jewishcuisine.com/passover.htm

Hametz (pronounced with a guttural "h") is leaven or fermented dough, and it is what Jews are commanded not to eat (or even own) during Passover. This divine commandment is clearly stated in Chapters 12 and 13 of the Book of Exodus. The great rabbis determined that hametz is created when cold water and flour ground from the grains wheat, oats, rye, barley, or spelt (related to wheat) have been combined into a raw dough for longer than 18 minutes. Fermentation or "leavening" is said to take place after that time....

Another source of confusion arises from ***baking soda and baking powder***. While these chemicals may cause baked good to "rise," they are obviously not hametz. Baking soda is a pure chemical (sodium bicarbonate), and is permitted on Passover just like sugar or salt. Baking powder differs from baking soda in that it contains two chemicals, and may be restricted on Passover only because it often also contains cornstarch. In fact, Pesach baking powder is usually available in kosher food stores at this time of year. Many commercial bakeries use both products in their kosher-for-Passover packaged baked goods. Even though baking soda and powder are permitted, many cooks avoid these chemical raising agents in order to make the holiday of Pesach feel different from the rest of the year, and prefer to rely on beaten egg whites to lighten desserts and other dishes.

Perfect Word Suggestions

We suggest that you make every effort to remove leaven and leavening agents from your home. We are not only commanded not to eat leaven, but to not even be seen with it anywhere in our territory. While each family may be at different levels of observance, as we all go through our personal processes of entering fully into this season, we need to be aware that some people in the community may feel it is particularly important to be in a 100% leaven-free environment during the week of Matzah. If you invite anyone to your home during this week, please be honest with them before-hand as to your level of observance, using the above information as a point of reference. While one may not condemn another for their level of observance, we also need to not purposely or inadvertently cause someone to violate their own conscience by allowing them to enter into an environment which they would not consider to be leaven-free. We all need to remember that we are each at different stages of this process and can feel free to be honest with one another without feelings of condemnation or non-acceptance.