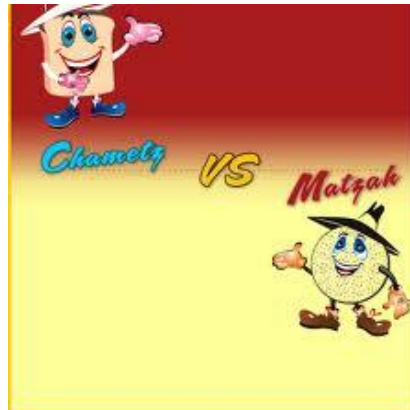


## **Chametz and Matzah- an Overview**



**Chametz** means leaven – the fermentation process which causes dough to rise. According to Jewish law, *Chametz* occurs only in products made with flour from the “Five Species of Grain”: wheat, barley, oats, spelt and rye. Common forms of *chametz* include bread, cake and cookies, pasta, breakfast cereal and oatmeal, and grain-based liquor and beer. In practice, we are careful to purchase only products certified as Kosher for Passover by a reputable agency, since virtually any product can contain trace elements of flour.

**Matzah**, the opposite of *chametz*, is bread made with flour and water that is baked within eighteen minutes – too soon for leavening to occur. *Matzah*, too, can only be made from the “Five Species of Grain.” Most *matzah* is produced with wheat flour, but spelt *matzah* is available on the market – a suitable option for those unable to consume wheat products.

“**Shmura matzah**” means “guarded *matzah*” – a reference to the Torah’s instructions to “guard the *matzah*” from becoming leavened. In practice, there are various levels of “guarding”– some track the wheat from the time of harvest, while others simply monitor the *matzah* during the baking process.

Hand-made *matzah* is round, while *matzah* produced by machine is generally square.

For a consumer, **the most important thing to ascertain is that the *matzah* is Kosher for Passover!** Some *matzah* is produced for year-round use – and is actually marked as *chametz*.

*Shmura matzah* can be found in specially-marked boxes. ***Shmura matzah* is required at the Seder;** during the rest of the Passover Holiday, non-*shmura* may be used, although *shmura* is preferred.