

Ohio University Hillel

How To Seder

So you've decided to hold a Passover seder! It can be a little overwhelming to dive into planning, particularly if it's your first time. Use this sheet as a guide for some of the basics.

Things you'll need:

- **Seder Plate:** This plate has places for each of the symbolic foods we eat on Passover. If you don't have a dedicated seder plate, that's ok! Just grab a nice serving plate and put your foods on that.
- **Haggadah:** This booklet contains the actual *seder*, that is, the order of the ritual meal. If you don't have one, don't worry, OU has you covered! The haggadah contains descriptions of the symbolism of each of the foods, so we won't spoil that here.
- **Matzah:** Perhaps the most important food we eat on Passover. Get a box of matzah and put an odd number of pieces on it and set it near the seder plate (odd numbered because you need a "middle" piece).
- **Bitter Herbs (Maror and Chazeret):** Included on the seder plate. Generally people use horseradish as one bitter herb (maror) and lettuce as a second (chazeret).
- **Egg (Beitzah):** Included on the seder plate. People generally use a hardboiled egg.
- **Charoset:** Included on the seder plate. This is usually a mixture of nuts, apples, and a little wine. See the OU Haggadah for a recipe.
- **Shank bone (Zeroa):** Included on the seder plate. Usually a lamb shank, vegetarians often use a beet or a sweet potato. The justification for the beet comes from the Talmud (Bavli Pesachim 114b) and the sweet potato because it replaces the "sacrificial lamb" with a "sacrificial yam!"
- **Karpas (literally: celery):** Included on the seder plate. People often use either celery or parsley.
- **A bowl of salt water:** Place this near the seder plate. The karpas will be dipped into the salt water during the seder.
- **A bowl of fresh water and towel:** Place this somewhere on the table. This bowl is used for ritual and symbolic handwashing. You may also want a towel handy.
- **Wine or grape juice:** At least enough for everyone to enjoy four cups. Traditionally, this would call for four *full* cups of wine, but feel free to fill as little or as much as you are comfortable.
- **An empty cup:** This is filled with wine and reserved for the prophet Elijah. If possible, this cup should be decorative or special in some way to honor Elijah.
- **A Festive Meal:** Part of the obligation of Passover is to enjoy a festive meal. The OU Haggadah contains some suggested recipes that are Kosher for Passover.

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Some additional (optional) inclusions that we use at OU Hillel:

- **An orange:** The orange is a modern addition to the seder plate that holds special symbolism both for feminists and for the LGBTQ+ community
- **An artichoke:** The artichoke is a modern addition to the seder plate that holds special symbolism for interfaith and intermarried families.
- **A second empty cup:** This cup is filled with water and reserved for the prophetess Miriam.

Setting the table:

- The Passover Seder is a festive, ritual, meal. Start by setting your table however you might plan on a formal dinner
- Make sure that people can have access to the following items. In some cases, it may be practical to have more than one of a particular item on the table:
 - Matzah: only the leader needs to access the odd numbered stack of matzah mentioned above, but everyone will need to eat matzah during the seder.
 - Seder plate: There should be one main seder plate that is easily accessible to whomever is leading the seder.
 - Pro-tip: everyone will need to eat things from the seder plate. It is perfectly acceptable, and even recommended, that everyone has a “mini” seder plate with small amounts of all of the items
 - Bowls of saltwater and freshwater: don't get them confused!