



VEGETABLE CHECKING GUIDE

Published by
 KOSHER CERTIFICATION



VEGETABLE CHECKING GUIDE

This guide will enable you, the kosher consumer, to learn the most thorough methods of cleaning and checking vegetables for insect infestation. These methods were originally developed for the mashgichim in our restaurants, who wash and check large amounts of produce without compromising our *Torah* standards. Due to popular demand, we have made these guidelines available to you - the kosher consumer.



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Dear Consumer,

As you all know, doctors and Jewish mothers alike are always encouraging us to “eat your vegetables!” But your Jewish mother would be horrified if she knew you were also eating insects...

Thanks to hours of research and consultations with *Rabbonim* and experts in the field of vegetable infestation, the Ⓚ is proud to announce that you can now fulfill the doctor’s orders and make your Jewish mother happy at the same time! With this handy Vegetable Checking Guide, you can rest assured that your vegetables will be insect free and perfectly kosher.

The instructions in this guide will enable you, the kosher consumer, to check all of your produce and ensure that it is free of insects. When you serve your famous salad to your *Shabbos* guests, you will be confident that you are serving a perfectly kosher salad.

I would like to extend a special thanks to *HaRav* Usher Anshel Eckstein, *Dayan* of the *Belzer Kehilla* of Brooklyn and *Kashrus* Administrator of the *Belzer Hashgocha*, for his diligent review and endorsement of our procedures. I would also like to thank our Restaruant Rabbinic Coordinators, Rabbi Yitzchak Gornish and Rabbi Naftali Marrus, who have perfected our vegetable checking techniques and ensure that Ⓚ restaurants and caterers check all produce scrupulously. Finally, I would like to thank Sarah Belman and Dina Fraenkel for all of the time and effort that they put into compiling the guide and making it “user-friendly.”

In the merit of your efforts to guard the *kashrus* of your home, may we be rewarded with all of *Hashem’s* material and spiritual blessings.

Tizku L’Mitzvos,

Rabbi Chaim Fogelman
Rabbinic Coordinator

Introduction

According to the laws of *kashrus*, all fruits and vegetables are inherently kosher, but bugs (*tolai'im*) are absolutely forbidden. Eating an insect violates more *Torah* prohibitions than eating ham. Eating ham violates one *Torah* prohibition and eating an insect violates seven *Torah* prohibitions. According to the United States Food and Drug Association (FDA), asparagus is only considered infested if 10% or more of the stalks are infested with 6 or more insects. Mushrooms, according to the FDA, are only considered infested if there are 20 or more maggots per 100 grams of mushrooms. In addition, the US government allows averages of up to 60 insects per 100 grams in frozen broccoli, and up to 50 insects per 100 grams of frozen spinach. According to Jewish Law, the presence of EVEN 1 INSECT makes a fruit or vegetable unfit for consumption. In order to ensure that fruits and vegetables are fit for consumption, they must be cleaned and checked thoroughly, and any insects found must be removed.

Bagged fresh salads pose a unique set of problems. Many consumers assume that the vegetables are washed satisfactorily and free of bugs, based on the Quality Control standards of the company. It is not possible every bag of salad to be insect-free, because farmers have not been consistently able to grow bug-free produce. Organic produce is even more likely to be infested, since it was grown without the use of chemical insecticides. In addition, the company's washing system is not foolproof. The effectiveness of the washing system is dependent on the level of infestation present in the crop. Some insects are very difficult to remove, especially aphids and thrips, which cling to vegetable surfaces and have their legs embedded in the leaves.

Many people assume that the leniency of "*Botul b'shishim*" can be applied to insects in vegetables and salads. "*Botul b'shishim*" says that if the non-kosher ingredient is less than 1/60 of the total food volume, or the flavor of the non-kosher ingredient is not noticeable, the small amount of non-kosher food becomes nullified. There are two reasons why "*Botul b'shishim*" cannot apply to insects:

- 1 When the non-kosher food is a complete entity, it becomes distinguished and cannot be nullified.
- 2 When the small amount of non-kosher food is noticeable, it cannot be considered nullified.

Things You Will Need

- Two basins
- Fresh running water (a sink)
- Veggie Wash
- Strong fluorescent light or light table
- Vegetable brush
- Knife
- 10x magnifying glass (suggested).

What Do the Insects Look Like?

As seen through proper magnification.



WALNUT APHID

found on asparagus stalks



ASPARAGUS BEETLE

found on asparagus stalks and leaves



THRIPS

found on leafy vegetables



SEEDCORN MAGGOT

found in beans



VEGETABLE LEAFMINER

found on spinach leaves



CABBAGE MAGGOT

found on cabbage leaves

How to prepare Veggie Wash and water mixture:

For vegetables where the detailed instructions require Veggie Wash.

Vegetables should be soaked in **water mixed with Veggie Wash**.

- a. Fill a basin with warm water. Put in the minimum amount of Veggie Wash or liquid soap needed to make water slippery. The water does not need to be foamy, but the Veggie Wash/soap and water must be mixed well. Dilute the Veggie Wash or soap in a cup of warm water before adding it to the basin.
- b. To test the water, take a very greasy knife and rinse it under hot running water. If the knife does not become clean, take a sample from the soapy water to finish cleaning the knife. If the knife gets cleaned, there is enough Veggie Wash/soap in the water. If it does not get clean, add more Veggie Wash/soap to the water.
- c. If the vegetables are dirty, it is advisable to rinse them before immersing in the water mixture.
- d. Vegetables must be put into the water whole. **Do not overload the basin. Vegetables should not overlap.**

Veggie Wash

Veggie Wash can be purchased at www.citrusmagic.com

Use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of Veggie Wash per 1 gallon of water.

General Instructions for Checking Water

In the water, you might find pieces of the vegetable you are checking, dirt, or small *tolai'im* (bugs). If you see well (20/20) and can see the bugs with your eyes, they are not permitted. If you cannot see well, you cannot check for bugs. The problem arises when you see something in the water, but you cannot tell what it is. **Only those with extensive experience checking vegetables may use this option.**

- 1 Check each vegetable one-by-one, on both sides (on a light box, or through a fluorescent light) to make sure they are clean.
- 2 Rinse them in a basin of fresh water, swishing vigorously for 2 minutes. If necessary, repeat this process until the water is completely clear.
- 3 Let all water pass through a coffee filter. Place the filter on a white surface and inspect the entire filter with a 10x magnifying glass. If you find complete bugs, repeat the process. If, after the 3rd time, you still find bugs, do not use the vegetable.

Vegetables and Herbs that Require Individual Checking

Vegetables should be checked one-by-one, on both sides (on a light box, or through a fluorescent light), opening all folds.

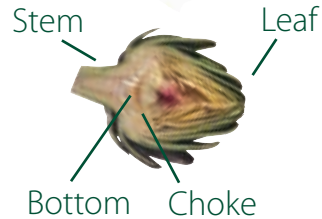
Vegetables and Herbs that Require Checking

Artichokes	12
Asparagus	12
Basil/Mint	13
Beans/Barley	14
Blueberries	14
Bok Choy	15
Broccoli	15
Cabbage	16
Cauliflower	17
Celery	18
Dill	18
Dried Fruits, Raisins, Apricots, Etc	19
Endive	20
Fennel	21
Kale	21
Leeks	22
Lettuce	23
Mesculun	24
Mushrooms	25
Parsley (Flat Leaf)/Cilantro	26
Radicchio	27
Raspberries	27
Scallions	28
Spices	29
Spinach	30
Sprouts	31
Strawberries	31
Other	32–33



Artichokes

- 1 Only artichoke bottoms may be used. Trim the leaves, so that only the bottom remains.
- 2 Rinse under a strong stream of water.
- 3 Scrape out the choke (fuzzy layer on top of the artichoke bottom) with a teaspoon until the small leaves in the middle are removed completely. This should be done even if the artichokes come with a kosher symbol.
- 4 Canned artichokes (even with a kosher symbol) should be cleaned the same way.



Asparagus

Green Asparagus:

- 1 Cut off 1 inch from bottom. Check for a cavity running lengthwise through the stalk. If you find a cavity, remove the bottom of the asparagus until there is no cavity. Peel off brads (triangle-shaped leaves) completely.
- 2 Remove and discard head. If required, it should also be peeled off completely.
- 3 Wash with soap and rinse under a strong stream of water.



White Asparagus:

Rinse thoroughly in water before using.

Frozen and Canned Asparagus:

Should be avoided entirely.



Basil/Mint (Fresh)

- 1** Rinse under a strong stream of water. In the case of basil, remove the roots first.
- 2** Soak in water with Veggie Wash for 2 minutes, and then rub each leaf between your fingers. Empty basin by removing basil/mint with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water.
- 3** Rinse each leaf under a strong stream of water and put basil/mint in a clean basin of fresh water. Swish the water for at least 2 minutes. Repeat this step until there is no foam on the surface of the water. Empty basin by removing basil/mint with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water. Place on a clean surface.
- 4** Check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.



Beans/Barley

Check that the expiration date has not passed

- 1 Check that the expiration date has not passed.
- 2 Submerge in water for 10-15 minutes.
- 3 Check a sample by placing on a contrasting colored surface and check for bugs.
- 4 Agitate with hands to separate foreign matter from beans.
- 5 Remove any wormy beans that float to the top of water.

Blueberries

Wild Blueberries:

Open and inspect each berry for maggots *or*

Sprinkle sugar on berries and refrigerate for a few hours. If there is a maggot infestation, they will come up.

Cultivated Blueberries:

Place in a strainer or colander and wash thoroughly under a stream of running water.





Bok Choy

- 1 Separate leaves. Open all folds and creases.
- 2 After soaking in water with Veggie Wash for 1-3 minutes, rub each leaf between your fingers. Repeat until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 3 Rinse each piece under a strong stream of water. Check each piece, one-by-one, on both sides (on a light box or through a fluorescent light); opening all folds to make sure they are clean.

Broccoli

Frozen Broccoli

Needs an acceptable kosher symbol (Bodek, Eden and Golden Glow are acceptable with a kosher symbol on the box).

Fresh Broccoli

Only Stems May Be Used.

Wash thoroughly. No further checking is necessary.





Cabbage (Green & Purple)

- 1** Clean the cabbage by removing all dirt and unclean layers, especially the leaves that are not completely attached.
- 2** Cut the cabbage in quarters. Remove the bottom part of the cabbage (that holds the leaves together). With your thumb, shuffle through the leaves on the newly exposed area, making sure they are clean and free of bugs.
- 3** Separate all leaves and soak in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, rub each leaf between your fingers. Empty basin by removing cabbage with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water.
- 4** Rinse each leaf, on both sides, under a strong stream of water, opening all folds. Put the leaves in a clean basin of fresh water.
- 5** Swish the leaves vigorously for 2 minutes. If foam forms on the surface, repeat step 4 and 5 until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 6** Check three samples to make sure they are clean, on both sides, against a light.

Cabbage

(For Stuffed Cabbage)

- 1 Freeze cabbage heads for 48 hours.
- 2 Allow cabbage to defrost.
- 3 Wash both sides of each leaf under a strong stream of running water, ensuring that water reaches all folds and crevices of the cabbage leaves.

Cauliflower

Frozen Cauliflower

Needs an acceptable kosher symbol.

Fresh Cauliflower:

MAY NOT BE USED.



Celery

- 1 Remove leaves by cutting off area where stem branches out. Cut off all spoiled areas, and/or holes.
- 2 Put in a clean basin, letting water run over the celery for a few minutes.
- 3 Rub each stalk between your fingers to remove insects.
- 4 Rinse each piece under a strong stream of water, using a food brush or a clean towel to remove any debris from the surface of the stalk.
- 5 Check for damage on the stalk, which may indicate the presence of a leaf miner. If a worm trail or brown spots are spotted:
 - a. Slit open the celery stalk
 - b. Remove worm and entire leaf miner trail
 - c. Wash thoroughly



Dill

Fresh

Use only green house





Dried Fruits

Raisins, Apricots, Etc.

- 1 Remove a few samples from each box and submerge in a basin of water.
- 2 Inspect the water for infestation. If the water is clean, you may use the box.
- 3 If the box stays open for a period of time, you will have to repeat Steps 1 & 2.
- 4 Imported dried apricots must be individually inspected.



Endive

- 1 Cut off bottoms. If outside leaves are not clean, remove them. If top is spoiled, remove it. Check first 3 leaves from both sides. If they are clean, separate the leaves.
- 2 Put in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes, and then swish vigorously for 2 minutes. Empty basin by removing endives with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water. Put endives in a clean basin of fresh water.
- 3 Rinse each leaf, on both sides, under a strong stream of water. Put in a clean basin of fresh water, swishing for at least 2 minutes. Repeat this step until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 4 Remove the endives and place on a clean surface. Check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.



— Bottom

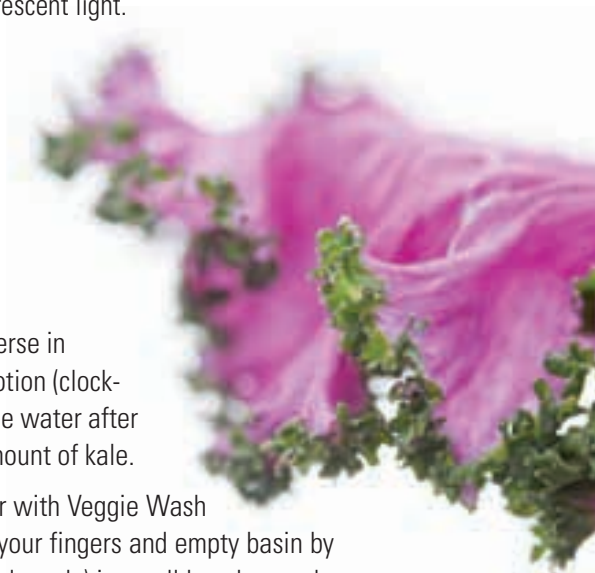
Fennel

- 1 Cut off top and bottom and remove all leaves. Separate all layers.
- 2 Put in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes, and then swish vigorously for 2 minutes. Empty basin by removing fennel with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water. Put fennel in a clean basin of fresh water.
- 3 Rinse each leaf, on both sides, under a strong stream of water. Put in a clean basin of fresh water, swishing for at least 2 minutes. Repeat this step until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 4 Remove the fennel and place on a clean surface. Check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.



Kale

- 1 While the kale head is still whole, immerse in water and swish around in a circular motion (clockwise and counterclockwise). Change the water after every few heads when doing a large amount of kale.
- 2 Cut leaves from stem and soak in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes. Rub each leaf between your fingers and empty basin by removing kale with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water. Put kale in a clean basin of fresh water.
- 3 Rinse leaves under a strong stream of water. Put kale in a clean basin of fresh water and swish vigorously for at least 2 minutes. Repeat this step until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 4 Check at least 3 sample pieces (on both sides) against a light. If doing two types of kale together, check 3 pieces of each type.





Leeks

- 1 Cut off roots. If some layers are not clean, or loose, peel off before washing.
- 2 Cut lengthwise, making sure there are no closed layers, especially at the junctions.
- 3 Separate all layers, rinse under a strong stream of water, and soak in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes. Swish vigorously for 2 minutes and empty basin by removing leeks in small bunches, with both hands, holding loosely.
- 4 Put leeks in a clean basin of fresh water. Rinse each leek under a strong stream of water, brush with a vegetable brush and place in a clean basin of fresh water. Swish vigorously for 2 minutes. Repeat Step 4 until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 5 Check 3 sample leeks. Special care is needed with the junction areas, where insects are most often found.



Root



Layer



Lettuce

Please do not order any salad mixes containing FRIZEE. If found, remove the frizee, it must be checked the same way as lettuce. The following types of lettuce must be checked according to the instructions below: ARUGULA, BOSTON LETTUCE, CHICORY, ESCAROLE, GREEN LEAF, ICEBERG, ROMAINE, RED LEAF.

- 1** Separate leaves from the head, opening all folds and creases. Soak the lettuce in water with Veggie Wash for five minutes, and then rub each leaf between your fingers. Empty basin by removing lettuce with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water.
- 2** Put lettuce in a clean basin of fresh water. Swish vigorously. Repeat this step until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 3** Rinse each piece of lettuce, one-by-one, under a strong stream of water.
- 4** Check one-by-one (on both sides) against a fluorescent light. A light box is recommended for this procedure.



Mesclun

Without FRIZEE. If frizee is found, remove completely and check one-by-one.

- 1** Soak in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes, and then rub each leaf between your fingers. Empty basin by removing mescaline with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water.
- 2** Immerse mescaline in a clean basin of fresh water, agitating the mescaline in a circular motion (clockwise and counterclockwise). Change the water after every few heads when doing a large amount of mescaline.
- 3** Rinse each leaf under a strong stream of water and put mescaline in a clean basin of fresh water. Swish the water for at least 2 minutes. Repeat this step until there is no foam on the surface of the water. Empty basin by removing mescaline with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water. Place on a clean surface.
- 4** Inspect the water for infestation, then check at least 3 samples of each type of mescaline (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.
- 5** If the quality of mescaline is not good (the water is green), you must check the water using the coffee filter and magnifying glass method (explained on page 1). Each piece must be checked individually.



Mushrooms



Regular

- 1 Remove any spoiled mushrooms.
- 2 Wash mushrooms (in small quantities) under a strong stream of water before cutting.
- 3 If fresh, inspect at least 3 samples. If mushrooms have started to turn brown, inspect more than 3 samples.



Portobello

- 1 Separate stem from top.
- 2 Scrape brown area under top with a spoon.
- 3 Wash, one-by-one, under a strong stream of water, while rubbing each surface.



Parsley (Italian Flat Leaf ONLY)

Cilantro

- 1** While still in a bunch, immerse the parsley/cilantro in water and wish around in a circular motion (clockwise and counterclockwise). Change the water after every few heads when using large amounts.
- 2** Usually, only the parsley/cilantro leaves are needed. In that case, cut them from the stems before continuing with Step 3. Make sure to ask the chef/owner if they want to use the stems, too. In that case, remove the rubber band and wash stems.
- 3** Put in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes, and then rub each leaf between your fingers. Empty basin by removing parsley/cilantro with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water. Put parsley/cilantro in a clean basin of fresh water.
- 4** Rinse each leaf, on both sides, under a strong stream of water. Put in a clean basin of fresh water, swishing for at least 2 minutes. Repeat this step until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 5** Remove the parsley/cilantro and place on a clean surface. Check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.

Radicchio



- 1 Separate the leaves and soak in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes. Rub each leaf between your fingers, and then empty the basin by removing the radicchio with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water.
- 2 Rinse each piece under a strong stream of water and put radicchio in a clean basin of fresh water and swish vigorously for 2 minutes. Repeat this step until there is no foam on the surface of the water. Place radicchio on a clean surface.
- 3 Check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.



Raspberries

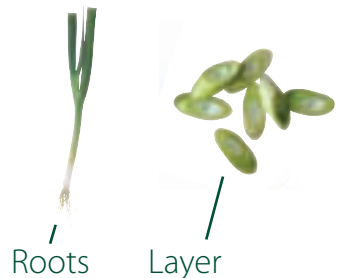
Frozen or Fresh – May only be used to make raspberry sauce

- 1 Submerge in ice water.
- 2 After removing the raspberries, filter water through a coffee filter and check with a magnifying glass.
- 3 Check 3 raspberries individually.
- 4 If water is free from bugs, the raspberries may be blended for sauce. Make sure no solids remain after blending.



Scallions

- 1 Cut off roots and discard. If any layers are not clean, loose, or spoiled, peel off before washing. Check for lighter spots or tunnels on the surface of the dark green stalks. If found, remove the stalk (the spots might be the beginning of a tunnel made by the bug).
- 2 Slice lengthwise from the top to the bottom of the bulb. Separate all layers and cut open all junction areas.
- 3 Soak for only 3 minutes in water with Veggie Wash (soaking longer or adding extra Veggie Wash will ruin the scallions) and then move them to a clean basin of fresh water.
- 4 Swish scallions under the water and rinse each piece under a strong stream of water, rubbing with 2 fingers (one on top, one on bottom), making sure to cover all surfaces.
- 5 Put scallions in a clean basin of fresh water and swish vigorously. Repeat Steps 4 & 5 until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 6 Check the water for infestation and check 3 sample pieces, on both sides, against a fluorescent light.





Spices

All spices, even with a *hechsher*, must be checked.

- 1 Take a sample, place it on a contrasting colored surface, and check for bugs. Example: Sesame seeds on a black napkin/surface. Poppy seeds on a white napkin.



Spinach

Baby Spinach (pre-washed)

- 1** Separate leaves. Put in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes, and then rub each leaf between your fingers. Empty basin by removing spinach with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water. Put spinach in a clean basin of fresh water.
- 2** Rinse each leaf, on both sides, under a strong stream of water. Put in a clean basin of fresh water, swishing for at least 2 minutes. Repeat this step until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- 3** Remove the spinach and place on a clean surface. Check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.

Other types of spinach

- 1** Follow Steps A and B above. Check each individual leaf, one-by-one.
- 2** Cut off stems that have an open cavity running through the stem. Cut off all areas that look spoiled or eaten.

Sprouts

- 1 Wash with water, it will usually be clean.
- 2 Check at least 3 of the brown seeds for bugs. If they are clean, then it is ready to use.



Strawberries

Please note: Strawberries with holes should not be used!

- 1 Cut off green stems.
- 2 Wash, soak and rub each strawberry in soap or veggie wash solution for 3 minutes. (Maximum 25 strawberries at a time).
- 3 Dump out the water, rinse the strawberries.
- 4 Wash, soak and rub the strawberries once more for 3 minutes.
- 5 Rinse the strawberries.
- 6 Check 3 samples.



Other

Peppers, zucchini, squash, cucumbers, eggplant, and tomatoes need to be rinsed before using.



Onions

Cut off top and bottom of onion. Check that the layers are firm. If there is space between the layers, check each layer individually. A "twin" onion must be separated and carefully inspected. If onions are to remain over night, pour salt or oil over them.



Peppers

Remove any spoiled parts and check for worms.



Sauerkraut

May only be used with an acceptable kosher symbol.



Sweet Peas

Wash all peas, and check 3 from each bag.

Not Recommended



Brussels Sprouts



Watercress



Blackberries/Raspberries



Curly Parsley



Kosher Without Compromise



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