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Meaty Advice for the High Holidays

by [Leah Koenig](#) · September 25th, 2008

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Over the next four weeks, Jews will be sitting down to together to more celebratory meals in succession than they likely do the entire rest of the year. Many of those meals will be kosher, and many more will include meat as either a main or side course – or both. Meanwhile, Jewish people around the country are also beginning to think differently about the meat that they eat, in light of the immigration [raid](#) on the kosher meat plant, Agriprocessors earlier this year, and of all the transgressions related to the conventional meat industry ([CAFOs](#), hormones and antibiotics, worker abuse, etc). For some people, the easiest response is to [go vegetarian](#). But for people who choose not to go the veggie route, what are the options?

We asked some of the leading voices of the New Jewish food movement to answer the question: "If I choose to eat meat over the high holidays, what is the number one thing I should consider?"

Read their responses below – and share your own.

Ari Hart

Ari is a rabbinical student at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (YCT) and co-director of [Uri L'Tzedek](#), which led a temporary [boycott](#) against Agriprocessors' products after the raid.

In his commentary to Rebbe Nachman's Likutei Moharan 37:6, Rabbi Chaim Kramer states that "when a person eats the meat of an animal which lacks proper shechitah, he also ingests the aspects of animal matter, darkness, foolishness, judgments, forgetfulness, and death." This Rosh Hashanah, I'll be wondering about what I have ingested this past year into my physical and spiritual self. I'll be asking about what kinds of darkness and foolishness have we allowed to permit in the name of God and kashrut. The last, and most important question I'll be asking though is: What am I going to do to change it?

Devora Kimelman-Block

Devora founded [Kol Foods](#), an independent, kosher sustainable meat company.

To celebrate the birthday of the world, we should eat in a way that honors the earth and honors life that was taken in order for us to eat. If you are eating meat over the holidays:

- 1) Eat consciously. Bless it and reflect on everything involved in bringing it to your plate.
- 2) Eat sparingly. The rabbis encouraged people to eat meat on the holidays

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because they lived in a society in which eating meat was rare luxury. It isn't special if you eat it at every meal.

3) Don't swallow your ethics. Do your best to consume ethically. If available, consider sustainable, non-industrial, pastured, organic, local meats. If buying industrial meats, go for the organics and the companies that employ union labor.

Shmarya Rosenberg

Shmarya maintains the blog [Failed Messiah](#), which has been a leading source of [Agriprocessors'](#) related news.

I see this as a twofold problem: How workers are treated by kosher meat-packers and how animals are treated by those same meat-packers and by factory farmers. If I were to eat meat this Rosh Hashana, I would first try to find some locally, humanely raised kosher grass fed beef. If I couldn't find any, I'd next opt for meat from a kosher company that treats its employees well – Aurora Packing out of the Chicago area, for example. At least that covers the worker half of the problem. But, truth be told, I think it would be best if we all went vegetarian (or ate only locally humanely raised and shechted beef) this Rosh Hashana and by so doing sent a strong message to Agriprocessors and Alle (Meal Mart), the two kosher meat industry giants, that we're not going to tolerate their behavior any longer. Enough is enough.

Dr. Maya Shetreat-Klein

Dr. Shetreat-Klein is a Neurologist and founder of the [Mitzvah Meat](#) sustainable kosher meat coop.

Rosh Hashana is an ideal time to rise above the mundane requirements and distractions of daily life. If you eat meat during the upcoming chagim, find a time to visualize yourself not just as independent being, but as an active part of a dynamic, interrelated whole. Think about how your food choices impact yourself and the world. Use that moment as a starting point to further develop as a mindful eater into the New Year.

What do YOU think? Share your thoughts about meat eating (or not eating) this high holiday season below.



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One Response to "Meaty Advice for the High Holidays"

1. **Elad The Great** Says:
September 25th, 2008 at 12:46 pm

Wow, thanks for this incredibly insightful blog. As a Baal Teshuva Jew, I am constantly reevaluating every part of my life, and it is very powerful to realize how much even something as seemingly normal and physical as food can become a part of that. I really appreciate this blog, and it came at the perfect time, right before the holidays.

Feel free to check out my blog at:
<http://eladthegreat.wordpress.com>

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