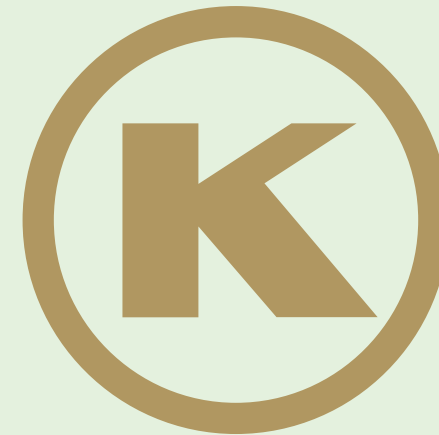




VEGETABLE CHECKING GUIDE



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 OK 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 restaurant Rabbinic Coordinator, Rabbi Naftali Marrus, who has perfected our vegetable checking techniques and ensures that OK restaurants and caterers check all produce scrupulously. In addition, I would like to thank Rabbi Yossef Kirshenberg for his valuable input.

Finally, I would like to thank Dina Orron for all of the time and effort that she put into compiling the guide and making it “user-friendly.”

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

Tizku L'Mitzvos,

Rabbi Chaim Fogelman
Rabbinic Coordinator

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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 while eating an insect violates seven Torah prohibitions.

According to the United States Food and Drug Administration (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 of 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 that are found must be removed.

Bagged fresh salads pose a unique set of problems. Many consumers assume that the vegetables are washed satisfactorily and are free of bugs, based on the Quality Control standards of the company. It is not possible for 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 distinguishable and cannot be nullified.
2. When the small amount of non-kosher food is noticeable, it cannot be considered nullified.

Things You Will Need

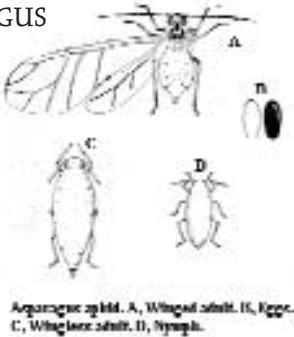
- Two basins
- Fresh running water (a sink)
- Veggie Wash
- Strong fluorescent light or light table
- Vegetable brush
- Knife
- 10x magnifying glass (suggested).

What Do the Insects Look Like?

As seen through proper magnification.

ASPARAGUS APHID

*found on
asparagus
stalks.*



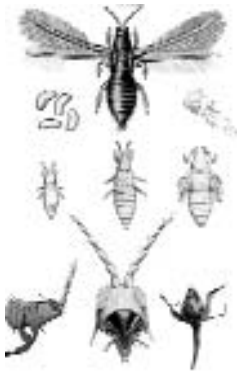
ASPARAGUS BEETLE

*found on
asparagus
stalks and
leaves.*



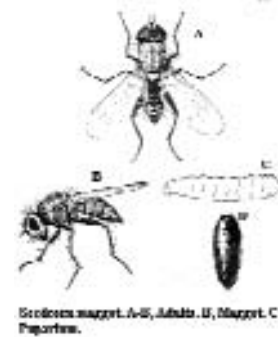
THRIPS

*often found on
leafy vegetables.*



SEEDCORN MAGGOT

*found in
beans.*



SPINACH LEAFMINER

*found on
spinach leaves.*



How to Check Basin of Water for Bugs

In the water, you might find pieces of the vegetable you are checking, dirt, or small *tolaim* (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. In that case, there are 3 options.

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

(as indicated in guide)

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

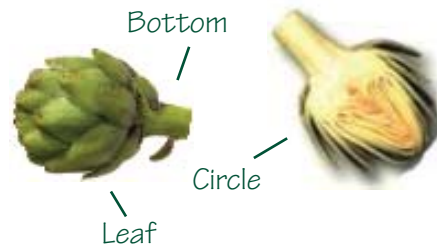
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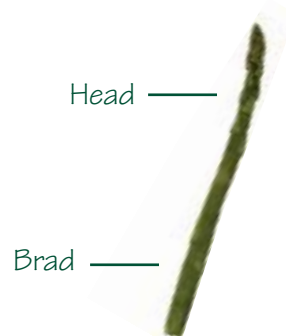
Artichokes

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 the surface of the circle 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 checked the same way.



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 completely.
3. Wash with Veggie Wash and rinse under a strong stream of water.



Basil/Mint (Fresh)

1. In the case of basil, remove the roots first. Rinse under a strong stream of water.
2. Soak in water with Veggie Wash for 5 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. Inspect the water for infestation, then check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.



Beans/Barley

1. Submerge in water.
2. Check a sample by placing on a contrasting colored surface and check for bugs.



Blueberries

1. Check the top cavity of 3 sample berries from every box. If samples are not clean, check each blueberry, one-by-one, or do not use.



Bok Choy

1. Separate leaves. Open all folds and creases.
2. After soaking in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes, rub each leaf between your fingers.
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

1. Frozen Broccoli – needs an acceptable kosher symbol.
2. Fresh Broccoli (Preferably should NOT be used.) – Please note: If the florets are very compact and impossible to check, the broccoli cannot be used.
 - a. Trim stems until smooth. Break apart florets. The diameter should not be larger than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. Check if smaller stems are smooth. Cut each floret in half, lengthwise.
 - b. Soak florets in hot water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes (to open up floret) and agitate water vigorously for at least 2 minutes. Empty basin by removing broccoli with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them vigorously under the water. Put them in a clean basin with fresh water.
 - c. Rinse each floret under a strong stream of water, then put in a clean basin with fresh water. Swish the broccoli for at least 2 minutes; remove as in Step B. This should be done until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
 - d. Check the water for infestation. If it is infested, do not use. If the water looks clean, check all surfaces. Start by checking florets from the top, as if checking hair for lice (with your fingertips), separating the leaves. Check visually from all sides, including the stems and between the small stems on the florets. Make sure all surfaces were checked.
 - e. Stem: Trim all surfaces so they are smooth. Check that there are no bugs on the stem. Clean with a food brush under a strong stream of water.
 - f. If you are not sure that every surface of the broccoli was checked, do not use.



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 5 and 6 until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
6. Check three samples on both sides, against a light, [to make sure they are clean].



Cauliflower

1. Frozen Cauliflower – needs an acceptable kosher symbol.
2. Fresh Cauliflower
 - a. Remove all leaves.
 - b. Trim stem until smooth, removing all surfaces that look brown, until the natural white color is seen.
 - c. Break apart florets. Soak florets in hot water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes (to open up florets), and then swish vigorously for 2 minutes. Empty basin by removing cauliflower with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them vigorously under the water. Put florets in a clean basin of fresh water.
 - d. Rinse each floret under a strong stream of water, then put in a clean basin of fresh water. Swish the cauliflower in the water for 2 minutes. Remove as in Step C. Repeat this process until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
 - e. Check the water for infestation. If not infested, proceed to the next step.
 - f. Cut the stem lengthwise, very thin, so that you can see through the floret when held up to a light. If the cauliflower is too wide, you will not be able to see through.
 - g. Hold each piece, one-by-one, up to the light so that you can see through the cauliflower (a light box is recommended). If you see anything, remove it. All leftovers may be ground very small (the size of flour grains), or cut thin enough to put on the light box and check one-by-one).

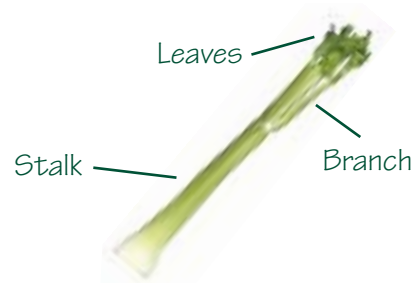
Floret





Celery

1. Remove leaves by cutting off area where stalk 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 each piece of celery, on both sides, for bugs.



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

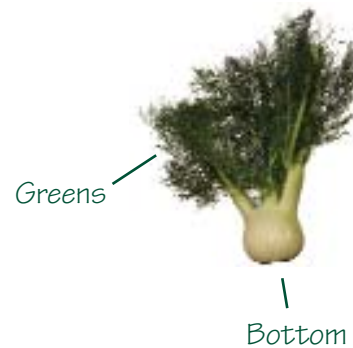
1. Cut off bottoms. If outside leaves are not clean, remove them. If top is spoiled, remove it. Check first 3 leaves from both sides. If they are clean, separate the leaves.
2. Put in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes, and after 5 minutes, rub each leaf between your fingers. Empty basin by removing 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 the water for infestation, then check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.





Fennel

1. Cut off top and bottom and remove all greens. Separate all layers.
2. Put in water with Veggie Wash for 5 minutes, and after 5 minutes, rub each leaf between your fingers. 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 the water for infestation, then 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. Inspect the water for infestation and 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. Rub each leaf between your fingers 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 water for infestation and check 3 sample leeks. Special care is needed with the junction areas, where insects are most often found.



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.



Mesculun

Mesculun Mix 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 mesculun with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water.
2. Immerse mesculun in a clean basin of fresh water, agitating the mesculun in a circular motion (clockwise and counterclockwise). Change the water after every few heads when doing a large amount of mesculun.
3. Rinse each leaf under a strong stream of water and put mesculun 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 mesculun 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 mesculun (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.
5. If the quality of mesculun is not good (the water is green), you must check the water using the coffee filter and magnifying glass method (explained on page 8). 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 gently agitate the water to remove excess dirt. 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.
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 the water for infestation, then 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. Inspect the water for infestation and 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.



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. 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. 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

1. Baby Spinach (pre-washed)

- 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.
- 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.
- Remove the spinach and place on a clean surface. Check the water for infestation, then check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.

2. Other types of spinach

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



Sprouts

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



Strawberries

- Cut off leaves with part of the top of the strawberry. Do not cut off too much, or you will expose the cavity in the middle of the fruit. Cut off all areas that look spoiled or soft.
- Put all strawberries in water with Veggie Wash and rub all surfaces with your fingers. Do not soak.
- Remove the berries with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water.
- Put berries in clean basin of fresh water, under a strong stream of running water. Swish berries until there is no foam on the surface of the water.
- Check 3 sample berries.



Other

Peppers, zucchini, squash, cucumbers, eggplant, and tomatoes need to be rinsed before using. Sweet potatoes, carrots, turnips, and parsnips should be completely peeled and rinsed.



Onions

After peeling and cutting off roots, spoiled areas, and removing any leaves, the onion should be rinsed before cutting. A “twin” onion must be separated and carefully inspected. If you do not plan to use the whole onion, DO NOT cut off the root, because the onion cannot be left overnight without the root attached.



Peppers

Remove any spoiled parts and check for worms.



Sauerkraut

May only be used with an acceptable kosher symbol.



Sun-dried Tomatoes

May only be used with an acceptable kosher symbol.



Sweet Peas

Wash all peas, and check 3 from each bag.

Not to Be Used



Brussels Sprouts



Watercress



Blackberries



Curly Parsley

Restricted Use



Fresh Dill

1. While still in a bunch, immerse the dill in water and swish around in a circular motion (clockwise and counterclockwise). Change the water after every few heads when using large amounts.
2. Usually, only the dill leaves are needed. In that case, cut them from the stems before continuing with Step 3. If you want to use the stems, 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 dill with both hands (holding loosely) in small bunches and shaking them under the water. Put dill 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 dill and place on a clean surface. Check the water for infestation, then check at least 3 samples (on both sides) against a fluorescent light.
6. If you are only using the fresh dill to flavor soup, you should put it in cheesecloth, seal it, and submerge it in the soup. After cooking, remove the package and discard.



Kosher Without Compromise



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