

# Passover preparations at Lester Senior Housing

## Kashering makes Whippany kitchen clean for the holiday

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Written by

**Cara Townsend | Staff Writer**

**HANOVER** — Ele Saltz was the kashering queen of her family. The oldest of three girls, Saltz, now 86, took over the yearly Passover preparations in her home in Boro Park, Brooklyn.

She remembers the kashering process, or the process of making the kitchen kosher, as physically intensive but rewarding.

“I loved the holidays as a girl — and still do,” Saltz said. “My kid sisters would just giggle because I did so much work. No one could turn over a house for Passover like I could.”



Hanover, 04/05/12---Jeffrey Vasquez of North Arlington scrubs down the meat kitchen at the Lester Senior Housing Community in Whippany. Kosher kitchens around the world will undergo a seven hour-cleaning process known as Kashering. Kashering the kitchen is necessary in order for the food, which will be served during Passover, to be prepared and cooked.  
Bob Karp/Staff Photographer 2012. / Bob Karp/staff photo

Saltz, who came from an Orthodox home, took charge of changing over all the dishes and preparing for Passover meals — a process that takes weeks. She also accompanied her mother on shopping trips and cleaned the home.

“She would show me what you could and could not buy,” she said. “And my mother would catch me wiping down the walls. She said I didn’t have to, but I was a crazy cleaner.”

Now a resident of Lester Senior Housing in Whippany, Saltz takes part in Seder suppers held each year to mark the beginning of Passover. There employees make the same preparations for Passover that Saltz experienced growing up — but for 180 residents.

“It’s a month-long process just getting ready to change things over for Passover,” said Alex Gross, an administrator who manages the center.

The housing center operates a kosher kitchen year-round with separate kitchens for meat and dairy, but during Passover, Gross says the kitchen takes kosher to “a whole new level.”

“We have to remove all of the non-Passover items from the kitchen,” he said. “There are separate storage areas for everything. A lot of people think kosher means that the rabbi blessed the food. But it’s really about keeping meat and dairy separate and not eating something forbidden in the Old Testament like shellfish or pork.”



Yehuda Katz of Brooklyn, N.Y. prepares the kitchen of Lester Senior Housing in Whippany for Passover. In addition to its sanitary purposes, the cleansing of metal with fire symbolizes renewal and remembrance of the Jews’ Exodus from Egypt.  
Cara Townsend/STAFF PHOTO

During a seven-hour kashering process under the direction of Rabbi Avneir Katz, Yehuda Katz blow-torched metal surfaces in the kitchen. The grill was lined with burning coals and covered with tinfoil to reach a maximum heat.

“The idea is to bring the metal to a higher temperature than it’s reached before,” Gross said. “The heat symbolizes renewal. It’s about more than being sanitary — it’s a spiritual cleansing.”

Katz says the idea is also to remove the kitchen of chametz — leavened bread or pastas.

“During Passover we’re cleansing our body from all the processed foods. We are cleaned from all impurities as servants of God,” he says.

Kitchen staff pressure-washed the floors, scrubbed the walls, poured boiling water over pots and pans and extensively cleaned the oven.

Following the kashering, residents take part in two days of Passover seders.

“From Friday night until Saturday night April 14 we do not eat leavened foods,” Gross said. “It symbolizes our past — the Jews left Egypt in haste and only had 18 minutes to cook their bread.”

Passover preparations and seders gives residents like Saltz to reconnect with their past, Gross said.

“Everything we do is symbolic — the four cups of wine during the seder represent the four different languages of redemption used in Old Testament. The three matzos signify the three members of the Jewish community: priests, Levites and Israelites.”

“Recounting all this allows us to remember that we were once slaves and now we’re free,” Gross said. “During Passover we open our door, invite others in. We take care of the poor. We don’t forget our past.”

<http://www.dailyrecord.com/article/20120405/NJNEWS/304050025/Passover-preparations-Lester-Senior-Housing?odyssey=tab>