Food Policy at Temple Sinai
Approved, January 2015

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” Genesis 2:16-17

We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of mitzvot and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as a community. Some of these mitzvot, sacred obligations, have long been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times. From the 1999 CCAR Statement of Principles

The question of what we should and should not eat has been with us since the Garden of Eden. As Reform Jews, we recognize wide personal autonomy in the making decisions about our eating practices and we seek to have those decisions informed by a lifelong engagement with Judaism. Through study, listening to others, and consulting our own beliefs, we define our own practices as we affirm that there are many paths toward spiritual meaning in our interactions with food.

In crafting a policy for dietary practice at Temple Sinai, we are aware of the diversity of opinion and practice. The Food Policy subcommittee of the Music, Prayer, Ritual (MPR) committee engaged in over a year of small group study about the many approaches to these issues within the Reform Movement. We have engaged the congregation through meetings, presentations at Shabbat services and elsewhere, and by inviting Rabbi Mary Zamore to speak on the topic as our Cohon Lecturer in 2013. The MPR Committee discussed an earlier draft of this document in meetings in the spring of 2014 and over email.

Our core consensus is that it should be possible for almost everyone to eat a reasonable meal when we serve a meal at Sinai. In saying this, we seek to be as welcoming and accommodating as possible as we seek to respect the choices of our members and guests while using the synagogue as a setting in which to encourage informed Jewish thought about those choices.

We propose

1) That Temple policy exclude traditionally non-kosher meats (pork and shellfish).

2) That meat and dairy be kept separate, but that both be permitted at the same meal but not in the same dish.

3) That all dishes be labeled in a manner that allows guests at our meals to make informed and healthy choices; for example, about gluten, nuts, kosher vs non-kosher meat, milk vs nondairy creamer.
4) We support ethical treatment of animals and concern for the welfare of those who grow our food and we would urge congregants to keep these concerns in mind when purchasing food for Temple (or, indeed, any) events.

To elaborate a bit:

1) In saying that *almost* everyone should be able to dine with us, we acknowledge that we may not be able to accommodate someone who is practicing any strictly halachic form of kashrut.

2) We might have trouble accommodating a strictly vegan diet.

3) Similarly, we might not be able to satisfy people with objections to what other people were eating at the same meal (e.g. a strict vegetarian who was not comfortable at any meal including meat or an individual who was not comfortable with meat and dairy being present at the same meal even if they were not combined.)

4) By “a reasonable meal”, we mean that everyone who comes to eat with us should be able to have a main course, side(s), and dessert without violating their core principles.

5) We expect this policy to govern temple events (e.g. Communal Shabbat dinners) and we hope that the same principles would govern other events at Temple (e.g. B’nai Mitzvah receptions).

In the end, we want meals at Sinai
- to be as welcoming as possible
- to be as sensitive as possible to the needs of all
- to reflect our Reform Jewish principles as well as our ties to the Jewish community
- to reflect our commitment to social justice and tikkun olam.