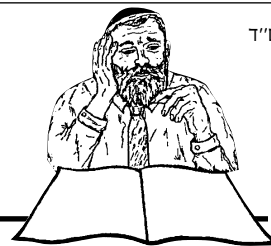


THE DAF HAKASHRUS



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE  RABBINIC FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

CONSUMERS' FAQs ON KOSHER FISH PART I

RABBI CHAIM GOLDBERG
Rabbinic Coordinator - Fish Industry

Q: How do we identify a kosher fish?

A: The Torah¹ says that the *simanim* of kosher fish are "*snafir v' kaskeses*". However the Gemara² tells us that all fish that have "*kaskeses*" have "*snafir*", so in practice, all one

needs to determine that a fish is kosher is that it has *kaskeses*!

Q: So what exactly is *kaskeses*?

A: "*Kaskeses*" is generally translated as scales. **Nonetheless, not all fish that have scales have *kaskeses*.** This is because the *Ramban*, in his commentary on the Torah³ tells us "*kaskeses*" are scales that can be easily removed by hand or with a knife without tearing the skin. Scales that are embedded in a fish (or are not visible to the naked eye⁴) are not "*kaskeses*". The *Ramban's* definition is universally accepted, and in fact the *Rema's* rules that those scales that cannot be easily removed (according to the parameters discussed below) cannot be called "*kaskeses*".

Q: I heard there are several different scientific classifications of scales. Which are *kaskeses*?

A: Though scientists categorize scales by certain characteristics⁶, the Torah is only concerned with whether or not a scale can be easily removed without tearing the skin, irrespective of its shape, color or size⁷. From the Torah's perspective, the various classifications of scales are irrelevant. Statements by certain "experts" about various types of scales always being kosher are not true.

Q: What are some examples of fish with scales that are not kosher?

A: Sturgeon definitely has scales, but it is not kosher. Its scales are classified as "ganoid", which means that they are covered with ganoin (similar in texture to fingernails) and cannot be removed without tearing the skin. Burbot has cycloid scales (one of the types often referred to as "always kosher") yet because they are embedded, this fish is not kosher. Sand lances may have tiny scales, but since they are not visible, this fish is not kosher.

Q: How can I know if a fish is kosher?

A: To check if a fish is kosher, one must ascertain that its scales can be properly removed⁸. *Kaskeses* are attached on the side of the fish closer to the head and are not attached on the side closer to the tail. To remove it, one must grasp the side that is not attached and gently pluck it from the side of the fish.⁹ If removing the scale did not damage the skin, then the fish is kosher.

Q: My local fish store is not under Rabbinic supervision, and it sells fillets without skin. How could I tell if the fish they are selling are kosher?

A: You cannot! Even if the fish is halibut, whitefish or carp (all

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ASK NEWS

BY RABBI YOSEF GROSSMAN, DIRECTOR ASK 

Grape Juice & Wine Seminar

Close to 150 participants from the NYC metropolitan area as well as from Lakewood, NJ and the Catskills attended this dynamic and stimulating seminar on Sunday March 14th at the Young Israel of Flatbush. Many worthy Rabbonim were in attendance including Rav Kurtstag, the Rosh Beth Din of the Beth Din of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Rabbi Kenneth Auman, President of the RCA and Host Rabbi greeted all of the assembled. Rabbi Menachem Genack discussed the various opinions on the use of grape juice for the Four Kosos. Rabbi Yisroel Belsky gave a Shiur on whether grape juice from concentrate could be used for Kiddush and the Four Kosos. Rabbi Zevulun Charlop related a fascinating personal life story involving his illustrious father Zt'l and Rav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik Zt'l concerning the use of grape juice for Kiddush. The five areas of Halacha where non-Mevushal wine has Halachic implications were reviewed by Rabbi Herschel Shachter. Rabbi Dovid Cohen explained the Berochos of various grape products. The seminar concluded with Mr. Feisch Herzog, the V.P. of Royal Wine Corp. (Kedem), relating some highly interesting stories and discussions with the Gedolei HaPoskim of the past generation such as Rav Moshe Feinstein Zt'l, Rav Eliyahu Henkin Zt'l, the Tzelemer Rav Zt'l and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Zt'l concerning wine and grape juice. Tapes from this exciting seminar are available from Zalman Umlas - 718-252-5274.


The Mesorah of Kosher Birds and Animals - A One Day Conference & The Halachic Seudah at Levana

These historic and one-of-a kind educational events are a first for North America. See accompanying brochure for further details.

Men and women are invited to attend the Mesorah Conference and the Halachic Seudah or both. You also have the option of ordering a box lunch. However, for all of the above you must be pre-registered BY WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21st. Kindly complete the registration form in the accompanying brochure and mail with any checks to my attention c/o Orthodox Union, Eleven Broadway, NYC, NY 10004.

ASK 7 &

The Kashruth Summer Internship Program

Registration for the bi-annual one week ASK  7 as well as the three week Kashruth Summer Internship Program begins after

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FISH

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kosher fish), once the skin is removed it is impossible to identify, and it cannot be assumed to be kosher. In determining the kosher status of fish, identity is critical.

There are two ways to identify a kosher fish:

1. By removing a kosher scale from the skin¹⁰
2. By recognizing the fish as being from a kosher species. One can only recognize a fish species if the skin is still intact. It is generally impossible, even for a “maven”, to identify fish without skin. The exception to this rule is that the OU accepts salmon and red trout fillets without skin, as there is no non-kosher fish whose flesh resembles that of a salmon or red trout.

For example, let's say you want to purchase tilapia¹¹. You've heard that tilapia is a kosher fish, and the friendly counterperson assures you this skinless fillet is tilapia. You cannot rely on this person, unless he is both Torah observant and familiar with the laws of kosher fish. Now let's say a tilapia eating friend (who met the above criteria) comes to the store with you and recognizes a fish in the display case whose scales have been removed as tilapia. Even though its scales are not present, you may eat this fish because a halachically reliable person has positively identified this as a kosher fish. Therefore, one can only purchase skinless fillets from a store under reliable Rabbinic supervision.

Q: Why doesn't the OU publish a kosher fish list?

A: At this time, there is no reliable consumer fish list, and it would be very difficult to create one.

The reason is that “common names” are a highly inaccurate way of describing a fish. For example, there are several fish known as “red snapper”¹². Who can say for certain that every fish called “red snapper” is in fact kosher, when “red snapper” could be referring to so many different fish? Another instance that we have found common names to be misleading is in the case of “escolar”. Escolar could refer to *Ruvettus pretiosus* (kosher) or *Gempylus serpens* (non-kosher). Yet another is “Ling” which could refer to 6 different species of fish¹³ most of which are in fact kosher. However, when the OU examined a sample of one of these “Ling” fish whose Latin name is *Lota Lota* (also called Burbot, Freshwater Cod, Eelpout, Lawyer and other names) we found it to be not kosher.

Latin names are more accurate. We could theoretically create a list of kosher fish by Latin name. The problem is that fish sellers never refer to fish by Latin names, and have generally no knowledge of the correct Latin name for a fish! In one case, we asked a kosher fish store the Latin name of a certain (kosher) fish and the Latin name provided was that of a completely different, non-kosher fish!!!

¹ Vayikra 11:9

² Chulin 66b

³ Ad loc

⁴ Aruch HaShulchan 83:15

⁵ Yoreh Deah 83:1

⁶ For more information on the definitions of the various classifications of fish scales, see the Australian Museum's web site at www.austmus.gov.au/fishes/students/scales/

⁷ Rabbi Y. Efrati wrote this in the name of Rabbi Y. Eliyashev in a Teshuva dated the 11th of Elul, 5763

⁸ Teshuvot Sheyvas Tzion #29 cited by Pischei Teshuva 83:1, states that it is necessary to actually remove the scales and not merely rely on the Rov (i.e.

majority) that most scales are easily removed.

⁹ I have not found this procedure explicitly, though this is simply the way to check the kosher status of a fish. Though the Nodah B'yehuda permitted a fish similar to sturgeon whose scales became removable only by soaking it in an alkaline solution, the Pischei Teshuva rules like the Teshuvot Sheyvas Tzion (cited above) who does not allow it.

¹⁰ The consumer need not personally remove the scale. The consumer only needs to see the scale removed and confirm that the skin did not rip from having the scale removed.

¹¹ According to www.fishbase.org, there are more than 30 different species that could refer to tilapia. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (the “FDA”) officially lists 7 different tilapia that are marketed in the U.S., (see www.cfsan.fda.gov/cgi-bin/seafd?QUERY=tilapia) though there may be more.

¹² See comments from the FDA on the species substitution of red snapper at www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/CONSUMER/CON00251.html

¹³ See www.fishbase.org



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
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Pesach. Tentative dates for the **three week program** open to Semicha students and Bnei Kollel is **Wednesday, July 28th through Tuesday, August 10th** and for the one week **ASK @ 7** open to Rabbonim, Vaadei Kashruth and the general public from **Monday, August 9th through Friday, August 13th**.

For any information concerning the above you can reach me at 212-613-8212 or email grossman@ou.org.

KASHRUTH alert!

Kikkoman, Inc. **TEMPURA BATTER MIX** (Foodservice Item) produced by Kikkoman, Inc. Walworth, WI is certified as  and correctly marked as  on the outer cases. The dairy designation has been inadvertently omitted on the individual bags. Future packaging will be revised.

WILD GARDEN HUMMUS (assorted flavors), sold in jars, and produced by ZBI, Cicero, IL mistakenly bears an  symbol and is not certified as Kosher by the Orthodox Union. Consumers spotting this product are asked to contact the Orthodox Union at 212-613-8148 or via email loewia@ou.org.

Some bags of consumer and industrial Yoshon flour with a date code of AL241 or earlier of the following two companies have been found to contain insects. Users should check or sift the flour before using: **DEPENDABLE BAKERS, DEPENDABLE HIGH GLUTEN, FANTASTIC HIGH GLUTEN** Dependable Food Corp., Edison, NJ. **SUPER BAGEL, MAZOR, MOUNTAIN HIGH, MOUNTAIN STRENGTH, PROGRESSIVE BAKER FANCY CLEAR, SPRING HEARTH, FY HIGH GLUTEN, PROGRESSIVE BAKER HUMMER** Cargill, Inc., Minneapolis, MN.

בואכם לשלום...

WELCOME BACK TO RABBI GAD BUCHBINDER who has rejoined OU Kashruth after graduating from Fordham University School of Law and working as a lawyer for the law firm Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP. Rabbi Buchbinder will be involved in OU Kashruth marketing projects.