BEHIND THE UNION SYMBOL

SPRING 2011

REACHING 7,000 FOOD EXECUTIVES & OVER 6,000 PLANTS WORLDWIDE

OU DIRECT YOUR VIRTUAL KASHRUT OFFICE

SNACKING KOSHER IT'S NOT EASY

PASSOVER PRIMER AND ITS SPECIAL FOODS

CHILE SOUTH AMERICA'S HOTTEST COUNTRY

The Charm of India

WWW.OUKOSHER.ORG | A PUBLICATION FOR OU CERTIFIED COMPANIES
Kosher foods, although based on one of the world’s oldest dietary laws, are among the fastest growing current trends in food processing. Here in the United States, home to 40 percent of the world’s Jewish population or about 6.15 million consumers, kosher food has always occupied an important marketing sector, but it is not Jews fueling this explosive growth in kosher foods.

More and more, we are seeing that kosher foods are increasingly attractive to the non-Jewish population; the population that now makes up the leading and fastest growing consumer base for kosher products. The growing popularity resulted in a U.S. kosher market valued at $12.5 billion in 2008, an increase of 64 percent since 2003. When in 2010 products as diverse and renowned as Tootsie Rolls, Gatorade and Glenmorangie Original, Scotland’s favorite single malt whiskey, attained OU Kosher certification, they were obviously seeking to broaden their appeal and expand their market.

Which market? That market, which includes vegetarians, vegans, gluten free shoppers, and health buffs. The market, that Mintel, a leading market research company, reports includes 62 percent purchasing kosher for its quality rather than because of religious reasons. In other words, three out of five kosher food buyers are not motivated by religious influences. Undoubtedly, all companies committed to going through the kosher certification process and willing to be governed by rigorous monitoring of every aspect of production – from ingredients, to preparation, to processing facilities — are happy and eager to have observant Jews purchase and enjoy their products. They are much more anxious however, to be part of the explosive growth of the kosher market to the general, all-inclusive market place.

I recall attending my first food show in Baltimore in the spring of 1994. I had recently begun as an OU Kosher New Companies rabbinic coordinator. I was accompanying Rabbi Moshe Elefant, who then headed OU Kosher’s New Companies department. He currently serves as OU Kosher’s Chief Operating Officer. I remember feeling ill-prepared to attend a major show. What might I contribute to its success? Nevertheless, it was an op-
portunity to learn from the master, who had by then perfected the “art of selling kosher.”

I vividly recall listening to his presentation before a group of companies eager to grasp why it would be propitious for them to “become kosher.” A phrase he used has remained with me ever since, which I myself have repeated countless times, when it was my turn to present. Rabbi Elefant said, “Kosher is hot.” How right he was. The New York Times’ Karen Barrow concurs. She writes: Kosher food is “…an ancient diet [that] has become one of the hottest new food trends.” She notes that more and more supermarket shoppers are “going kosher.” Why? Because these shoppers are “…convinced that the foods are safer and better for health.”

Market research indicates that fully 62 percent of people who buy kosher foods do so for reasons of “quality” while 51 percent say they buy kosher for its “general healthfulness.” A third buy kosher because they believe that kosher food safety standards are better than with traditional supermarket foods. Only 15 percent of respondents say they buy kosher food because of religious rules.

“The kosher market,” Menachem Lubinsky, President and CEO of Lubimco Marketing and Consulting corroborates, “is the beneficiary of a young, loyal, and thriving consumer who appreciates better foods that are kosher certified. Many of these consumers have larger families, spend more than the average customer on foods, entertain more, and are extremely open to creative new ideas in their kosher diets.”

The kosher food category is booming. Reports indicate that 50 percent of food on U.S. supermarket shelves in now kosher certified. According to ipost.com “kosher” is the most popular food label in the United States, having surpassed “All Natural” and “No Additives or Preservatives.”

Logging on to www.koshereye.com, a website showcasing new kosher products, one finds that the kosher option has expanded to nearly every category, including vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy free, organic, wines, spirits and kosher “copycat” products such as kosher sausage, imitation crab and non-dairy alternatives to cream, butter and cheese. Today’s Koshereye’s home page features Yogachips, Healthy, Crunchy Apple-a-Day! Organic Apple Chips. And their description: “Yogachips are a tasty, healthy, convenient and eco-friendly snack food – an all natural, fat free, crispy apple in a bag! A perfect snack for the health conscious, the fruits are free of the added preservatives and are grown without the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals. The chips are peanut/nut free and certified USDA organic, Vegan, Gluten-Free and OU Kosher, making them perfect for anyone with dietary restrictions. We feel they are perfect for everyone!”

Kosher food is available at many baseball stadiums and was sold at Super Bowl. Major cruise lines provide kosher options, as have several leading hotel chains and airlines. Supermarkets continue to seek kosher certified products while expanding their kosher offerings. Wholesale food buyers would be advised to understand that when two products are basically equal, the smart choice is to select the kosher certified product, a magnet to the shopper who spends more on food, shops more frequently, while preferring a store that will offer the specialty gourmet, gluten-free, organic, healthful, perhaps even locally grown but most certainly kosher selections. The “kosher is better” buyers are looking for the extra step of cleanliness, purity and transparency, enabling them to raise their ‘eating consciousness.’

Were I to accompany Rabbi Elefant to a show these days, I am certain that his catch phrase would now be, “It’s cool and trendy to buy kosher.”

(Note: many of the updated statistics and information from Seafood.com News – “Half the food on supermarket shelves is now reported to be Kosher “February 23, 2011.”

Rabbi Dr. Elyahu Safran
Editor-in-Chief/Vice President
Marketing, OU Kosher
You may contact Rabbi Safran at Safrane@ou.org
From the moment it appeared upon the scene and changed the face of kosher certification forever, OU Direct has been the subject of intense speculation, rampant rumors and wild conjecture. What can it do? Where did it come from? What powers it? Who is behind it? Why is there grass growing in the ice cream in the picture on the log-in screen?

To dispel the myths and address the myriad of misinformation circulating on the kosher street, an unnamed but highly placed OU Direct authority with a Group Six (allowed) clearance has anonymously shared the following inside information. What follows will be surprising and, in some cases, shocking. All of it has been independently verified. Here, unvarnished and unedited, are the secret truths about what OU Direct is, and what it is not.

OU Direct IS……

Empowering! Everything you could ever need to run your kosher program, and more, is right there at your fingertips! It’s your one-stop shop for managing your every interaction with OU Kosher. With a simple, quick log in, you and the personnel you authorize in your satellite plants will have immediate access to:

- Your schedules A and B – current as of 30 seconds prior to your request;
- Your OU invoices – both past and current, with up to the minute status;
- Your OU Kosher Letters of Certification – for every label of every product in every plant;
- Your OU Forms and Applications – including new plant, new product, new ingredient, private label, product termination, plant termination and private label termination forms;

Details about OU Direct are not Group 1 information (definition: able to be obtained from any source). Veiled in secrecy and closely guarded, the inner workings of this revolutionary and innovative website have never before been disclosed to the kosher manufacturing public. Until now, that is.

Everything You Wanted to Know About OU Direct
Your OU symbols – camera ready JPG and EPS files for every possible OU symbol that you can use on your product packaging.

About the only piece of your company’s OU Kosher program that can’t be found right now on OU Direct is YOU! Log in today to this oasis of sanity in a crazy, confused and mixed-up world.

**OU Direct IS NOT……… Dairy!** Although the OU Direct logo is made up of an OU followed by the word Direct spelled with a capital “D”, this is NOT meant to indicate the OU Dairy symbol, and OUDirect.org is not meant solely for OU Dairy companies. Not understanding this, some OU Meat and OU Pareve companies have attempted to log on by going to OUMirect.org and OUPirect.org. This will not work. OU Fish companies are strongly advised not to log on to OUMirect.org, since this is apparently a well-known phishing site. OU Direct is available to all OU companies. Regardless of whether your own kosher symbol is OU D, OU Fish, OU Meat, OU Pareve or even just plain OU, OUDirect.org is where you belong.

**OU Direct IS………. Energy Efficient!** No more sharpening pencils, running to the fax machine, making phone calls, copying Letters of Certification, or any of the other myriad of previous kosher program maintenance activities that used to sap your strength and tire you out! Now, from the comfort of your leather, padded, executive chair, you can keep your program up to date with just a few mouse clicks. Even the formerly exhaustive task of locating acceptable ingredients has been simplified, with the access that OU Direct gives you to the UKD database. With this amazing tool, you can quickly locate and identify exactly the right raw material you need in your plant and have the comfort of knowing that it is already approved and accepted in the OU system. Once you have located the item, just click on it and then put it in your shopping cart.

Even if the item is not in the UKD, you can still submit it and attach an electronic copy of the kosher letter of certification that your supplier has emailed to you. As soon as you submit the cart, you will receive a receipt and, in most cases, you will find the item already added to your schedule A! All you need to do then is sit back, relax and plan what you are going to do with all of your newfound free time.

**OU Direct IS NOT……… Taxable!** The U.S. Tax Court, in its landmark IRS vs. Bagel Bob decision, ruled by a 4-to-1 majority that OU Direct is a non-taxable benefit to OU companies. In the aforementioned
case, Bob Bagelberg, Founder and CEO of Bagel Bob’s Bakeries, was on OU Direct, creating customized OU Kosher letters of certification for the private labels on his new Boysenberry Bagel product. As each letter rolled perfectly off the printer, he could not contain his enthusiasm, and he loudly proclaimed, “OU Direct is awesome! It’s worth a million bucks!” A customer at the shop, who happened to be an IRS agent, overheard Mr. Bagelberg’s statement and proceeded to audit the company and charge it with tax evasion for failing to disclose $1,000,000 of unreported income – the value of having OU Direct!

The court, in its decision, reasoned that the peace of mind and state of happiness that result from being able to update schedules A and B, create customized letters of certification, authorize new products and ingredients, identify acceptable raw materials, access financial data, and have what is essentially 24/7 control of a company’s kosher program – in short, all the benefits that OU Direct offers - are impossible to place a value on since, as the court stated, “You can’t buy happiness.” Although the IRS appealed, the Court rejected their position, stating that the IRS claim was simply a case of database envy.

OU Direct IS…………. Secure! OU Kosher fully appreciates the sensitivity of the information that you share with us and goes to every extent possible to assure the confidentiality of your data. OU Direct utilizes high levels of security to protect your valuable information. Your connection to OU Direct is securely encrypted with 128-bit encryption. The connection uses TLS 1.0. The connection is encrypted using AES_128_CBC, with SHA 1 for message authentication, and RSA as the key exchange mechanism. You can sleep well at night knowing that everything you submit via OU Direct is safe and secure.

OU Direct IS NOT………… a Dating Service. Granted, one of the main benefits of OU Direct is unfettered access to the UKD (Unbelievable Kosher Database), which enables companies to find exactly the right ingredient match that they have been searching for. And it helps them find it based on OU’s unique 29 (almost) dimensions of compatibility, such as source company, item description, category, kosher status and kosher certification. But OU Direct cannot help you to find your life partner. And the only lonely hearts found lurking on OU Direct belong to artichokes and palms. Who, incidentally, are just waiting on the UKD for...
you to take them to your plant and make them your own. Log on today and review your ingredient matches for free!

**OU Direct IS……………. Liberating!** Once you begin doing all your kosher paperwork using OU Direct, you will never go back to pen and paper again. Who wouldn’t become addicted to a system that dispenses with submitting any forms and enables you to transmit all of your kosher information electronically?

**OU Direct IS………….. Free!** Unlike other offers you receive, which try to lure you through the door with all sorts of low price, all-inclusive promises and then “nickel and dime” you for every service, OU Direct is included as part of your OU-provided kosher program absolutely free! The cost to your company? Nothing. Zip. Zilch. Nada. It is just another example of the OU Kosher commitment to providing your company with the quickest and most efficient tools and systems to manage your kosher program, so that you can keep your focus on the important business of providing your consumers with high quality, kosher product.

A small but dedicated OU team of IT professionals has toiled for days, weeks and years, working in relative obscurity and total anonymity, to bring about a system that has revolutionized the way true professionals do kosher. Don’t miss the train before it pulls out of the station! Log on to OU Direct today and be an active participant in the bright new world of kosher!

Rabbi Avrohom Stone serves as OU Kosher Senior Rabbinic Field Representative visiting with OU certified companies throughout the country. His instructive and entertaining articles frequently appear in Behind the Union Symbol, and always elicit many positive responses.

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Everything at Your Fingertips
Crystal Head Vodka, created by entertainer Dan Aykroyd and American landscape artist and portraitist John Alexander, is now certified kosher by the Orthodox Union, the world’s largest and most respected kosher certification agency.

Crystal Head Vodka is quadruple-distilled and triple-filtered through Herkimer diamond crystals. Produced from water sourced from a deep glacier lake in Newfoundland, Canada, it is a Pure Spirit, free of any additives such as sugar, glycerin or citrus oil. “Attaining OU certification is exciting news for the brand because it allows all followers of dietary laws to enjoy a one of a kind, ultra premium vodka”, says Jonathan Hemi, Vice President, Globefill Inc.

Crystal Head Vodka is the fastest growing ultra premium vodka brand on the market. In recognition of the brand’s performance in its first 18 months, Crystal Head Vodka was named a “Rising Star” by the Beverage Information Group, publishers of Cheers magazine and producers of the annual Cheers Beverage Conference. According to Charles Forman, Editor of the magazine, “Crystal Head Vodka, through its attractive packaging, product quality and well-timed entrance into the market has shown that even during a challenging economy, consumers are willing to trade up to the right brand.”

According to 2010 data compiled from IMPACT, Crystal Head Vodka reached the one million bottle mark faster than Grey Goose, Belvedere and Chopin vodkas.

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran, OU Kosher’s Vice President, Communications and Marketing, was “gratified to welcome Crystal Head Vodka to the ever-growing list of the high class vodka and liquor products that have gained OU certification in recent years.”

The striking skull-shaped bottle celebrates the mystical legend of the 13 Crystal Heads possessed by tribal cultures such as Aztec, the Mayan and the Navajo and recalls the celebration of the Mexican “Day of the Dead” tradition.

Rated 91 by The Tasting Panel Magazine, Crystal Head Vodka continues to gain distribution across the country and can be found in restaurants, clubs and bars as well as wine and spirit shops.

Crystal Head Vodka can be enjoyed in its purest form, shaken over ice with a squeeze of lime, in a classic martini or in a variety of cocktails. For more information or to contact directly, please visit www.crystalheadvodka.com

Rabbi Yaakov Mendelson is Orthodox Union rabbinic coordinator for Crystal Head Vodka.
For the first time ever, kosher Biltong dried beef and Boerewors beef sausages will be broadly available at U.S. retail stores and food service establishments. Delectable and satisfying, these gourmet quality products are made with a 40-year old recipe brought to the U.S. from Johannesburg, or ‘Joburg,’ by David Libesman, Founder of Joburg Kosher Foods, LLC. “We selected the OU,” said Libesman, “based on input from customers and due to its stature as the most widely recognized kosher certification symbol.”

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran, OU Kosher Vice President of Communications and Marketing, declared, “The Orthodox Union is pleased to certify the ever popular South African ‘Joburg’! Kosher Biltong and Boerewors beef products, so that they may now be enjoyed by the ever-growing kosher market place in the United States.”

Joburg Kosher Beef Biltong and Boerewors Gourmet Sausages are currently available via the internet at www.joburgkosher.com and at kosher restaurants in Philadelphia, Teaneck, NJ, New York City, Staten Island, NY, and Skokie, IL. A full scale rollout to kosher specialty shops, grocery stores and dining locations is underway. Joburg Kosher products, first sampled to rave reviews in October at Kosherfest 2010, are produced in New Jersey under supervision of the Orthodox Union. “We are excited to announce that Biltong, the perfect travel food, will also be available Kosher for Passover,” Mr. Libesman said.

Joburg Kosher Boerewors, or ‘Farmer’s Sausage,’ add a new dimension to the gourmet sausage category. They are marinated and seasoned for a juicy and succulent taste experience when grilled, fried in a skillet or broiled. Joburg Kosher Boerewors are not pre-cooked like most other sausages, but are shipped frozen with no nitrates or nitrites, and contain only 280mg of sodium per serving. Great as a center plate entrée, in a roll or in a recipe, Joburg Boerewors are available in Traditional, Garlic and spicy Peri-Peri flavors, in 4-pack/3oz links and 2.5 lb packs. South Africans love “Boeries on the braai (bbq grill)” all year round.
Biltong is a staple in South Africa that is available in stores, butcher shops and roadside stands throughout the country. While kosher beef jerky has been available in the U.S. market, kosher Biltong offers an exciting, new taste experience. Made from premium cut beef, Joburg Kosher Biltong is marinated and seasoned, then slowly dried for days. The result is a savory and satisfying snack or meal that is low in calories, 97 percent fat free, has only 150mg sodium per serving, with no preservatives. Biltong, which requires no refrigeration and is a great travel companion, comes in Traditional, Black Pepper and spicy Peri-Peri flavors. It is available in individual 3oz servings as well as one-pound packs and slabs.

About Joburg Kosher Foods, LLC

David Libesman, the son of a South African butcher, arrived in the USA in 1998. For 11 years he searched high and low for Biltong and Boerewors with the taste and texture that he grew up with. He then decided to make them himself using recipes and techniques perfected over 40 years. The overwhelming response from family and friends led to the creation of Joburg™ Kosher Foods, LLC. The company’s mission is to be the first kosher food manufacturer to make high quality, authentic South African foods widely available through retail shops and foodservice channels throughout the U.S., as well as the Internet. For more information and consumer comments, see the videos at http://www.youtube.com/JoburgKosher.

Rabbi Seth Mandel is Orthodox Union rabbinic coordinator for Joburg Kosher.

Island Abbey Foods Ltd™, specialty honey manufacturer, announced that they have attained kosher certification through the Orthodox Union (OU). This announcement will allow the innovative honey products produced by Island Abbey Foods Ltd™ under their Honibe™ (pronounced hon-ee-bee) brand to be sold with a new level of accreditation of quality, health, and safety.

The Honibe™ brand is built around a proprietary platform technology that has enabled the creation of 100 percent pure dried honey products in a variety of form factors. The OU certification of the Honibe™ line of products includes the Honey Drop™- A tastier sugar cube; Honey Lozenges™ with added Eucalyptus and Menthol for sore throats; Honey Delights™ - pure honey candy; and Honey Sprinkles™ - honey granules for baking and sweetening tea or coffee.

“Having our Honibe™ brand of honey products certified as kosher is going to open our business to an ever expanding new market,” stated John Rowe, President of Island Abbey Foods Ltd™. “The kosher community is prominent throughout United States, Canada, as well as throughout the world which creates a major opportunity to market our unique line of products to a segment of the commu-
nity we haven’t been able to target until now. Kosher certification gained through the highly respected Orthodox Union provides an extra level of quality certification for our products that gives consumers additional confidence in their purchase decision.”

“We are pleased that Island Abbey Foods has attained its kosher certification from the Orthodox Union for their Honibe™ line of pure dried honey products,” said Rabbi Eliyahu Safran, OU Kosher’s Vice President of Communications and Marketing. “Undoubtedly all of the Honibe products will be enthusiastically welcomed within the kosher community. We are especially pleased with the certification of the Honey Lozenges, an important addition to the growing list of OU certified health-related products,” Rabbi Safran added. We will now work with Island Abbey Foods to introduce the Honibe™ line of products to the kosher community.”

The Honibe™ brand has received major international recognition in recent months with the Honey Drop™ being named as the Global SIAL d’Or Winner 2010 for the best new food product in the world. The Honey Drop™ was also named as the best new product in the ‘Grocery Sweet 2010’ and best of Canada ‘Country Award 2010’ categories. Honibe™ was recently featured on one of Canada’s most popular television shows, CBC’s Dragons’ Den, where entrepreneurs pitch their ideas to savvy business investors. Island Abbey Foods recently entered into a major distribution deal that will see the Honibe™ brand sold through Dutch Gold Honey and McLure’s Honey and Maple Products into supermarkets across the United States.

For more information please visit www.Honibe.com.

About Island Abbey Foods Ltd™

Island Abbey Foods Ltd. is a specialty honey producer based in Prince Edward Island, Canada. We are a sixth generation PEI agricultural family business with our feet firmly planted in our Island’s bright red soil (ideal for farming with its high iron and nutrient content). Honibe™ (hon-ee-bee) brand honey is our line of all natural, specialty honey from PEI. Under our Honibe™ brand we offer innovative products like the Honey Drop™, the world’s first 100 percent pure, no mess, non-sticky honey, and a better tasting sugar cube. We also have a 100 percent pure honey candy called Honey Delights™, granular honey called Honey Sprinkles™ and Honey Lozenges™ for cough relief.
The Scent of India

India’s food industry—on the rise with OU Kosher

By Bayla Sheva
The next time you’re savoring your side of basmati rice, mushrooms in your salad, and vegetables in your instant soup — you just might catch a scent of sandalwood incense and sweet flowers. After all, you’re enjoying a taste of India.
As high-tech communication reaches ever higher, OU Kosher reaches ever wider. Prominent Indian companies such as Global Green, Argo Dutch, Nagar Haveli, Sunstar and Kohinoor are busily producing a vast potpourri of OU-certified foods and raw materials for America’s burgeoning OU Kosher food industry – and the kosher consumer’s worldly palates.

To date, 82 companies and 155

RABBI YOSSI TIRNAUER, THE "MASTER OF INDIA."
plants on the Indian subcontinent have gone OU Kosher. “They come to us because their customers require it,” says Rabbi Yossi Tirnauer, an OU Rabbinic Field Representative or over twenty years, whom the rabbis at the OU Kosher office call ‘the Master of India.’ “I told the head of Mohini Organics, a company that makes emulsifiers, it would take a minimum of one year to prepare the facility for OU Kosher certification; if he’s in a hurry, maybe he should go to another agency. He said: ‘Rabbi, I did my research; I know what I want. I’ll wait a year; no problem.’ After about eight months, he was OU certified.”

Rabbi Tirnaeur, a native Israeli, travels to India twice a month visiting factories manufacturing pickles, milk powder, concentrated mango and papaya juices, enzymes, oil, vinegar, herbal medicines, spices and IQF, a.k.a. instant quick freeze foods. “Anything that grows from the ground in India can be dehydrated or IQF,” says Rabbi Chaim Loike, OU Rabbinic Coordinator who specializes in spices. “The dehydrated vegetables in many of the soups we eat come from India.”

Many of the pickles we eat are also from India. In fact, Rabbi Gavriel Price, the RC in charge of the Mohini Organics account, refers to India as “the cucumber distributor to the world.”

Situated near the equator, the country enjoys abundant vegetation. “They do a lot of herbals, oil extractions from botanicals,” says Rabbi Mordechai Merzel, RC, “industrial products that go into foods, vitamins and other items — the possibilities are endless. Spices, peas, gherkins are also indigenous to the region, as well as from Sri Lanka, which used to be part of India. And they are offering products at economical prices.”

FARMING GHERKINS IN INDIA
Dr. Rakesh Jain, president of Nagar Haveli, manufacturer of aromatic and specialty chemicals for 15 years, attributes much of India’s food industry success with both raw materials and retail products to OU Kosher certification. “I remember when Rabbi Tirneaur first came; he had eight or ten places to inspect,” he says. “Now, he has more than one hundred.”

With the Indian food and raw material industry, as well as the demand for OU Kosher certification growing, Rabbi Tirneaur delegated some of his kosher supervisory work to Rabbi Bezalel Kupchik, a fellow Israeli, and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Crombie, originally from Sefat, Israel, who lives with his family in Sri Lanka, and flies to India four times each year to his assigned factories. “(After fifteen years on the job in India), Rabbi Tirneaur knows the companies; he knows the culture and the people,” says Rabbi Shaul Gold, an RC who specializes in pickles and rice. “He is also very good at making sure the system he put in place continues to run optimally.”

The rise in production has also prompted lifestyle changes in the populace. “I met an Indian chemist who works for Firmenich, a huge multinational natural and synthetic ingredient company, who grew up in Gujarat, (the state with the fastest growing economy in India),” says Rabbi Price. “When he was younger, the people who worked together assumed they would work side by side for the rest of their lives. Now, it’s a fact of life that they will most likely move away; half the workers employed by the company travel from Mumbai and fly back. Goods move, people move. It’s a dramatically different life from just a few decades ago.”

MOOve Over—Cow Crossing

The RC’s at the OU Kosher office in Manhattan welcome the chance to sample the markedly different Indian culture during their initial visits to companies. “There are animals all over the place,” says Rabbi Price. “You stop at a red light and a cow comes right up to your window. In the U.S., if you want to pass a car on the highway, you move to the left lane and accelerate, then move back to the right. In India, you honk your horn and the person in front of you has to move out of the way, then you accelerate and he goes back to his original lane. This causes a cacophony of honking,” Rabbi Merzel concurs. “It makes New York City seem like a prairie in the middle of Kansas,” he says.

Despite the noise, Rabbi Loike is impressed by India’s sophisticated production systems. “There are some really high-tech processes going on there,” he says. “Agro Dutch, an OU Kosher company, is the largest integrated mushroom company in the world; due to superior standards of cleanliness in their manufacturing procedure, their product is free of bug infestations, a major plus, since Jewish law forbids the consumption of insects.”

According to Rabbi Gold, we have Rabbi Eliyahu Safran, Senior Rabbinic Coordinator and Vice President for Communications and Marketing, to thank for the inroads OU Kosher has made in India. “He worked very hard over the years to develop solid, warm relationships with the owners of the companies in India and they, in turn, brought other companies to the OU,” he says. “He would meet people at trade shows and developed a long term relationship with each of them. It’s about business, but it’s even more about interpersonal relations.”

Apparently, it’s also about quality. “We have converted many of our non-kosher suppliers to get OU Kosher certification,” says Suma Devassy, who handles operations at Marcatus QED, one of India’s largest exporters of gherkin pickled cucumbers. “It is one of our requisites in our quality manual. People understand, just like any other quality parameters, they need to have the OU. The OU’s mechanisms are very stringent, so it has an impact on bringing quality systems. It forces the vendors in India to follow certain protocols and this helps them to follow such standardized practices. The recognition, the acceptance, the quality assurance — we knew OU Kosher certification was the only way. We have grown exponentially. And it’s only going up and up.”

Bayla Sheva Brenner is senior writer in the OU Department of Communications and Marketing.
We have all heard of the dangers associated with artificial colors. With many artificial colors having been found to be carcinogenic, one certainly understands that consumers would prefer not to see “artificial colors” listed on the ingredient panel, and industry is proud to prominently display a “No Artificial Colors” disclaimer to win over the health conscious consumer. This has helped spur demand for cochineal extract and carmine (a more purified form of cochineal extract). These dyes are made from carminic acid which is extracted from the cochineal scale insect and are therefore natural products.

Although the cochineal is native to South America, the process of creating dyes from insects has also been known to the “Old World” for thousands of years. The Old World kermes (kermes vermilio) which inhabits the Mediterranean basin was used to make a red dye in ancient Egypt and is one of the oldest known organic pigments. The Bible uses the words Tolaat Shani to refer to the scarlet threads sown into the coverings of the Tabernacle and the vestments of the priests. The Hebrew word Tolaat can also mean worm or insect. This has led some Biblical scholars to surmise that these red threads were dyed with an extract from kermes vermilio. Whether this is true or not, we certainly admire these bright dyes. However, since these dyes are extracts of insects they are not kosher.

Even foods that are colored with carmine are not kosher.

Until recently, FDA labeling guidelines have allowed these dyes to be listed as “natural red” or even just plain “natural coloring.” However, for a small percentage of consumers for whom carmine can trigger a severe allergic reaction this anonymity has been dangerous. Therefore, effective January 5, 2011 new FDA guidelines require declaration by name on the label of all foods and cosmetics that contain these color additives. As a result of the new guidelines some manufacturers, who would rather not list carmine on their labels, have opted to reformulate their products.

An unintended consequence of the new legislation is a windfall for the kosher consumer. Some products which were unable to be certified kosher because they had always contained carmine have now been reformulated and may be eligible for kosher certification. If you have any questions as to whether this might apply to any of your products, please consult your rabbinic coordinator, who can best advise you as to the feasibility of having your products certified.
Potato chips are deceptively simple. Basically, they are flavored, fried slices of potato. Simple and kosher – right? Not so fast. The first question – what are they fried in? True, most product today is in pure vegetable oil, but there are strong regional markets for lard fried chips – especially in central Pennsylvania and the South. I recently visited a facility making a large number of specialty products for various manufacturers. The same fryers are used for lard chips and those made in a variety of vegetable oils. Just because the label doesn’t mention lard, it doesn’t mean the fryer is not common.

Moreover, one of this plant’s specialties was a brand of “healthy” chips fried in oils like olive and avocado. All shared the same equipment. Many common kosher brands sold in major kosher markets have lard fried products. Utz, for example, has the Grandma Utz line and Herr Foods sells a product labeled “Old Fashioned.” Specialty chips, like sweet potato, may also be made on these lines, as their small production volume complements the niche lard chip production. One must be diligent to look for the OU symbol and not assume that “plain” or “vegetable oil” only chips are not problematic.

Once fried, most potato chips are salted while still hot. However, secondary flavor applications are usually at ambient temperature. The days of nothing but plain and barbecue chips are long gone. Today, someone makes a potato chip with just about any flavor one can imagine. Most plants have both dairy and non dairy seasonings. Many also have non-kosher –especially for cheese flavors. The OU works closely with manufacturers to insure proper separation of the kosher categories. This is one place where allergen concerns are our ally. Allergen level cleanouts are very thorough and companies are careful to remove all residues between high allergen categories like dairy.
Scheduling is another tool we use. Weekend cleanouts are generally less pressured – and more thorough. When possible, we implement a series – kosher non-dairy at the beginning of the week, then kosher dairy, then non-kosher. However, there are many plants where the changeover pressures and other concerns like line proximity or the design of flavoring equipment create an environment where kosher acceptable separation cannot be achieved. This is one reason why consumers find otherwise non-dairy chips labeled OU-D(dairy).

Tortilla chips, corn chips and similar rolled dough based products (many rice and multigrain chips for example), are also traditionally fried. Normally seasoned directly after frying, these chips, which are thicker and denser than potato chips, retain their heat. Between the residual heat and the volume of production, the tumblers and belts themselves get hot enough to absorb the flavors and attain their kosher status. For example, if the company makes a kosher nacho chip (dairy), all subsequent chips are considered dairy, unless a koshering process is completed. As koshering can be quite involved, time consuming and messy – usually including boiling water or even direct fire, companies that make pareve corn and tortilla chips split the lines so that necessary equipment never has dairy or non-kosher contact. The OU works closely with companies to design dedicated and easily monitored systems.

Baked chips are commonly also quite hot when seasoned and present similar issues. Some of these products – like baked potato crisps – are made from shaped dough that contains much more than potato flour and water. As they are not fried, oils and emulsifiers, as well as flavor components, are incorporated into the dough itself. Many of the ingredients are highly kosher sensitive and must be monitored carefully. Similarly, many shaped extruded items – some of the fancy vegetable straws and chips for example, start out as a manufactured pellet. These pellets contain many kosher sensitive ingredients and the pellet manufacturers regularly make a wide variety of items, not all necessarily kosher, on the same production lines. The end snack producer then fries or bakes the pellets and seasons according to customer tastes.

Puffed snacks – including rice cakes and similar appearing items – are increasingly popular. In essence, these involve popping grains in a mold. When the whole grain kernels explode under heat and pressure, they form a basic platform for the snack maker. The fundamental product is low fat and often whole grain, making these items increasingly popular with snackers. As the fundamental product is dry, adding seasoning requires a carrier like vegetable oil. In many applications, the seasoning itself is added at room temperature. While the equipment itself does not absorb multiple kosher categories through heat, it is much more difficult to clean properly because of the oil. Therefore, certifying multiple kosher categories in these environments takes diligence on the part of the manufacturer and the OU. Like with potato chips, a number of strategies are employed and not all manufacturers are able to comply.

Many times, the application of seasonings is more complicated. Chocolate drizzled rice crackers, for example, go through a machine called an enrober. Here, chocolate is melted and drizzled onto the base cracker and/or the cracker itself travels through a bath of chocolate. While generally a cool process, these machines are difficult to clean. As the chocolate is usually dairy, so are the products.

In some applications, seasoning is sprayed onto the unflavored popped chip which then runs through an oven. In these situations, the oven belts absorb through heat and can become dairy or non-kosher depending on what the company makes. These belts are difficult to kosher and companies using these systems routinely label all products dairy or non-kosher. Some do have dedicated belts or choose to run campaigns of kosher or pareve product with the OU providing koshering and necessary supervision.

Extruded corn snacks like cheese balls and curls present a somewhat different problem. Here, the basic “ball” or “curl” is little more than extruded corn flour and water. Immediately after the extruder these look – and taste – something like Styrofoam! They are
flavored with a slurry of oil and the appropriate cheese flavor. Mixing the slurry is generally hot, so the mix kettle is problematic. The hot mix is then sprayed onto the pellet and tumbled to get the desired end consistency. If the company uses non-kosher cheese, the entire system is non-kosher. Even if kosher cheese is used, the system is certainly dairy. Hence, companies generally sell the entire category as non-kosher or kosher dairy, depending on the seasonings. Flavored popcorn is very similar.

While many snacks are very simple in their basic ingredients, the process of making and flavoring them is more complicated. Because the OU works with such a wide variety of snack companies, we are very familiar with the industry and the issues. As such, we are able to work with our clients in responsive and cooperative ways to ensure the best possible service for both our clients and the kosher consuming public.

Rabbi Aharon J. Brun-Kestler has over 18 years of experience working in all aspects of kosher supervision, from field inspections to directing the Vaad of Greater Seattle. The majority of his career has been with the Orthodox Union in New York where he has assisted many companies through the certification process. Today, Rabbi Brun-Kestler manages nearly 200 OU client portfolios in a broad range of industries. Rabbi Brun-Kestler has his rabbinical ordination from Rabbi Yisroel Belsky and holds an MA in English Literature from Northeastern University.

In the snack food industry, Utz Quality Foods, Inc. has always been known for freshness and the quality ingredients that it uses in manufacturing its products. It’s been that way since the company’s humble beginnings 90 years ago this year, when Bill and Salie Utz began making potato chips in their Hanover, PA home. Salie used her knowledge of good ‘ol Pennsylvania Dutch cooking to provide customers with the highest quality potato chips in the marketplace and Bill Utz delivered them directly to stores and farmer’s markets in the Hanover and Baltimore areas.

Salie’s quality cooking tradition continues to this day, as Utz uses minimal processing which allows its products to retain a maximum amount of nutrients present in the natural ingredients. Over 50 percent of its product line is All-Natural and has been that way from the start. Salt and seasoning levels are controlled to maintain a sodium content which is lower than many other processed foods. In addition, the nutritional content of Utz products is regularly tested and printed clearly on the package labels. Utz is so certain of the quality of its products, that every package is unconditionally guaranteed.

While its distribution network and coverage has certainly grown over the years, the company’s philosophy remains the same as Bill Utz’s when he delivered directly to the stores and farmer’s markets: “If you manage the process yourself from start to finish, then you can ensure that your customers are purchasing top quality products.” Their direct store delivery system has more than eight hundred company-controlled routes running from Maine to North Carolina. In surveys, Utz has found that 80 percent of its chips are purchased and consumed within a week of manufacture.

Its long-standing commitment to quality led Utz Quality Foods, Inc. to become OU certified in 1996. Today, three out of its four manufac-
SPRING 2011

OU COMPANIES SPEAK

Utzing plants and over 95 percent of its product line is OU certified as either pareve or dairy.

These kosher products range from its many varieties of potato chips, with a production of one million pounds every week, to its large assortment of pretzels, with its production of 900,000 pounds every week. Utz also produces cheese curls, tortilla chips (baked, natural, organic, and restaurant style), popcorn and party mix, offering more than 90 flavors or varieties of snacks in total. Utz also carries salsas, crackers and specialty items such as chocolate-covered pretzels, seasonal pretzel barrels and sports mixes.

In 1997, Utz expanded its kosher certification to include two Kosher for Passover chip items (Regular and No Salt). These items are manufactured to adhere to the strict dietary regulations of the holiday.

“Being certified kosher is no longer simply about following religious dietary law,” says Tom Dempsey, President of Utz Quality Foods, Inc. “Today, many consumers are turning to kosher certified product for allergen and health-related reasons. The OU symbol represents the use of pure ingredients and has become a universal quality seal of approval.”

Kosher certification has opened up new distribution channels for Utz, expanding its territories and bringing on new accounts such as kosher grocery stores. However, the Utz reputation for quality has spread far beyond its own distribution area. The Utz Mail Order division accommodates the growing national and international demand for its products.

In recent years, Utz has seen an increased interest in its kosher products nationally and internationally. Whether customers are purchasing for themselves or as a gift, kosher certified products continue to be in high demand.

Utz has also created a dedicated space within the nutritional section of its website where all kosher products are highlighted, as well as other nutritional data. See utzsnacks.com/nutritioninfo.html for easy reference.

Since 1921, the Utz name has stood for quality. With a strong tradition of family and professional leadership and Utz’s thousands of loyal employees dedicated to providing the freshest, best tasting products, Utz continues to be the choice of customers everywhere.

Rabbi Aharon Brun-Kestler is Orthodox Union rabbinic coordinator for Utz Quality Foods.

Herr Foods Incorporated has been manufacturing snack foods with OU certification. A recognized leader in the snack food industry, Herr’s is headquartered in Nottingham, in Southeastern Pennsylvania, about an hour from Philadelphia and Baltimore. The family-owned and-operated company began 65 years ago and has mastered the ability to continually introduce innovative products and packaging needed to satisfy ever-changing appetites and tastes of the snack food consumer.

The Orthodox Union is the most widely recognized kosher certifying agency in the world. Some of the Herr’s sales market opportunities are in areas that encompass large Jewish populations. Many of the sales accounts request kosher status for the products that Herr’s manufactures and sells. Herr’s recognizes that many consumers view the kosher certification as an extra level of product quality supervision.

Tom Chase, Research & Development Technologist at Herr’s, is the current kosher coordinator. Tom clearly recalls his first visit with Rabbi Yitzchak Friedman. “We are predominately gentiles in this processing plant and we will not understand the issues involved with food laws. However, we at Herr’s have an agreement with the Orthodox Union.
that assures that when an OU or an OU-D symbol appears on our package, the consumer buying that product will have confidence that the product in the package will be what the symbol implies.”

Herr’s works closely with the current rabbinical field representative, Rabbi Richard Levine, to do just that.

Phil Bernas, V.P. of Research & Development/Quality Assurance, explained the manufacturing process for kosher certification. “All of our potato chips are either kosher pareve or kosher dairy. There is a complete cleanup (hot water and an oil solvent cleaner) after kosher dairy products are manufactured before running a kosher pareve product. We also run kosher for Passover chips using cotton-seed oil. We have one pretzel line that is dedicated to making pareve pretzel thins and circle H minis. All other pretzels lines are kosher dairy.

On the corn line we did have kosher pareve products and kosher dairy on the same line. This required a hot water (180°) cleanup after running a kosher dairy product. Now the white corn tortilla line is kosher pareve and the yellow corn line is kosher dairy. All the items (cheese curls, snack fries and baked potato crisps) manufactured in the new plant are kosher dairy. All popcorn items are kosher dairy.”

Herr’s offers a free factory tour at the Nottingham headquarters. Visitors are given a guided tour of the factory to see how all of the Herr’s snacks are made. A favorite part of the tour is sampling the warm potato chips right out of the cooker. Many Orthodox schools and families visit the Herr’s Snack Factory each year. The tour is fun, educational and appeals to all ages.

Herr’s has company-owned branches in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia. Herr’s national sales team has sales in 48 states, as well as export sales and distributors. The Herr’s online store is another way for customers to purchase Herr’s snacks to be shipped to their home or to send as gifts to others. Herr’s online is an easy way to send kosher snacks to your family and friends. If you have any questions about purchasing online, just call the toll free number, 1-800-284-7488 during the weekday business hours of 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and the staff will be happy to help you.

Herr Foods Inc. has been adding flavor to the lives of families for 65 years. From the very beginning, James S. Herr’s commitment to bring the freshest, best-tasting snacks foods has been the

At Wise® Foods, our goal is simple: to make real food for real people...great tasting snacks made from the finest ingredients and backed by exceptional customer service. From our familiar favorites to our newest varieties, we strive to be the snack our customers are proud to share with friends and family.

The Wise® story begins in 1921, when Mr. Earl Wise, Sr, then a young grocer, had too many potatoes. Being a frugal businessman, he decided to use the extra potatoes to make potato chips. He did all of the work by hand and sold the chips in brown paper bags from his store.

Earl’s chips enjoyed instant popularity and the company he founded, Wise® Foods, has grown into a leading regional salty snack manufacturer in the eastern United States. For the past 90 years, from small batches in his mother’s kitchen to a remodeled garage to the current state-of-the-art facility located in Berwick, PA, one thing has never changed: Earl Wise, Sr., and the company that bears his name, make terrific, all-natural chips!

It all began with a single variety of all natural potato chips, but over the years, Wise® has expanded its product...
offering along with its manufacturing capabilities. We are now proud to offer a wide variety of salty snacks under recognizable brands such as: Wise®, Ridges®, New York Deli®, Cheez Doodles®, Dipsy Doodles®, and Bravos®!

Wise® Foods has long been a proponent of kosher snacks. Our customers expect high quality snacks and many of them are looking for the kosher certification for specific dietary, religious, or health reasons. To that end, Wise® has established a relationship with the leading organization for kosher certification, the Orthodox Union. Wise® has a strong partnership with our OU certification expert, Rabbi Aharon Brun-Kestler, and is extremely proud to offer a variety of OU (Dairy) and OU (Pareve) kosher certified snacks. The majority of Wise® process lines in Berwick, PA are kosher. Specifically, Wise® product lines which include kosher certified items include: Potato Chips, Tortilla Chips, Onion Rings, Corn Chips, Pretzels, and Salsa.

In the past year, the company has also invested in new equipment to further improve our production processes and to make the kosher certification process even easier. Investments were made in new stainless steel seasoning tubes and seasoning augers, and separate seasoning lines have been installed for kosher products within the Wise® plant facility.

There’s no doubt that kosher food practices help Wise® to make high quality products and the OU kosher certification keeps Wise® Foods competitive in our core marketplaces, where consumers and retailers alike desire a broad offering of delicious, quality kosher snacks!

Our newest product offerings – Wise® Baked Potato Crisps and Wise Bravos® Ranch and Sweet & Spicy Tortilla Chips - also carry kosher certifications. For more information about Wise® snacks, please visit us online at: www.wisesnacks.com, or contact us directly: Phone: 1-888-759-4401 Email: snackmaster@wisesnacks.com; Mail: Wise Foods, Inc, 228 Raseley Street, Berwick, PA 18603-4533

Rabbi Aharon Brun-Kestler is Orthodox Union rabbinic coordinator for Utz Quality Foods.
Cross and Peters company was founded in Detroit on August 1, 1930. The company was named after the founders’ first names, Cross and Peter. Both set goals to make a better potato chip, hence the brand name, Better Made Potato Chips. In 1934, the company was incorporated by the founders, the late Peter Cipriano and the late Cross Moceri.

Better Made became not only a brand name but a way of doing business. Even in the early days of the company, only the best ingredients and methods were used. At first, production was simple. Burlap-bagged select potatoes were cooked in the best oil available, weighed, and hand packed into crude greaseless bags. Distribution was chiefly through the company’s own store outlets, which later grew into small delivery routes.

Today, however, Better Made uses over 50 million pounds of choice potatoes every year and the entire process is a little more complex. The potatoes are purchased in bulk (45,000 to 85,000 pounds per truck load) and unloaded from semi-trailers which are raised by a hydraulic lift. The potatoes are then transported by conveyors to storage bins. When needed, the potatoes are automatically conveyed to the fryers where they are washed, peeled, sliced, and inspected. Next, the potato slices are conveyed to high-temperature controlled cookers, where only 100 percent cottonseed oil is used. The cooked chips are then lightly salted and automatically advanced by an overhead vibrating conveyor system to automatic packaging machines that weigh, form, fill, and seal the finished bags. Better Made’s Original Potato Chips use all natural resources and are untouched by human hands from the time the potatoes leave the farm until you bring the crunchy chips to your mouth.

Through the years Better Made has expanded its production to include Potato Sticks and Air-Popped and Kettle-Popped Popcorns. Also the company’s sales force has evolved into over 175 route sales people servicing over 10,000 customers throughout most of Michigan, Toledo, OH and Chicago.

All of Better Made’s potato chip and potato stick products are certified kosher by the Orthodox Union. Better Made chose OU certification because it is the best known and most widely accepted kosher certification in the world. In addition, many consumers consider OU certified products as having better quality than products without the certification. From a marketing perspective, having the OU symbol on your package adds another layer of credibility to your products. Currently, Better Made is working on obtaining OU certification for its popcorn items.

Rabbi Aharon Brun-Kestler is Orthodox Union rabbinic coordinator for Better Made.
Communications, the backbone of commerce and human civilization since time immemorial, has taken huge leaps over the past two decades. With the advent of the World Wide Web and Internet protocol, what once took much time to dispatch information can now be accomplished almost instantaneously with the click of a button. The global economy has rapidly shrunk because of this, and the amount of information readily available for access is mind-boggling. However, what has become the center of attention in this era of the Information Age is the portal that allows access to all this information, the website.

At the Orthodox Union, we are no exception and like most other organizations and companies throughout the globe we have developed numerous websites and applications for our clients and consumers. Primarily, the main web page at www.oukosher.org, serves as the gateway to a vast array of information regarding our kosher certification services. Recently, the home page went through a redesign to allow for a more user-friendly, eye-pleasing informative experience. The page was designed to bring together both consumers and companies, so that each may explore what the OU has to offer. With a wide collection of articles and audio-visual presentations, vast amounts of kosher information are easily accessible.

Additionally, as a service to OU certified companies, we have a Featured Companies section on the home page, which displays the logos and information about various OU companies. Furthermore, the page now has scrolling information such as Newly Certified products and establishments, OU News, and Kosher Alerts. Especially important to consumers is our new Product Search function, which helps verify for them if a product is indeed certified kosher by the Orthodox Union. For industrial applications that require an actual letter of certification, we have a link (called LOC Letters) on the top right of our homepage, which will allow interested parties to view and print kosher certificates of non-confidential OU certified products.

OU companies can garner tremendous exposure from their placement on our website. As described above, each time consumers log on to our homepage, they will automatically view the profile of various companies with links to their website. These profiles constantly refresh, exposing a wide range of OU Kosher clients to a vast array of food production corporations. Additionally, companies can find out the latest trends in kosher food production, as well as articles relating to kosher law. For companies and products requesting additional exposure, newly certified companies, products, and brands are periodically refreshed.

This is but the beginning of a constant redesign, redevelopment, and upgrades to our website. Essentially, in the digital era the World Wide Web serves as the main street of commerce, and home pages as the storefront. Featured elsewhere in this issue is information regarding oudirect.org, the powerful website that allow OU companies to manage and view their kosher programs and accounts. Coupled together with some specialty sites such as oupassover.org – our Passover site – and ou.org the site of OU Kosher’s parent organization, we are embarking on an ambitious plan to make OU Kosher information available to all.

Rabbi Eli Eleff is rabbinic coordinator and website administrator for OU Kosher. He graduated from the Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem and received his rabbinic ordination from the prestigious Yeshivas Ohr Hachaim in Kew Gardens Hills, NY. Rabbi Eleff also earned both his BA and MS from Touro College in New York City.

POST THE OU LOGO On Your Website

>>> Post the OU logo — one of the world’s best-known symbols of added attention to quality — on your website. Ask Suzanne Beck at BeckS@ou.org to send you a beautiful, hi-res OU logo
Ah, Chile!

This incredible country has been in the spotlight recently. Last year’s terrible 8.8 magnitude earthquake that rattled the southern and central parts of the country, and the spectacular miraculous rescue of the Chilean miners and then their emotion-filled visit to Israel have placed Chile firmly in the world’s spotlight. The truth is that Chile has been the model country economically and politically for the entire South American continent for the last two decades.
South America's Hottest Country is...
Chile is physically isolated from the world. The Atacama Desert in the north; the gorgeous snow-capped Andes Mountains in the east that separate Chile from Argentina and that can be seen from almost any point in Chile; and the stunning Lake Region leading to Antarctica, make Chile a traveler’s dream. The country is a few thousand miles from north to south yet only a hundred or so miles from east to west – it’s that long skinny country you see on the map.

Although Chile is known as the world’s largest producer of copper and one of the biggest exporters of wood, the food industry is its most dynamic and quickly growing industry. That is why in close to 15 years in Chile working with the OU, I have travelled from the north to the south of Chile and seen so much growth in so many diverse climates with many different products coming out of each specific climatic region.

From anchovies, salt and delicious olives in the north, to the fruity center of Chile that produces some of the world’s best quality fruits and wines, to Southern Chile where salmon and trout reign in the waters this country is a feast for the eyes and an opportunity for those who can use the country’s great economic climate to produce high-quality kosher products.

Chile’s Jewish population of 15 thousand, based mainly in Santiago, has benefited from kosher certified products, as the main supermarkets such as Lider and Jumbo now have kosher sections and many products bearing the OU Kosher symbol on them.

Starting in the north with the anchovy companies, there’s always a very friendly reception from Mr. Sergio Taboada, one of the owners of Agropesca, and Mr. Agustin Cataldo, who works for the company. If I take a taxi from the airport to visit this company it’s an insult to them. They show so much respect and caring and not only drive me to their company and give me some delicious samples, but they also drive me to their competitors’ plants and to
other companies in the area. The anchovies are fished locally and are salted for a few months with olive or other oils added afterwards, and then are canned and sent north to the United States.

Five hours to the south by car we find the astounding SPL Salt Company. The salt reserves are found high up on salt beds in the Andes; at some point the oceans reached so high as to leave salt deposits there that can provide the human race with salt for thousands of years to come. It’s exciting to see the salt blasted with dynamite out of the ground. Many bricks of salt have water trapped in them from thousands of years ago; I take a few of those souvenirs home after I visit. One would think salt is salt and doesn’t need supervision, yet there are processes and ingredients added to make sure the salt is nice and clean and doesn’t stick together; there is salt with iodine added and iodine free; a kosher certification is needed to ascertain that the ingredients used are kosher and sometimes Kosher for Passover.

Heading straight to the central region there are state of the art olive oil companies like Terra Santa in Curacavi on the way to the beautiful Vinia del Mar beach, or the enchanting Aculeo Lagoon, which is home to the Soho Olive Oil company; in both plants only extra virgin olive oil is produced. About three hours south of the capital is wine country. Millions of acres of vineyards line the Panamerican Highway; it’s a treat to the eye so drivers beware. Producing quality kosher wine is no easy task, yet working with the Luis Felipe Edwards winery for many years has been a great experience, in which both the team of rabbis and the company’s staff work together to produce award-winning kosher wines. Kosher tour groups come to visit this winery, as it is not just an advanced production plant but is located in a valley with many fruit trees and a small garden and park with antique carriages and wine barrels, perfect for a quick photo shoot.

The southern third of Chile is fish country, more than anything fish meal, which is used for animal feed and made from mackerel and hake; even more important are its salmon and trout farms.

Rodrigo San Martin, who runs the Marvivo Fish Company, has been my guide and friend since the very beginning in Chile. His company produces frozen fillets, canned and smoked salmon and trout. Most smoked salmon coming out of Chile is prepared with the cold smoked system with the smoke coming from wood chips. It’s a pure process in the sense that no artificial colorings or flavorings are added to the salmon, just natural smoke salt and sometimes sugar. Much of the salmon both processed and fresh we buy in American supermarkets, or the salmon we see in sushi bars, are Chilean products and come straight from these OU certified companies.

The price of salmon has been high of late due to a virus that wiped out ninety percent of the baby Atlantic salmon, similar to what happened in Norway a few years ago, but this has been almost completely eradicated and prices are starting to stabilize.

Chile’s government is extremely understanding and helpful to its companies, providing incentives which helps them set up new or upgrade existing plants to be able to meet HAACP ISO and kosher standards. ProChile is the government’s export bureau, with offices in many countries. In New York, its office is in the Chilean consulate right across the street from the UN.

Daniel Martinez, ProChile’s representative in New York, went with the OU to Kosherfest, and as the representative of many food companies in Chile has decided to set up a Chile booth for the 2011 show.

ProChile will promote many new niche areas like organic products and different oils, teas, natural and artificial colorings and fish products, that will open up even more possibilities for Chilean companies who have not yet exported or for companies who want to expand their export possibilities and range.
A Look at ProChile

ProChile(*), the Trade Promotion Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile provides a wide range of services for national exporters, such as high quality information systems; supporting their participation in some of the most important international trade shows; and programs specifically designed to develop export capacities.

While the Jewish community in Chile is not very large (close to 20,000 people) the supply of national kosher-certified products is increasing. “Chile has over 300 companies and national kosher-certified brands, covering not only domestic consumption requirements, but also focusing on export markets. The range of products for export is varied, including Chilean iconic products such as wine and salmon, as well as processed fruits and vegetables, milk, olive oil, nuts, and gourmet product,” said the Trade Commissioner of Chile in New York, Alejandro Cerda.

“ProChile is strongly interested in having Chilean companies access the market of kosher-certified products, positioning our country as a new supplier for kosher food. ProChile’s activities for 2011 will focus primarily on promoting the benefits of Chilean kosher products in niche markets in Europe and the United States; coordinating among national kosher producers through workshops and through the creation of an export directory; and identifying business opportunities for Chilean companies that are already kosher-certified,” he added.

(* ProChile, the Trade Commission of Chile, is part of the General Directorate of International Economic Affairs of Chile’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is responsible for implementing and enhancing Chile’s trade policy. ProChile’s mission is to provide support to small and medium-sized enterprises, helping to encourage and diversify exports of Chilean products and services by increasing the number of export markets and companies. ProChile has a global network of 56 trade offices and representatives strategically located in 43 countries, covering more than 90 percent of the destination markets for Chile. For more information please visit www.prochile.us

The mix of natural beauty, natural resources and Chile’s determination to continue growing as a South American leader in quality food production and exports, makes Chile a unique and proud country to live in, to do business with, and as The New York Times reported, the number one country to visit in 2011.

Rabbi Shoshan Ghoori serves as OU Kosher rabbinic field representative throughout South America. He was born in New York to a distinguished rabbinic family. He studied in Israeli yeshivas, including Beit Meir and Torat Moshe, and received rabbinical ordination from the renowned Beth Medrash Govoha, in Lakewood, NJ. Rabbi Ghoori moved to Chile in 1991 to further his studies at Kolel Avreichim de Chile and has since been actively involved in creating a vibrant Orthodox Jewish community through establishing both the Aish Torah of Chile and the first Sephardic congregation in Chile for Jews of Mediterranean and North African descent.

In addition, he was instrumental in creating the Spanish translation of the ArtScroll Siddur (prayer book) which has sold tens of thousands of copies. Rabbi Ghoori established the Kosher Chile organization as well as latinkosher.co. His exciting feature on OU certification in Peru appeared in the BTUS Spring 2010 issue.

>> CHILE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29
Dear Rabbi:

Our plant processes and cans fruits and vegetables. The raw fruits and vegetables are of course all kosher. Why would I need to receive OU kosher certification; wouldn’t everyone know that my products are kosher? Can you explain what would be involved in attaining kosher certification for my plant?

Answer by Rabbi Leonard Steinberg

Dear ____________:

Canneries present several concerns regarding the kosher status of their products. The first concern is the product itself. Are all ingredients kosher including the additives that may go into a fruit or vegetable? Next we are concerned with what else may be produced on the same equipment. Very often a plant that cans fruit or vegetables in season will can soups or meats in off-season. This can compromise the equipment so that anything produced on it will not be kosher. Another issue is shared steam systems where the condensate returned from a non-kosher product can be used in cooking a kosher product, which would render the product non-kosher. Some types of products also require rabbinic participation in their cooking in order to be considered kosher.

Kosher consumers will look for a reliable certification on any canned product because that tells them that all issues have been addressed and the product is indeed kosher. Without the certification the consumer must be wary that one of the above issues has compromised the product.

When you apply for certification, the OU will arrange for an initial inspection by one of our expert field representatives. The inspection will cover the ingredients and production processes. The OU field representative will file a report with the OU Kosher office taking into account all pertinent kosher issues. If there are any problems the OU office will work with you to find a solution to the problem. After resolution of all issues and approval of all ingredients, the OU certification contract outlining your kosher program will be written and once signed, your product will be OU certified.

Rabbi Leonard Steinberg is an Orthodox Union rabbinic coordinator handling new applications in the foodservice and food transportation fields. He also manages university kosher meal programs.
Chile has a long history as a wine producing country, with Spanish colonists bringing vines with them as they settled the country during the sixteenth century. It wasn’t until the 1980’s that Chile flourished as a major wine producing country. During this time there was significant investment in modern winemaking equipment and upgraded winemaking technology, which gained Chile an international reputation for producing good quality, easy drinking wines. Chile had arrived on the world winemaking map.

Chile is a long narrow country, with natural boundaries of the Andes mountains to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. This unique setting blesses Chile with ideal growing conditions to produce very fruity wines that are able to fully express their varietal character. The main wine producing area in Chile is in the Central Valley, stretching south from Santiago, with smaller finger valleys running east to west from the Andes to the Pacific Ocean producing more premium wines. (See map.)

The History of Luis Felipe Edwards Wine Group

The history of Luis Felipe Edwards Wines dates back to 1976, when Luis Felipe Edwards Snr, (Senior) purchased the large Fundo San José estate in Puquillay Colchagua Valley, a prime wine-producing area in Chile’s Colchagua Valley. In the early 1990s, Luis Felipe Edwards Snr decided to produce wine under his own name and so he built a modern winery equipped with the latest state of the art technology. Today, Luis Felipe Edwards Wine Group is the largest 100 percent family-owned wine company in Chile. Luis Felipe Edwards Snr is still actively involved in the management of the winery along with two of his sons, a daughter, and two sons-in-law. Since the 1970s, Luis Felipe Edwards Wine Group has continued to acquire more vineyards in the Colchagua, Maule and Leyda Valleys as well as expanding the original Fundo San José.

It has been clear for some time that the best quality red wines were grown on hillsides of the valley. Recognizing the potential for creating something very special, Luis Felipe Edwards Wine Group decided to push this principle to the limit and started planting vines on the top of the high hills of the Colchagua Valley, at an altitude of 900 meters above sea level, making these the highest vineyards in the Colchagua Valley. The high altitude is the inspiration for the name of the LFE 900 hilltop project.
This bold vineyard project of transforming steep arid mountaintops into high quality vineyards involved many challenges. Supplying water to the vineyards involves 3,500 meters of pipelines passing through eight pumping stations, which supply water to 25 kilometers of drip irrigation pipes. All of this has been accomplished with a high degree of environmental sensitivity, including replanting most of the trees and shrubs that have been conserved in their natural state.

To date a total of 130 hectares have been planted on the top of the hills, of varieties including Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Carmenere, Merlot, Malbec, Petite Syrah, Mourvedre, Petit Verdot, Grenache Noir and Viognier.

At the same time as the LFE 900 project was being undertaken, Luis Felipe Edwards Snr was investing in the coastal Valley of Leyda, an exciting, emerging region for growing the premium white varieties Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay, and the red grape Pinot Noir. LFE’s “Marea de Leyda” estate, whose vineyards are currently the closest to the sea out of all the vineyards in the Leyda Valley, is planted predominantly with Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, with smaller plots of Chardonnay and Syrah.

Leyda was not the end of the
growth of Luis Felipe Edwards Wine Group, as we headed south to the Maule Valley and acquired 400 hectares of land located 30 kilometers from the Pacific Ocean, close to the coastal range of mountains at an altitude of 120 meters above sea level. This patch will be planted this year, mainly with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Carmenere, Cabernet Franc and Carignan, hoping to be harvesting the first grapes by 2013.

**Elevating Quality**

Luis Felipe Edwards Wine Group’s main focus has always been on quality. Every glass of our wine reflects our family values of care, tradition and quality, while always striving to improve. Improving every glass of wine requires investment in every step of the process: finding the best vineyard sites, vines, personnel and the most upgraded equipment. Our outstanding international senior management team consistently works towards continual improvement.

Our modern winery is equipped with the most updated European equipment to ensure that Luis Felipe Edwards wines will always meet the highest international quality standards. This includes state-of-the-art bottling and labeling machines, high technology pumps, filters, pneumatic presses and cooling and heating equipment. All Luis Felipe Edwards winemaking and bottling processes are environmentally friendly and certified to international standards.

Currently, the company exports brands including including Luis Felipe Edwards, Santa Luz, Don Cayetano, Terra Vega, Don Julio, Alto Los Romero, Autoritas and Claro, to over 50 countries. Luis Felipe Edwards award winning wines are recognized internationally as one of the Chile’s leading wineries, produced by skilful local winemakers and assisted by top international consultants.

**Kosher Wines**

The company’s kosher project began in the late 1990’s when an importer from Israel approached us at Vinexpo in Bordeaux, France, requesting for our wines to become kosher certified. He was well familiar with the quality of our non-kosher wines. That was the spark that ignited our kosher wines campaign. Israel was our initial kosher market which then expanded to France, Morocco, Canada and finally to the United States, where we have just finished a working agreement with a previous importer.

Today Luis Felipe Edwards Wine Group is the main producer of kosher wines in Chile and is the largest wine exporter to Israel under two brands – Terra Vega and Don Julio. We are proud of our kosher wines, produced with the same care and attention to detail as our award-winning non-kosher ranges.

Our kosher certification process is supervised by the Orthodox Union and its kosher Chile representative, Rabbi Shoshan Ghoori. OU certification and its highly regarded OU symbol is recognized throughout the world as a statement of quality and integrity. We know that OU certification adds an extra level of credibility to our highly sought after line of kosher wines.

We produce different wine varieties; all of which are dry wines, under different brands of products. Most of the brands are mevushal, which means that the wine undergoes a very fast pasteurization in which the temperature of the must is elevated rapidly and is then rapidly decreased. With the former, we avoid simmering the must and the resulting loss of flavors and aromas.

The entire process is handled by the OU team to ensure the kosher status of the wine. They are present in the winery to physically tip the fruit into the crush, and for all subsequent processes through fermentation and bottling.

Rabbi Ghoori commented that, “It is a pleasure working all these many years with this exceptional and aristocratic family-run winery. From their executive front office in Santiago to their professional team at the winery, they have made the normally difficult process of producing quality kosher wines a smooth experience that we always look forward to with gusto.”

Or, as they say in Chile, “Me gusta este vino – I like that wine.”

Rabbi Shmuel Singer is Orthodox Union rabbincit coordinator for Luis Felipe Edwards wines.
Any traditional Jew will tell you that the most pivotal time of the kosher year is the Festival of Passover. But it is also the most intense period of the year for the many food companies who try to offer their products to the kosher market. This is because kosher keeping Jews are spending a lot of time and money buying food for Passover. In fact, according to one estimate, forty percent of all kosher products are purchased during the six weeks prior to Passover.

There are a number of reasons for the pre-Passover shopping sprees. First of all, Passover is the most celebrated holiday of the entire Jewish calendar (making the market share even larger than the rest of the year). The seder—a family-centered ritual celebrated on the first two nights of Passover and organized around food and wine—is the most commonly observed ritual of the entire Jewish year. While food is central to the seder, it is also pivotal to the rest of this eight-day festival. In fact, according to some Jewish thinkers, how we eat on Passover reflects how we eat the rest of the year.

Just as significant is the fact that Passover requires re-stocking the entire kosher kitchen. Foods containing five grains
(wheat, oats, barley, spelt, and rye) and their derivatives are completely forbidden (unless they are in the form of matzah, unleavened bread). To top that off, Jews of European descent refrain from other grain products (like corn, soy, rice, beans, among other staples) as well. Even foods that do not contain these ingredients are frequently processed on equipment shared with them (also prohibited according to Jewish law). This means that the vast majority of items found in the year-round kosher kitchen are unacceptable for Passover use. Entire pantries must therefore be repurchased, from condiments to snack foods, to oils. Between Passover’s popularity, the centrality of food to the Passover experience, and the many food restrictions special to the holiday, it is no wonder that so much food is purchased for it.

Because of the many food restrictions on Passover and the association of many Jewish foods with “tradition,” it is understandable why many think that the Passover diet consists of matzah, brisket, gefilte fish, horseradish, matzah balls, and syrupy-sweet wine. To whatever degree that these stereotypes were ever true, they are certainly not true now. Within the past few decades, the kosher palette (to borrow the title of a popular kosher gourmet cookbook) has grown much more sophisticated. The kosher market is now looking to and borrowing recipes from Italian, French, Asian, Southern, and other cuisines. The same is no less true for Passover. For these reasons, even a “kosher” brand like Gold’s is producing Passover-certified duck sauce (and a good one, I might add) in addition to the horseradishes with which the brand is commonly associated. While there will always be a place for matzah balls and macaroons on the Passover table, there is also room for beef bourguignon.

The tastes of the Kosher market are not only expanding but also becoming more refined. The market now has much higher culinary standards than it had, for example, forty years ago. This greater sophistication has also shaken up the Passover market. Two perfect examples are the standards of cheese and wine.

It was not long ago that Passover cheese was thought to be bland and heavily processed. These days, many Kosher for Passover cheeses are meeting a higher standard. One example is the artisanal Israeli cheese maker Barkanit. While they make an assortment of sheep and goat cheeses, one of their best is Gilboa hard sheep cheese. Those with a desire for authentic Italian cheese can now purchase scamorza, provolone, and fresh mozzarella cheeses from the Italian brand Yotvata. Recently, the gourmet cheese maker Cabot has also taken the Passover plunge, adding their sharp cheddar to the market.

The Passover wine market has experienced an even greater revolution. For the past two thousand years, wine has been integral to the Passover holiday. At the seder, Jews are obligated to drink four cups of wine to celebrate their freedom from Egyptian bondage thousands of years ago. Forty years ago, the only options consisted of overly sweet wines. But with the greater desire within the kosher market for sophisticated dry wines, the options have multiplied such that there are now hundreds of great tasting Kosher for Passover wines from all over the world.

Take your pick of styles and varietals, and it is very likely that there is a kosher equivalent. Not only are there many
authentic Kosher for Passover Bordeauxs, but also Cote du Rhones, Asatian Rieslings, Burgundies, Sauternes, and more. And that is just among French wines. Among Italian Kosher wines, there are Barolos, Chiantis, Proseccos, Pinot Grigos. The list of varietals and regions featuring kosher wines goes on and on. While there are always new kosher wines on the marketplace each Passover season, one notable addition this year is a line of Alsatian wines—Gewirtzteminer, Riesling, and Pinot Gris—from a special kosher production of the winemaker Willm.

Even those within the kosher market who have kept their sweet tooth for wine are looking for more sophisticated options like Bartenura’s popular Italian Moscato, Herzog Select’s Late Harvest Riesling and Late Harvest Gewirtzteminer. For those who really want to splurge for a sweet there is the kosher production of Chateau Guiraud Grand Cru Sauternes. Passover wine has certainly come a long way.

So what would it take for a company join in on the Passover trend? The process of getting a product certified for Passover is similar to that of approval for other new products, though (like everything involving Passover) much more intense. Companies interested in Passover approval submit forms detailing their products and ingredients to our Passover department. These ingredients are carefully reviewed. Should a company have trouble finding an acceptable Passover ingredient, the Orthodox Union—as part of its mission of superior customer service —tries as much as possible to help identify the appropriate ingredient or to suggest alternatives.

The fee for Passover certification is assessed based on the time (broken down in eight-hour shifts) and expenses needed for a rabbinic field representative (RFR) to oversee this special production. Because of the special significance of the laws of Passover and their many differences from the rest of the kosher year, the vast majority of products require this on-site rabbinic presence to become certified for Passover.

Once the formulas and facilities are approved, the actual production can begin. The RFR first kosherizes the product line to purge it of anything unacceptable for Passover. Manufacturing can then take place, overseen the entire time by the RFR. As long as everything goes according to plan, the resulting foods can bear the OU-P, the trademarked symbol indicating that they meet the Orthodox Union’s high standards for Passover use.

The time, effort, and fees (though it is not as much as you might think; ask your rabbinic coordinator for a price quote) involved in certifying products for Passover has frightened many away. But think of it as an investment, just as one would for any other new product being developed. In fact, a well-made Passover product by a respected brand is very likely, if not guaranteed, to gain sufficient market share for the Passover investment to pay off.

Every year, new Passover products are coming on the marketplace. Last year, the brand Health Gardens came out with a Passover-certified xylitol for those on sugar-free diets. Kedem introduced a sparkling pomegranate juice. Savion introduced a line of Fireman’s Frenzy sauces. Season introduced Moroccan sardines. This year also features many new and exciting Passover products. Among them is the gourmet Jane’s Crazy Mixed Up Salt. Shkedia is adding to its delicious Passover confection line with Chocolate Covered Citrus Peels, Chocolate Covered Coffee Beans, and Chocolate Covered Nuts. The specialty brand Sonny and Joe’s is coming out with Passover certified babaganoush and Eggplant Matbucha. Reisman’s and Lilly’s are each adding to their line of Passover baked goods.

This all begs the question, what will the next enterprising and forward-thinking company come up with for Passover next year?

Rabbi David Polsky has been serving the Orthodox Union’s Kosher Consumer Hotline since 2004. He studied at Yeshiva University where he received his B.A. in 2001 and his rabbinic ordination from YU’s Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 2005. Rabbi Polsky’s warmth, patience, and professionalism are always evident as he responds to more than one hundred consumer kosher questions, daily. He lives with his wife in New York City.
Each year, Passover strikes an acute sense of panic in the hearts of most homemakers long before the spring holiday actually arrives. Several weeks in advance, the search starts – looking through cookbooks and recipe clippings, calling friends and family members asking about long-lost recipes, or searching the world-wide web for Passover recipes – something old, something new, something borrowed, something tried and true.

Even though today’s modern kitchens are outfitted with a wide selection of appliances to ease Passover preparation, the kitchen needs to be completely cleaned out and then re-stocked, from condiments to cookies, from sauces to snack foods. To make meal preparation and cleanup easier, disposable foil containers are often used for turkey, brisket, kugels and vegetables, and many people use fancy disposable paper plates, glasses and cutlery for the larger than usual crowds at the Passover table.

Today, a huge selection of prepared and packaged Passover products are available on supermarket shelves to help make preparation easier for those who don’t want to cook – or for those who don’t have the time. Caterers also offer up a variety of menus in large ads in the local newspaper. One might think that a famine wasn’t far away!

Your grandmother or mother may have had a live carp swimming in the bathtub for her homemade gefilte fish, but today you can buy delicious frozen gefilte fish logs and transform them into a colorful, three-layered loaf that will wow your guests. Instead of roasted chicken, you can add bottled Szechuan sauce and canned pineapple to create a quick, elegant main dish that looks like it took hours to prepare.

With a little creativity and the help of some packaged products, here’s how to prepare some scrumptious Passover fare with flair! Your family and friends will never know – unless you tell them!

**TRICOLOR GEFILTE FISH MOLD (Pareve)**

The layered look is in!

5 medium carrots, cut in chunks (or 20 mini carrots)
1 package (10 oz) frozen chopped spinach
3 packages frozen gefilte fish, completely thawed

1. Spray a 12-cup fluted tube pan with nonstick spray.
2. Cook carrots in boiling water until tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain well.
3. Microwave or steam spinach for 3 to 4 minutes, until thawed. Let cool, then squeeze dry.
4. In a food processor fitted with the steel blade, process spinach until finely ground, about 15 seconds. Add contents of one package of gefilte fish and blend well. Spread mixture evenly in tube pan.
5. Spread with the contents of the second package of gefilte fish to make the second layer.
6. Process drained carrots about 15 seconds. Add contents of the third package of fish to carrots and blend well. Spread evenly in pan to make the third layer.
7. Place a piece of parchment paper on top of fish, then cover pan with aluminum foil.
8. Bake in preheated 350 F oven for 1 1/2 hours. When done, top should be firm to the touch and edges should pull away from sides of pan. A skewer inserted into fish halfway between centre and outside edge...
Passover

SAUCY SZECHUAN PINEAPPLE CHICKEN (Meat)
You’ll get rave reviews when you serve this dish to family and friends at your Passover table!

3 onions, sliced
2 chickens (3 lbs each), cut up
Pepper and paprika, to taste
1 1/2 cups Szechuan-style duck sauce
1 can (19 oz) pineapple chunks, drained (reserve liquid)

1. Place onions in the bottom of a large sprayed roasting pan. Remove and discard fat from chickens but do not remove skin. Place chicken pieces on top of onions. Sprinkle lightly with seasonings.
2. Pour duck sauce and pineapple chunks over chicken, along with half of the reserved liquid.
3. Bake covered at 400°F for 1/2 hour. Reduce heat to 350°F and bake 1 hour longer, basting occasionally.
4. When cool, refrigerate for several hours or overnight.
5. Discard chicken skin and congealed fat from pan juices. Reheat covered at 350°F for 25 minutes.
Yield: 12 servings. Reheats and/or freezes well.

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Norene Gilletz of Toronto, Canada is a kosher cookbook author and food consultant. She is the author of nine cookbooks, which include The NEW Food Processor Bible: 30th Anniversary Edition (Whitecap, February 2011) and Norene’s Healthy Kitchen (Whitecap). Her motto is “Food that’s good for you should taste good!” Her Pickle-icious feature appeared to great acclaim in BTUS Winter 2010/11 issue. For more information, visit www.gourmania.com <http://www.gourmania.com> or contact her at goodfood@gourmania.com <mailto:goodfood@gourmania.com>.
What do Paris, New York and Mexico have in common? Answer – kosher certification! Kosher certification has had steady growth over the past twenty years, by an average rate of 15 percent a year internationally. With thousands of products becoming kosher each year, the kosher consumer has choices that were not available to our parents and grandparents fifty years ago.

October through December were busy months for those of us in the food industry. With Sial, the world’s largest food show in Paris, Kosherfest, the International Kosher Food Show in New Jersey and the Internacional Kosher Expo in Mexico, it was a busy time for food manufacturers and kosher buyers.

Paris in October, when I was there, is unbelievably beautiful. The weather is crisp but not yet cold enough to have to bundle up. I was lucky to be in one of the most beautiful cities in the world to promote kosher food certification. I love my job — getting to go to Paris for work, where on behalf of OU Kosher I would meet with over 6,000 food and ingredient manufacturers to explore kosher certification!

OU is the world’s largest, most respected kosher certification agency. With over 70 percent of the kosher retail market being OU certified, it’s no wonder the OU is the most sought after kosher certification by manufacturers, as well as consumers.

Consumers trust the reliability of the OU’s kosher standards, while businesses know that having the OU on their products enhances their marketability. The OU has grown into the world leader for kosher certification, certifying more over 500,000 products in over 80 countries.

My trip to Paris took me to Sial, one of the world’s largest food trade shows. There I met many OU certified companies as well as many international companies from countries like India, Turkey, China, Vietnam, Israel, South Africa and South America. I only speak English, Hebrew and a few words of Yiddish, while my colleague, Rabbi Yisroel Hollander from Belgium, speaks French, Flemish and English. Together we managed to communicate with people from all over the world, sometimes cryptically. The fascinating common denominator was that when we mentioned the word “kosher” or “kasha,” the food manufacturers would smile and exclaim “Ahh, kosher” and shake their heads in understanding.

“Kosher” has become an international word representing a high quality standard of certification right up there with “food safety,” “organic” and “natural.” Companies know that in order to capture a larger portion of food sales it is important that they attract a large consumer base with products that appeal to everyone. Recent studies have shown that there is a large segment of consumers outside of the traditional “Jewish kosher consumer,” who purchase kosher food for a variety of reasons, including, food safety, health and reliability.

Kosherfest, which took place...
at the end of October in Secaucus, NJ was an astounding sold out success this year. With a strong international presence from Canada, Argentina, and Israel, Kosherfest was the place to be for everyone in the kosher food industry. As I travel and meet companies who are interested in selling their products to the kosher market, I always mention Kosherfest as the premier trade event for them to introduce their products to the kosher market.

My next trip took me to Mexico. The first annual Expo Kosher Internacional in Mexico City was well attended by the Mexican Jewish community as well as buyers looking for kosher products. I met people from South America, Israel and the United States – all gathering together to promote kosher in Mexico.

There are approximately 60,000 Jews living in Mexico; Mexico City alone has 40,000 Jews, representing the largest concentration of Jews in Mexico. I enjoyed the warmth and hospitality of the Jewish Mexican community.

Visiting Expo Kosher Internacional Mexico brought back memories of the first Kosherfest in 1988. At Kosherfest’s inception 22 years ago, the kosher industry in the U.S. was just beginning to dream of its eventual growth and development. The potential for growth for Mexican food manufacturers is strong, particularly for export. In addition, there is tremendous interest in kosher food from those in the Mexican Christian community who are seeking healthier, safer foods.

I can’t help thinking how the very core of being a Jew and keeping kosher has become a world phenomenon. Companies around the globe recognize the importance of kosher food as a business decision to increase their bottom line. And I’m always ready to meet with these companies at shows to tell them just how valuable OU certification can be for them.

Phyllis Koegel serves as the Marketing Director of OU Kosher based in New York City. She received her MBA from Pace University and resides in Cedarhurst, Long Island, NY.

OU KOSHER MARKETING TIPS:

If you’ve got it - flaunt it.

Letting your customers know that you are OU certified should be as much a part of your marketing strategy as any other significant benefit your product offers.

1. Ask our marketing department how best to reach the kosher consumer — countless consumers contact us every day about food products they can buy, places they can shop and eat, and information about kosher in general.
2. Plan special promotions around Jewish holidays: Passover (March /April), Rosh Hashanah (September) and Chanukah (December) are the most widely observed.
3. Want your products to be found on www.oukosher.org when consumers search? Be sure the product name listed on Schedule B is something that will come up in a search engine.
4. Keep a link to your current OU Kosher letter directly on your company’s website.

Recently attained OU certification, get the OU symbol on your packaging as soon as possible. Studies show that products with the OU symbol sell more.

Be sure the OU logo is large enough and clearly visible in your advertising — either on the product label or elsewhere in the ad.

Feature OU certification and the OU symbol on your web site. Forward your company information to be included on www.oukosher.org Featured Companies section, at no cost.
How the Chicken Went from the Jungle to Your Plate

By Rabbi Chaim Loike

According to most ornithologists the chicken is the domesticated form of the jungle fowl. There is some disagreement in the scientific community as to which species of jungle fowl were used to develop the domestic chicken. The dominant view is that the red jungle fowl (Gallus Gallus) was the primary genetic donor; however, some have argued that the green jungle fowl (Gallus Varus), the grey jungle fowl (Gallus Sonneratii) and perhaps some now extinct species, also contributed to the development of the domestic chicken. All of the known species of jungle fowl are native to the Far East, and the domestic chicken is thought to have first been raised on the Indian subcontinent.

Although the Far East, was thousands of miles from Israel, the two civilizations did have contact with each other. While classical biblical trade routes were not known to reach the Far East, there were times of peace and prosperity when extensive expeditions were launched by the Judean kings. Biblical Israel extends from the Mediterranean to the Gulf of Elat. From the port of Elat, Judean kings were able to launch naval expeditions via the Indian Ocean. The first successful expedition to the Far East was launched by King Solomon in the early years of the First Temple (Kings I: Ch. 10 v. 22; Chronicles II: Ch. 9 v. 21).

There were a number of failed attempts by other Judean kings (Kings I: Ch. 22 v. 49). The attempts by the Judean kings relied on the ship building skills of the Phoenicians (Chronicles II: Ch. 8 v. 18) and the Phoenician cities which bordered biblical Israel did successfully launch expeditions to the Far East without the participation of the Jews (Ezekiel Ch. 27 v. 15). As a result of these expeditions, many exotic items were imported into biblical lands from the Far East.

Along with the spices and woods, a menagerie of animals were brought back to the biblical lands. They include monkeys, elephants and peacocks, but no chickens. In fact the biblical word for peacock, tuki, is borrowed from ancient Tamil, who at that time dominated large areas of the Indian subcontinent. The first chickens were imported into Israel during the Mishnaic period, at the time of the Second Temple, almost one thousand years after the initial expeditions of King Solomon’s navy. It is unclear if the chickens were imported by Jews emigrating from Babylonia or by the armies of Alexander the Great returning from the conquests in the Far East. In any case, the chicken was immensely popular in Israel, as it was in the far reaches of the Greek and Roman empires.

In the biblical times, all domestic animals, pigeons, doves and numerous birds were used in the services of the Tabernacle and the Holy Temple which stood in Jerusalem. However, the chicken was not used in the Tabernacle nor in the services of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. Quite to the contrary, its habit of digging through the trash heaps and removing remnants of food could have presented a unique problem for the biblical Israelites.

In the time of the first Temple, ritual purity was strictly adhered to. Not only was the chicken not used in the Temple, but its actions could cause ritual impurity which would prevent a person from being allowed to ascend the steps of the Temple or enter through its gate. Persons could become impure if they came into contact with dead animals or insects. Mice, rats, and roaches no doubt foraged in the garbage heaps of biblical Israel. Yet, as long as people avoided these garbage heaps, they would not accidentally come in contact with the impure creatures.

However, the chicken, because of its habit of scratching the earth, eating insects and such would likely go to the biblical garbage heaps and in course of scratching for food, would find these ritually impure animals and insects. They would then run with these animals and insects in their mouth to eat them in privacy. This action would cause the impurity of the garbage heaps to spread. People who dedicated their lives to maintaining a standard of ritual purity would find themselves barred from the steps of the Holy Temple.

In the Second Temple period, there was indeed legislation passed to limit the raising of chickens for this reason. However, for much of the Second Temple period there was too much foreign interference to really bar the chicken completely, as by that time, the chicken had become one of the most popular domesticated birds in that part of the Middle East.

While the chicken’s economic usefulness is indisputable, aesthetically it is not as impressive as the monkey, peacock and elephant. If the biblical expeditions to the Far East did return with the chicken, their economic potential was never explored because of the danger which they posed to the general population, which was trying to preserve their ritual purity. With the destruction of the Second Temple,
One of the complex pieces of equipment used in the food industry today is the agglomerator. This machine is unique because of its high level of versatility, allowing for its many and varied functions. Through the application of dry heat and liquid spray, the agglomerator will effect physical and chemical changes to the texture of the product. The agglomeration process helps to produce a wide range of products: From medicinal herbs to dairy drink mixes, among the kosher products, and chondroitin and glucosamine, among the non-kosher items.

As with all machinery used in the kosher industry, the mashgiach needs to understand both its technical make-up and its processes, to be able to determine its kosherization needs. The agglomerator is comprised of a bottom chamber used for the inlet hot air to enter the agglomerator. This bottom area is covered by a screen used to disperse the hot air evenly to the upper chamber. Above the bottom area, in the upper chamber, is the product bowl. The product is held on a thin mesh screen which sits on a stainless steel screen held up by stainless steel beams. Above the bowl is an open area where liquid is sprayed, through atomizing nozzles, into the agglomerator and onto the product. Even further above that area is the bag house of filters which hold back the product from being pulled out with the hot air exhaust. The hot air is produced by either a heat exchanger or by a direct fire unit, which heats the air, and this air is then introduced into the bottom chamber.

The hot air is pulled through the product by a vacuum that pulls the air out on top. As the hot air goes through the bowl that contains the product, the product rises; a process called fluidizing, by the thrust of the upward movement of the hot air and is sprayed with the liquid that is needed for the agglomeration of the product. As the hot air moves through the upper chamber, it is also causes the evaporation of the excess liquid. The ability for the temperature and humidity to be at variant levels simultaneously in each of its sections is perhaps the most dominant feature of the agglomerator. The chemical make-up of source product and the desired outcome in new product will determine the temperature maintained on its many surfaces at any given time.

The mashgiach will be challenged to identify the presence of the following features in each product:

- The temperature of the hot air;
- The CFM (cubic feet per minute) of air flow;
- The rate that the liquid is sprayed in;
- The rate of evaporation which can

Kosherizing an Agglomerator: They Said It Couldn’t Be Done. They Were Wrong.

By Rabbi Yisroel Rossman

ritual purity has become almost impossible. As such, the chicken is raised throughout modern day Israel and is certified kosher by all major kashrut agencies, including the Orthodox Union.

Now, in our times, the chicken has become a staple of the Jewish diet, serving as a favorite food for Sabbath and Festival meals. Kosher food stores offer their chicken specials (barbeque and fried), which are snapped up by customers. Thousands of years after the domestication of the chicken, it is a feather in a chef’s cap to come up with a new Sabbath recipe using our favorite fowl.

Rabbi Chaim Loike, the OU’s bird specialist, serves as OU Kosher rabbinic coordinator servicing egg, spice and chemical companies. His fascinating BTUS features on the pigeon, partridge, peacock, duck, Aracouna chickens, birds of the Bible and flamingo are always big hits with BTUS readers. Rabbi Loike frequently visits with schools and adult groups as part of OU Kosher’s educational outreach, teaching about “Kosher Birds: Who Are They.”

>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 44
be adjusted by the temperature of the hot air or the CFM of air flow and spray rate;
• The various different liquids that can be used to affect the agglomeration process.

The inlet temperature can range typically from 110°F – 250°F from one product to another, and the internal product temperature can range typically from 85°F – 150°F. In the kosherization process, it is standard procedure to either fill the equipment with boiling water or apply dry heat of 500°F–1000°F; to do so in an agglomerator, would be to destroy it.

As mentioned, agglomerators can be used for a variety of products. As long as it is used exclusively for kosher pareve products, or exclusively for kosher dairy products, maintaining the kosher program is rather easy. For many years, Powder Processors, an OU certified agglomeration facility in Ogden, Utah, maintained an agglomerator exclusively for kosher pareve products. Maintaining the kosher program was rather simple. However, when the opportunity arose to produce a kosher dairy product on the pareve agglomerator, the challenge began.

Serious questions needed to be answered. Which areas of the agglomerator get hot enough to the point where kosherization would be required? What would be the most practical way to accomplish the kosherization? Could it be done at all? Complications integral to the uniqueness of the agglomeration process arose. Indeed agglomeration facilities are not equipped to boil an abundance of water, nor do they have steam generators accessible. We were stymied by its limitations; but, not for long. Working within the premise, “Were we able to kosherize the equipment, how should we?” the dedicated team at Powder Processors worked out the following solution:

As is the process for the kosherization of most equipment, the first step was to determine the temperature at which each section of the agglomerator is used. To do this, Powder Processors decided to attach Temperature Indicating Labels to all of the areas that may get hot during production. Obviously, the bottom mesh screen upon which the product sits would get hot, since the heat is directly below it. Thus, Powder Processors decided to purchase a new mesh screen and have dedicated pareve and dairy mesh screens.

Next, it would be important to ascertain if the areas above this mesh screen get hot. If the areas above the mesh screen do not get hot during the dairy production, no further kosherization would be required beyond replacing the mesh screen. If the areas above the mesh screen do get hot, kosherization would be required. Powder Processors suggested a rather simple solution. They would bring in a burner capable of boiling a large pot (new) with 10 gallons of water. The agglomerator would be preheated to 212°F, and the boiling water would be pumped into the agglomerator and sprayed through the spray nozzles.

By turning the spray nozzles upwards, dispersing boiling water throughout the agglomerator, the spray of boiling water would hit the hot upper walls and the stream flow would run down. Our objective of accessing all heated surfaces which come into contact with hot product through the use of boiling hot water, would be accomplished.

However, a new problem came to the fore at this point in the process. During the spraying stage, a substantial amount of heat is lost, due to evaporation. Once again, a simple solution was found. After the hot water was sprayed in, the agglomerator would be reheated, thereby causing the water that was saturating the walls to boil. The agglomerator would be thoroughly and effectively kosherized. Replacing or washing the bag house or filters to remove any residual product would conclude the process.

Rabbi Yisroel E. Rosskam was born in Brooklyn, NY. He attended Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and Mirry Yeshiva, Lakewood, NJ. For the next five years Rabbi Rosskam continued his advanced studies in Jewish law, concentrating on all areas of kashrut, culminating in his receiving rabbinical ordination. In 1990 he was selected to join the newly established kollel in Denver, CO, where he was also introduced to the kosher certification field.

In 1994, Rabbi Rosskam was appointed as rabbinic field representative by the Scroll K agency. Representing the only kashrut agency within a 600 mile radius, he was also frequently asked to perform inspections on behalf of OU Kosher. During his continued extensive work in the kosher food industry, Rabbi Rosskam interacted with many of the OU’s rabbinic coordinators, as well as rabbinic field representatives. In 2006, he was appointed Rabbinical Administrator of the Scroll K / Vaad Hakashrus of Denver. He travels throughout the Rocky Mountain Region and beyond inspecting tens of OU certified companies. In his free time you can find him deep into continued study of the Talmud or simply enjoying his family.
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I have been a full-time OU rabbinic field representative for the past 12 years. My job has taken me to all types of places and has given me exposure to people and plants of which I never dreamed.

I was born in London, England, and my rabbinical studies led me to New York City, where I met my wife and thereafter began rabbinical work. Until last year, my family and I resided in Louisville, KY. Although we now live in Cincinnati, OH, I retain the same supervision route as before, which includes Indiana and Kentucky.

My day begins early. When I start my route, I may visit a large baking facility such as Flowers Foods of London KY, Consolidated Biscuit Co, or Kraft Foods North America/Biscuit & Snacks Division. I may then proceed to visit a massive flavor house, like Clarendon Flavor Engineering Inc of Owensboro KY, and then to some dairies.

I drive over 50,000 miles a year, and I have just reached the 600,000 point - all with no speeding tickets, thank God. I stay over in hotels on average of two to three times a week.

I visit over 100 companies. Two of my plants schedule many special productions. One of these plants is Morgan Foods of Austin, Indiana, renowned for its top-quality soup offerings. As one of America’s most sought-after business partners in the private-label food industry, Morgan Foods offers retailers everything they need to win customers and keep them coming back.

Even though Morgan Foods manufactures numerous non-kosher products, the company has undertaken an amazing program to maintain OU certification of many of its products. Every kosher production at Morgan Foods involves kosherization of the facility and full-time OU supervision of kosher productions.

Another special-production company I visit often is Bluegrass Dairy & Food of Springfield, Kentucky, where I enjoy a very good relationship with their staff, especially with the Mr. Jerry Hardin and Ms. Patty Howlett (senior management); they are dedicated utmost to our kosher program. This plant processes hundreds of specialty powders made on spray dryers, including cheese, flavoring, dairy, honey, molasses, shortening and butter powders, and it also features a long list of specialty blends. Due to the plant’s mixed production (kosher, non-kosher, dairy and non-dairy); I visit often to supervise kosherization and special productions.

Understanding Bluegrass/Springfield works has been a most interesting experience, as spray-drying is one of the oldest forms of drying — and one of the few technologies available for converting a liquid, slurry or low viscosity paste to a dry solid (free-flowing powder) in one-unit operation. Spray dryers are found in almost every industry, including pharmaceuticals and detergents, paint and pigments, food and dairy, and mining and minerals.

Visiting Little Brownie Bakers, L.L.C. that manufactures Girl Scouts cookies, is always a treat. If you were to ask me what the Garden of Eden smells like, I would reply, “chocolate mint”!

Jif peanut butter, owned by The J.M. Smucker Company, is also on my route. This facility and its staff are a pleasure to work with, and their renowned products fit well with their overall stellar work.

Recently I began visiting a new plant called Bloomfield Farms, which specializes in gluten-free products, Mr. Daniel Sutherland, president of Blend Pak and CEO of Bloomfield Farms, and Ms. Ruth Companella are model examples of how one expertly runs a kosher program. There are nine different gluten-free OU Kosher certified products produced by Bloomfield Farms.

I also visit our friends at Dawn Foods products, the provider to bakery owners with quality commercial food service products for bakery management and the baker owner. I work with our dedicated kosher contact Mr. Ron Foster who
AN RFR’S KENTUCKY (AND INDIANA) DERBY

exels in keeping up with hundreds of kosher dairy and pareve ingredients at the plant and with all the kosher dairy and pareve production lines.

Let me not forget Najla’s, Inc. a gourmet specialty food manufacturer specializing in all-natural upscale, handmade products made from the highest quality ingredients. And yes, there is a Najla, and a Stasia, and an Azra. Their products are made by these incredibly talented artisans. They never cut corners; never compromise quality or consistency. All Najla’s products are kosher dairy, free of high fructose corn syrup, free of hydrogenated and trans fats, free of preservatives and artificial flavors. It’s like having three pastry chefs in your corner! They do all the work, you get all the praise.

The internationally renowned Mead Johnson Nutritionals, best known for its Enfamil and Enfalac families of infant formulas as well as for our regional children’s nutritional products, including Enfagrow, Enfapro, Enfakid, EnfaSchool, and Sustagen is most fortunate to have Mrs. Evelyn Brady administer its extensive kosher program. Her total dedication to our kosher program is exemplary. The equipment and different lines used at this plant of 2,000 employees used to make all these many different products was a big learning curve for me, but after visiting this plant for more than ten years, I believe I’ve gotten the hang of it.

I visit The Carriage House Companies Inc. Division of Ralcorp, one of America’s leading store brand food manufacturers, having roots that predate the store-brand food industry. Mr. Jeff Williams and Ms. Leiga Cooper do a wonderful job with maintaining our kosher program. Some of the products produced here are salsas, barbeque sauce, sauces, jams and jellies, chocolate and pancake syrups.

Jim Beam Brands, located in Frankfort, KY, manufactures a large variety of the best known liquor products. Mr. Nathan Capps is a person truly dedicated to our kosher program and is always looking to enhance and add more products to the OU kosher line.

Another big industry I got very involved with is the oil industry, visiting Consolidated Grain & Barge, Inc., where the soybeans come in raw and are crushed. I then visit Owensboro Grain, where the crude soybean oil is sent. The process also includes degumming the oil and then RBD that is, Refined, Bleached and Deodorized.

Last but not least is Snyder’s of Hanover, Inc, which is now Snyder’s-Lance, Inc. Located in Jeffersonville, IN, this plant produces kosher tortilla chips, kettle chips, and potato chips. It is a company I thoroughly enjoy visiting.

My special-production work schedule often requires me to work when others are home spending time with their families or sleeping. I am frequently at special-production plants on Sundays, overnight, and at all odd hours. On these days, my work hours exceed 20 hours daily, yet the hardest part of my job is to schedule and be available to all of our partners at any given time.

I share with all my plants that I am not a policeman, seeking to discover problems. Rather, I am there to verify that all is well. If and when a problem is found, we will fix it together. My job is to assist and accommodate companies in every way possible. It has also been my good fortune serving as a matchmaker with different OU companies, and have thereby helped them thrive with business.

As a rabbi, I frequently find myself being a therapist, as many of the employees and sometimes the employers of the companies open up to me with their personal trials and tribulations, seeking my advice and recommendations. I always keep in mind what they tell me so that on my next visit I can follow up and continue to show my care and concern. Sometimes all people need is just a listening ear! On one occasion, I spent over an hour listening to someone without saying a word, and when the speaker was done he said, “Thank you, rabbi; you have such good advice!”

What a privilege it is being part of the Orthodox Union – the world’s largest and most respected kosher certification agency.

Rabbi Yosef Levy was born and raised in London, England. After spending two years of study in Manchester, England, Rabbi Levy studied for rabbinic ordination at the Lubavitch Yeshiva of New York. As part of his rabbinic training, Rabbi Levy spent a good deal of time doing Jewish religious outreach in the former Soviet Union, where he ran educational and religious programs at camps and schools.

Rabbi Levy joined the Orthodox Union in 1999 to become the first full time RFR in Kentucky, where he was assigned to supervise nearly 100 companies. He also is an active member of his synagogue and community in Cincinnati, where he serves on its board of directors, maintains educational and outreach programs for youth and adults, and visits with inmates at federal prisons. Rabbi Levy lives in Cincinnati, with his wife and six children.
HERE IN 20 MINUTES is everything you need to know about the procedures and requirements necessary to produce an OU Kosher product, and how to design an effective system at your company. Recommended for personnel in management, production and quality control and for in-house training.

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