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OU KOSHER’S 2015: A SUMMARY OF SUCCESS
A Work in Progress: Roe, Roe, Roe Your Fish

BY RABBI CHAIM GOLDBERG

When people imagine those involved in giving kosher supervision, and the requisite knowledge to do our job properly, they imagine rabbis in regal robes like the Supreme Court in full session. While the rabbis at OU Kosher do need to have a very strong working knowledge of the various kosher laws governing food production and the guidelines under which kosher food must be made, people are often surprised to learn about how much of our jobs require knowledge of food science, chemistry, biology, logistics and so much more. While we’d all like to work under ideal circumstances, we at OU kosher are always up for a new kosher challenge. Today’s assignment: possibly certifying flying fish roe.

Various fish in the family Exocoetidae, are prized fish. Flying fish are a dish of national pride (and a source of accord with neighboring nations) in Barbados, for example, so much so that they are featured in the passports! A recent application to OU Kosher arrived from someone wishing to make a product from the roe (eggs) of flying fish in Peru. Luckily, OU kosher had someone in the area at the exact time the application came in (just at the end of the spawning season), and we were able to review the request within days of its receipt.

While our primary concern in certifying any fish product is guaranteeing that the source fish is kosher (which we believe flying fish are) we are always worried about various forms of adulteration of target product (intentionally or unintentionally) with non-kosher bycatch species. In the case of our flying fish an additional concern arose: unlike most species of finfish that we work with, flying fish are not harvested and gutted to collect their eggs. Flying fish lay their eggs on various flotsams or possibly on nothing in particular in specific sections of the water column. That means that not only aren’t the source fish stable (i.e. dead), they also aren’t easily reviewed by the rabbi to ensure they are kosher. The concern is that if we don’t see the eggs emerge from the fish, how can we be sure that the roe is exclusively from the kosher species?

Flying fish work themselves under water to reach speeds of about 37 miles per hour, angle their bodies upward, and then the four-winged flying fish can break the surface and taxi by
rapidly beating its tail while it is still beneath the surface. It then takes to the air, sometimes reaching heights over 4 feet and gliding long distances (up to 655 feet). Once it nears the surface again, it can flap its tail and taxi without fully returning to the water. Capable of continuing its flight in such a manner, flying fish have been recorded stretching out their flights with consecutive glides spanning distances up to 1,312 feet.

Flying fish are attracted to light, like a number of sea creatures, and fishermen take advantage of this with substantial results. Canoes, filled with enough water to sustain fish, but not enough to allow them to propel themselves out, are affixed with a luring light at night to capture flying fish by the dozens.

The issue now facing the experts at OU kosher is how to guarantee the purity of this roe.

A few options remain:

Source the fish from an area where eggs are collected with the onsite rabbinic supervisor present. He could visually confirm that no other species have mixed into the egg supply. The fact that the fish aren't available for manual handling isn't an issue, provided he can grab a couple of sample fish to confirm that he is familiar with the species and observe during the egg-laying that the fish from which the eggs emerge appear to be the same.

The downside is the cost: depending on the volume of eggs needed, there is no reliable way of knowing where and when to find spawning flying fish. While a field rabbi could surely observe some egg-laying, we might not be able to supervise enough for the customer's needs. We also remain with some concerns that other sources of fish might've mixed in without the rabbi being able to confirm (this all happens rather quickly, the fish are not sticking around to give statements. Kind of like commuters, they pass the ATM, make a deposit, and get back on the road).

Without onsite rabbinic supervised roe, we'd need to figure out how to guarantee the integrity of the roe harvested. One option is visual review (having the rabbi go through copious amounts of unprocessed roe to look for anomalies), coupled with a little research on our end into what other species of roe might reasonably be mixed with flying fish roe (so far we found nothing, but this is only the beginning!) The obvious concern is that it's far from flawless in terms of vetting non-kosher bycatch.

Unsupervised roe extraction might theoretically be guaranteed though DNA testing, though this has several limits as well. Assuming we could find a lab comfortable with guaranteeing flying fish

1 Taken from http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/flying-fish/
(a species not often sent for DNA testing), the tests themselves are only on a small sample size. 20-30 tiny pieces totaling a few grams from each submitted sample are normally drawn, concentrated and then the DNA checked against a verified master sample. That sample is then checked for ambiguous or mixed sequences of DNA, indicating if anything besides the target species is present. The tests themselves are not cheap, and we’d need to work with a statistician (no, I’m not joking) to confirm the number of sample tests needed to guarantee a single delivery (ostensibly from each fishing region).

For example, when a similar issue came up with checking for insect infestation, we determined that 23 samples of approximately six grams from each batch would confirm the absence of insects. We’d need to consider differences in the collection and randomness of the fish roe collection to see if that standard would apply here as well.

Time is also a factor. DNA testing can take a week or more, which means we’d likely have to give a conditional approval for the roe to be further processed pending DNA review (fish roe degrades shortly after extraction, even freezing it prior to primary processing would likely degrade it to the point where it wouldn’t work for our customer). Customers aren’t happy with the idea of having a factory produce their product without knowing if they’ll even be allowed to consider the end product OU-certified, but that’s a risk which will need to be considered.

This article is being written while in the heat of the issue’s discovery. We haven’t even received the rabbinic field inspectors’ written report and assessment yet (a critical step before approving any OU-certified production), and significant additional research into the bycatch concerns and possible ways of avoiding it need to be made. Once all of this information is collected, it will be presented to those regal robed rabbis to rule, if flying fish roe has the requisite recognizance to rightly retain OU ratification.

RABBI CHAIM GOLDBERG HAS BEEN MANNING THE FISH DESK AT THE OU FOR 13 YEARS, MANAGING 350 OU-CERTIFIED MANUFACTURING PLANTS AND TRAVELING TO FIVE CONTINENTS TO INSPECT AND ESTABLISH KOSHER PROTOCOLS AT PROCESSING PLANTS OF ALL TYPES. RABBI GOLDBERG’S TACKLE BOX CAN BE FOUND IN HIS FAMILY HOME IN BROOKLYN, NY.
Double, Double, Toil and Trouble:
When One Boiler Serves Kosher and Non-Kosher Production

BY RABBI ELI GERSTEN

One of the more challenging considerations when evaluating a factory that produces both kosher and non-kosher is dealing with their shared utilities, such as a common boiler. If a factory produces both kosher and non-kosher products, even if the products are made on separate lines or in completely separate parts of the plant, this can still be problematic, if they share a boiler. If the steam or hot water that is used to heat the non-kosher kettles is returned to the boiler and then reused throughout the plant, in effect both the kosher and non-kosher kettles are being heated with the same water.

At first glance, it would appear that a shared boiler would not pose such a great problem. After all, the steam or hot water never directly touches any of the food; not the non-kosher food nor the kosher food. Rather, it simply circulates through the jackets of the kettles, always remaining segregated from the actual food. One might think that since the steam follows its own special path, never converging with the food, it will never become contaminated. However, kosher law dictates that we view the pot of food and the steam that heats it, as being cooked together. If the food is non-kosher, the steam will become non-kosher as well, and it may not subsequently be used to heat the kosher kettles.

So what can be done to alleviate this concern? There are several options.

First we must determine which non-kosher products pose a concern in the first place. If the percentage of non-kosher ingredients in a particular production is very small, although the overall product must be labeled non-kosher, it may not pose an issue with the steam. The rabbinic coordinator (RC) who oversees the plant or the rabbinic field representative (RFR) who visits the plant can help you determine which kettles will or will not pose a problem.

If the steam does become non-kosher, one can avoid the issue by not returning the condensate to the boiler. If instead of returning the condensate, it is sent to the drain, the boiler will remain kosher.
Another possibility is to ensure that the water in the boiler is non-potable. Non-potable water will not become non-kosher, and may be circulated around both the kosher and non-kosher kettles. Sometimes, the regular boiler treatments alone are sufficient to foul the taste of the boiler water to such a degree. However, additional chemicals are often needed. One chemical that is often recommended for this purpose is Bitrex (Denatonium Benzoate). This very potent chemical already at 5 ppm will make the boiler water completely undrinkable. Usually, a system for metering in the chemical is necessary to ensure that the boiler always remains at the appropriate concentration.

RABBI ELI GERSTEN SERVES AS OU RABBINIC COORDINATOR AND RECORDER OF OU POLICY. HE IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO BTUS.

OU KOSHER CERTIFICATION

certifies over 900,000 products in over 8,000 facilities in 80 countries. The OU kosher symbol is found on close to 70% of all kosher certified packaged products in mainstream supermarkets in the United States.
Viva La OU Kosher! Bringing the Taste of Italy Home

BY BAYLA SHEVA BRENNER

Like every foodie on the planet, kosher consumers love to eat anything Italian. And now, thanks to OU Kosher, they’ve got even more to love. Rabbi Nachum Rabinowitz, the OU’s Senior Rabbinic Coordinator reports a steady rise in Italian companies obtaining OU Kosher certification. In just the past two years he’s seen an increase of 30 percent.

“Kosher is an integral component to penetrating the U.S. market,” he says. “Italy makes excellent products and Americans love Italian cuisine.”

To date, 207 Italian plants have gone OU Kosher. Rabbinic Coordinator Rabbi Aharon Brun-Kestler works with a variety of Italian companies. Unigra, one of his largest clients, is an industrial complex in Conselice, in the province of Ravenna. The company produces oils, chocolate, soy milk and packaged whip creams. He said that was an atypical client.

“Many of the manufacturers are family-owned companies,” says Rabbi Brun-Kestler. “Much more like mom and pop operations.” These successful family enterprises include La Regina Di San Marzano in Naples, makers of whole peeled tomatoes; and De Cecco, producers of pasta and extra virgin olive oil in Fara San Martino. Ferrero, part of the Piedmont region of Italy bordering France and Switzerland at the foot of the Alps, is the third largest chocolate producer and confectionery company in the world.

Family owned or not, Italy’s food manufacturers are welcoming the benefits of OU Kosher certification. OU Kosher is the most widely recognized and trusted kosher certification in the world, serving more than 8,000 certified plants in 100 countries across the globe.

Along with the producers of pasta and olive oils, Italian wineries are putting in the extra effort to make their products kosher. OU Kosher wines have become a staple for wine lovers since the 1980s, when Bartenura began importing its flavorful and affordable products to America.

The grapes that create Italy’s distinctive wines grow in various regions of the country. In fact, there are at least 350 common wine
grape varieties used for Italian wines in the 20 wine-producing regions throughout Italy.

Bartenura Moscato wine, which is wildly popular with both kosher and non-kosher clientele, originates from Moscato grapes grown in Pavia; Chianti wine comes from a combination of Sangiovese and Merlot grapes grown in Tuscany; Pinot Grigio grapes blossom in the sunny hillside of Veneto, a northeastern Italian region bordering the postcard-perfect Dolomite Mountains and Adriatic Sea.

“It’s a beautiful country,” says Rabbi Rabinowitz, who travels to Italy to help plants establish OU Kosher certification. “I would say it’s one of the most magnificent countries in the world—and the Italian people are very nice.”

Rabbi Avrohom Hazan, who grew up in Italy, concurs on both points. Since he started supervising for OU Kosher 35 years ago, he’s travelled to hundreds of scenic plant locations throughout the country, from the northern towns of Pavia, comprised of grassy plains, where Riso Scotti rice products are made and Asti, in Piedmont, the world’s key wine-producing provinces—to the southern sunbaked region of Calabria and Napoli, situated on the toe of the country’s boot-shaped peninsula, home to pasta, olive oil and Italian tomato production.

“Tourists come from all over the world to enjoy our resorts in San Remo, Venice, and, the most beautiful place, Sorrento, a fishing village near Naples with the blue sea and white cliffs,” says Rabbi Hazan. He also echoes Rabbi Rabinowitz’s observations of the Italian people. “They show me a lot of respect. Many of the manufacturers and workers call me before the Jewish holidays.”

Rabbi Yishai Hochman, another OU Kosher supervisor, travels back and forth from his home in Jerusalem, visiting scores of plants across Italy. His schedule entails 12 days in Italy and eight in Israel and then 12 in Italy again. “Look at a map of Italy, point out almost any location; I’ve been there,” says Rabbi Hochman, who says his proficient “street Italian” helps him break the language barrier and bridge any cultural gap at plants in Torino, Milan, Bari Reggio Calabria and Rome.

“It’s important to speak personally, in a way that helps them feel comfortable with me and lets them know we have a mutually beneficial
partnership as we work together for the goal of kosher,” says Rabbi Hochman. Apparently, it’s not just wine, olive oil, and pasta manufacturers who are seeking OU Kosher certification. Add to the list: Balconi Cakes; Grisbi and Vicenzi Cookies; Amaretto di Saronno, Frangelico, and Bicerin di Gianduiotto Cream Chocolate liqueurs; Illy Caffe; Natural Earth Balsamic Vinegar of Modena; San Pellegrino Mineral Water; and a steadfast favorite, Ferrero’s Nutella Hazelnut Spread (a chocolaty hazelnut spread, marketed in over 75 countries across the globe).

So, treat your taste buds to a tossed green salad smothered in Bertolli and Colavia olive oils; enjoy an entrée of Barilla and De Cecco pastas topped with your favorite Agromonte tomato sauce; then finish with a plate of Vicenzi Lady Fingers dipped in Bicerin Italian White or Dark chocolate liqueur. All OU Kosher.

Buon appetito!

When attending industry conferences or exhibiting at shows, be sure to display signs that say:

“WE ARE PROUD TO BE AN OU KOSHER-CERTIFIED COMPANY”

Marketers and show organizers should always have the signs in their show kits. They are sure to attract kosher buyers to your booth.

If you need more copies of the sign, we will be glad to supply them. Just email koegel@ou.org.
Certifying Oil as Kosher: It’s Not Easy

BY RABBI AKIVA TENDLER

**Kosher Fat:** Edible oil and by-products such as fatty acids and lecithin are a necessary ingredient in almost every food industry. As a result, the demand for kosher oil has increased globally for the ever-expanding kosher market.

In this article we will explore the various oil production processes and the requirements to be certified as kosher by the Orthodox Union. Although a seemingly innocuous item, oil production includes many phases, production agents, and equipment which need to be kosher compliant. For starters, most animal and fish-based oils cannot be certified as kosher. Common non-kosher oils include fish-oils, tallow and lard. Palmitic and stearic acid are examples of common by-products that can potentially be sourced from non-kosher oil.

**Equipment:** Due to increasing public health awareness to trans fats, the demand for animal-based oil has significantly dropped in recent years. Therefore there are very few edible oil refineries in the United States that refine both vegetable and animal oil. It is still common in Europe and Central and South Americas. However, there are many bottling facilities in North America that are storing and bottling non-kosher and vegetable-based oils with shared equipment. As with all kosher products, the integrity of a kosher production line is essential. Cross-contamination with non-kosher product needs to be avoided. This is one of the many reasons that vegetable oil must be certified as kosher.

**Crushing:** When producing vegetable oil, the seed/bean is cleaned and dried. Foreign materials such as stones, glass, and metal, are removed by sieving and magnets. They are then disposed of outside the feed chain.

Some oilseeds, like soybeans and sunflower seed, may be de-hulled after the cleaning step. After de-hulling, the meal will have a lower crude fiber content, and hence a higher protein content. The hulls can also be used for feeding purposes, most often in pelletized form.

Seeds with high oil content, like rapeseed (canola) and sunflower seed, are usually mechanically pressed in expellers after a preheating step in (indirectly) heated conditioners. Because the expeller cake (or pressed cake) may still contain up to 18 percent oil, it is then further treated in the extractor. In some cases the expeller cake is sold for animal feed.
In the expelling process, the oil bearing material is fed into one end of a cylinder in which a power-driven worm conveyor forces the material out the other end, against resistance. The pressure squeezes the oil out. Soybeans, with relatively low oil content, are thermally treated, mechanically cracked and flaked for further extraction.

Sometimes the raw material is pressed without heating; such oils are known as cold-pressed oils. Since cold pressing does not extract all the oil, it is practiced only in the production of a few special edible oils, i.e. olive oil.

In the past, crushing was done between mill stones that later became steel rolls. That is why until today oil factories are known as oil mills and the process as oil milling or oilseed crushing, even though it is more common to extract the oil with solvents.

Solvent extraction is used to separate oil from seeds/beans where the principle is to employ a volatile liquid in which the oil is freely soluble. The common solvent used is hexane. The pre-processed seeds/beans are treated in a multistage counter-current process with solvent until the remaining oil content is reduced to the lowest possible level. The kosher certification agencies monitor the various solvents available in the ever changing world of food technology.

There is little concern that equipment used to extract the oil will be shared with non-kosher oil since non-kosher oils are not crushed. However, starting with the storage through the fillers, the tanks and lines are monitored for kosher integrity.

The OU has found that some olive oil producers have used cell wall digestive enzymes to increase the oil yield of the olives. These enzymes are potentially animal based. These enzymes have to be approved as kosher by being listed on the Schedule A, just like any other ingredient or production agent. Steam may also be used to improve yield. Although this is most often approved, in some European countries the steam is provided by a separate company nearby which may be supplying steam to a non-kosher facility, and recycling that steam with the kosher steam. This should be considered at the planning stage for kosher certification.

**Degumming:** Crude oils -- the oil immediately following extraction -- may have relatively high levels of phosphatides. Soybean oil, for example, may be degummed before refining to remove the majority of those phospholipid compounds. Phosphoric or citric acid may be used to disso-
citate the nonhydratable phosphatides (NHP) into phosphatidic acid (PA) and calcium or magnesium bi-phosphate salt. Both components are removed by adsorption on bleaching earth in the degumming process. The citric acid needs to be certified as kosher.

During the degumming process, the crude oil is treated with a limited amount of water in order to hydrate the phosphatides and then separate them by centrifugation. After the degumming process, the crude oil is dried to remove this added water.

Soybean oil is the most common oil to be degummed; the phospholipids are often recovered and further processed to yield a variety of lecithin products.

Distillation: The miscella -- a mixture of oil and solvent -- is separated by distillation into two components; oil and solvent. The solvent is recycled into the extraction process. After the oil has been manufactured into the crude state, it is either refined in the same plant or transported to a different plant for refining. All transportation of bulk oil (and any liquid) must be in kosher approved carriers.

Refining: Refining is the process by which crude oil is made ready to be used for human consumption by removing its impurities. The oil refining process involves some or all of the following steps:
1) Alkali Refining: Removes fatty acid content and other impurities. This is achieved by introducing an alkali solution into the oil while it is being heated.
2) Bleaching: Removes color producing substances and further purifies the oil. This is achieved by putting material such as bleaching clay into the oil to absorb the substances.
3) Deodorization: Removes any remaining materials in the oil that can cause spoilage or unpleasant odors. Oil is pumped into a deodorizer (a very large piece of equipment that heats the oil in a vacuum).

The kosher cleaning (kosherization) of a deodorizer is difficult and is something kashrut agencies try to avoid if possible. The preference is to use vegetable oil from plants that exclusively process vegetable oils. A deodorizer can be six stories high. There are many trays into which oil is pumped, heated, and centrifuged at temperatures as high as 700°. It is difficult to clean because after each deodorization process a film of oil adheres to the deodorizer and is not easily removed. In order to properly perform a kosher cleaning (kosherization), every inch, nook and cranny has to be cleaned until it looks brand new, which can be very labor intensive and expensive.
Off-Shore Tanks: An often overlooked issue is off shore storage. If a tanker unloads an oil hold to an off shore tank which will then be transferred to a barge or railcar, this off shore facility also requires kosher certification to verify that the tanks are not shared with any non-kosher certified oil.

Conclusion: Kosher certification monitors the mechanics of oil extraction, the agents used, and the vehicles for transporting the kosher oil. Kosher certification verifies that from the beginning of the extraction until the retail filling, all steps comply with the rigorous kosher guidelines. The demand for kosher certified oil increases daily. The OU receives requests on a daily basis from companies around the world, including the most remote areas of the Amazon Jungles. This global reach of the OU has positioned it as the number one kosher certification agency. It is no surprise that kosher consumers prefer oil with the OU kosher symbol!

RABBI AKIVA TENDLER SERVES AS RABBINIC COORDINATOR SERVING THE OIL, TEA AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRIES. HE IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO BTUS. HIS “DOCUMENTING INTERMEDIATE PRODUCTS” APPEARED IN THE FALL 2015 ISSUE.

The 2016 OU Guide to Passover

The preeminent resource for Passover observance, planning and shopping; The OU Guide to Passover is a must-have in Jewish households nationwide. Distributed free of charge to this comprehensive guide includes informative articles, useful charts and reference materials...

The Guide’s comprehensive listing of OU-certified products is unrivaled in print or on-line.
Interactions with Rabbi Belsky – Redefining the Word “Irreplaceable”

BY RABBI AVROHOM GORDIMER

We mourn the loss of Rabbi Chaim Yisroel Belsky, who served as Senior Kosher Law Consultant at OU Kosher for three decades.

Rabbi Belsky was an internationally acclaimed scholar of Jewish law, whose opinions and rulings on the most sensitive of kosher law issues were sought after by the multitudes. Rabbi Belsky, who was born in New York in 1938 and who was one of the first American-born rabbis to attain such prowess, literally revolutionized the kosher certification industry worldwide, setting standards and determining best practices for an incredibly wide array of industries and specialty areas. Although Rabbi Belsky’s official “day job” was rosh yeshiva/dean of the Torah Vodaath rabbinical school in Brooklyn – an advanced landmark institution that has trained tens of thousands, and was founded by Rabbi Belsky’s grandfather – Rabbi Belsky left his mark on the world of kosher and on so many other spheres of Jewish and general life.

Below are some first-person recollections for BTUS readership.

Ever since my first encounter with Rabbi Belsky at OU Headquarters, where I had the privilege to present halachic questions about important matters in kosher law to him for almost two decades and to gain from his immense wisdom, I have been spoiled, as have been all of my colleagues at OU Kosher who came to Rabbi Belsky during his Thursday sessions at the OU to pose important questions pertaining to the kosher requirements and protocols of the food manufacturers whose accounts they handle. We have been so spoiled.

We have been spoiled by having a first-class technical master who knew the processes, equipment, relevant science and issues far better than anyone. Rather than having to first explain to Rabbi Belsky the facts on the ground about the issue for which we came for guidance, Rabbi Belsky would instead give us a lesson on it as we began each discussion. Usually, one needs to laboriously present a halachic (Jewish law) decisor with the technical intricacies of each question, and perhaps repeat and break it all down several times so that it can be understood, before the decisor is confident that he has the information clear.

With Rabbi Belsky, this was not necessary. It was like a student asking a top-tier math professor a simple math question or an acclaimed physicist a basic physics question – there was no need
to explain to Rabbi Belsky about the technology and science, for it was all on his fingertips. This uniquely elevated the halachic discourse to unparalleled levels of ease and sophistication, and gave us, the rabbinic coordinators, the luxury and comfort of interacting with someone who fit so naturally into our world of kosher and technical processes. In fact, Rabbi Menachem Genack, CEO of OU Kosher, told me on several occasions that food company executives related to him that Rabbi Belsky, after visiting factories for kosher purposes, understood the equipment and processing mechanisms better than they themselves did, and taught them things about their own operations of which they were unaware.

We have likewise been spoiled by having a top-notch rosh yeshiva and in-depth Torah scholar serve as decisor. Every time we asked a question, we received a mini-lecture on the topic, a detailed explanation of the mechanics, and an answer that was so compelling that we knew it was pristine truth and not something based on a limited presumption or on an approach that we felt was subject to question. The answer reflected Rabbi Belsky’s profound understanding of the topic, evincing sophisticated and developed logic that emanated from the depth and bedrock of the halacha as only a rosh yeshiva can grasp it.

Answers were never superficial or based on a “tally” or less masterful approach, such as deciding an issue based on the number of sources which rule a certain way versus those that rule otherwise. Rabbi Belsky would read aloud from the relevant sacred books when replying to questions, in order to show us the firsthand sources, specific expressions and nuances, and make us feel part of the halachic give-and-take. After rendering a decision, Rabbi Belsky would show us inside how the ruling was in truth what the kosher law books and commentaries meant. It always came forth so decisively clear that the ruling was true and accurate without flaw, as if Rabbi Belsky had read the minds of the authors of the source texts. Totally compelling responsa of dizzying depth, with pure simplicity that fit the words of the sources and that we knew reflected their true intent, was what Rabbi Belsky always presented.

This unique blend of a decisor who was both a halachic doyen and technical wizard, all with such depth and breadth, is irreplaceable.

Rabbi Moshe Elefant, COO of OU Kosher, elaborated upon the legacy Rabbi Belsky created: “In great measure, we will be guided in the future with the thousands of halachic papers he wrote on kosher issues. His knowledge was second to none. He not only mastered the laws of kosher slaughter and kosher meat, but he was himself a ritual slaughterer and an expert in the intricacies of kosher deveining, which he passed on to hundreds of kosher slaughterers.”

Dr. Avraham Meyer, the OU’s most senior overseas field representative, whose prowess in kosher and science are unequalled, told me after Rabbi Belsky passed away that he was “the most
amazing man I have ever met, and I have been around for a quite a while.” Dr. Meyer explained: “One of the most remarkable memories of my life was having lunch at an OU conference with Rabbi Belsky, discussing kosher and microbiology. The intellectual speed (truly a supersonic thinker); the interest in and understanding of complex science and technology; the innovative thinking; the whole range of conceivable halachic approaches at his fingertips – it was wonderful and excellent for my humility. In additional to all that, he was a lovely, caring person.”

Rabbi Belsky was also renowned for his low-key/high-caliber acts of kindness:

The lobby of 11 Broadway in NYC where the OU is headquartered, has a barber shop (an
excellent one, by the way!) which Rabbi Belsky used to frequent every month or so after finishing his session at the OU. Rabbi Belsky would have his hair cut there by Roshell, a young barber from Queens, New York.

Roshell told me a few months ago that he and his friend had just made a siyum (completion of a Talmud tractate) at their local synagogue, and that he had invited Rabbi Belsky to come, although he certainly did not expect the rosh yeshiva of Torah Vodaath to trek to Queens for a siyum, especially for someone who was not even his student. Roshell told me that when he arose to formally complete the tractate at the siyum, he noticed that Rabbi Belsky and a student who drove him were sitting at the edge of the room, as guests. Roshell could not believe it, and he immediately went over to Rabbi Belsky and asked him to speak, giving great honor to the occasion by introducing the crowd there, many of whom were not used to hearing such internationally renowned authorities speak, to the rosh yeshiva of Torah Vodaath.

Rabbi Dovid Bistricer, OU rabbinic coordinator, added another piece to the story about Rabbi Belsky and the barber: “Roshell also told me that four years ago, Rabbi Belsky asked if he could attend Roshell’s wedding. (It would have been a tremendous honor for Roshell.) Unfortunately, Rabbi Belsky became sick right before the wedding and was unable to attend.

When Rabbi Belsky recovered and returned to the OU, he stopped in to say hello to Roshell before coming upstairs to the OU offices. The first thing Rabbi Belsky did was apologize to him for not making it to the wedding.”

Such is the humble conduct of a genuinely great Torah scholar. Rabbi Belsky always honored the Torah and his fellows, forever, without fanfare and with true sincerity.
Reclamation and Reuse of Water

BY RABBI GAVRIEL PRICE

Food manufacturing companies are always keen on finding ways of eliminating inefficiencies. One way to do this is to recover a byproduct of a processing stream and reincorporate it into production.

Fresh water is innocuous from a kosher perspective, but when reclaimed from a non-kosher production it can have serious implications for future kosher productions. Here are four cases where a company has reclaimed or reused water from one production for use in another. Read carefully, because plant processors themselves are often unaware of the consequences of these recovery systems.

Vapor Scrubber Water

In the course of vinegar production a significant volume of vapor escapes into the atmosphere. In some regions, like southern California, environmental regulations mandate that a vinegar manufacturer capture the vapors. Some manufacturers, even without regulatory pressure, choose to recover the otherwise lost vapors and return them to the vinegar stream.

A non-descript column called a vapor scrubber is nestled above each vinegar manufacturing tank. A scrubber is composed of packing material that absorbs the vapors. Water courses through the material, stripping it of the condensed vinegar.

If a company is manufacturing both kosher white distilled, and non-kosher (red or white wine) vinegar, both types of vinegar vapor will be recaptured. What will the company do with all the vapor-laden water? Sending it to the drain not only means losing perfectly usable water; typically municipal fees are associated with wastewater treatment.

The most efficient usage is for the production of white distilled vinegar, which is essentially made from ethanol, water and nutrients. This in fact was the procedure at a vinegar manufacturer a number of years ago, until a sharp-eyed and tenacious field representative realized what was happening.

Separation Column at an Animal and Vegetable Fatty Acids Plant

When a fat or oil is processed, or split, to yield fatty acids and glycerin, it goes through
behind the Union Symbol

an enormous (110 feet high, four foot diameter) tower called a separation column.

What happens, specifically, is that oil or fat is pumped into the bottom of the column and water is pumped into the top, while steam is being injected into the column. Oil makes its way up the tower and water sinks to the bottom. The collision of the two, together with assorted perforated metal trays and intensely high temperatures, forces the oil to split into its two components, fatty acids and glycerin.

The standard switchover from tallow to vegetable processing allows for something called a clean-break, and uses the same water that induced the splitting of tallow to induce splitting of the coconut oil. The non-kosher water, freshly cooked with tallow, is literally the same water used for the coconut oil processing.

COW (Condensate Of Whey) Water

What about the water used for cleaning, or for kashering? At many cheese companies separation technologies remove fat and protein fractions from whey, which leaves over lactose, minerals, and water. The permeate stream can be further separated, leaving what is referred to in the industry as “polished” water.

This water is so commonly used in the industry it’s been honored with a nickname: COW (Condensate Of Whey) water. The water is dairy and cannot be used in kosherization for equipment that will be running a non-dairy (pareve) product; if the water comes from non-kosher whey it is considered non-kosher. Typically COW water is used in cleaning equipment, although in one case an OU representative has reported seeing it used in the production of fruit juice.

Wheat and Corn Starch Processing

Passover productions are also vulnerable to creative reuse of water. A European processor of corn starch was interested in having its product certified for Passover as non-chametz (free of wheat and other grains). Separate from the corn starch division is a wheat starch division.

Wheat starch production requires a wheat/water slurry, in which wheat is cooked at about 160°F. The slurry is then spray-dried, a process that removes the water component. This bonus water is used in the corn starch production.

There's yet another way water can be recovered from wheat starch processing. Alpha amylase is added to wheat starch to initiate decomposition to glucose (dextrose). Water is a byproduct
of this process. This water too is recovered and has multiple applications, including use in corn starch production.

What is the implication? Corn starch, which appears to be straightforward non-chametz, is (when originating from this manufacturing plant) chametz. The corn starch could not be certified as non-chametz.

OU representatives are trained to be attentive to the creative usage of resources such as water to ensure it does not contravene OU standards. If you have an opportunity to reclaim or reuse a byproduct that would otherwise be lost, contact your RC to find a way of resolving the issue without compromising the kosher program.

RABBI GAVRIEL PRICE SERVICES THE TRANSPORTATION, INGREDIENTS AND FLAVOR INDUSTRIES AT THE ORTHODOX UNION. A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO BTUS, HIS “THE OU SYMBOL: HANDLE WITH CARE,” APPEARED IN A RECENT ISSUE.

After much demand, the OU is pleased to present an extremely valuable feature serving the kosher transport sector.

Our website [www.oukosher.org](http://www.oukosher.org) now features an interactive map displaying all the North American locations of OU certified tanker and railcar wash facilities.

The direct link to this map is [https://oukosher.org/wash-facilities/](https://oukosher.org/wash-facilities/) and will also be featured on your company’s home page on [www.oudirect.org](http://www.oudirect.org) in the near future. A certified trailer or railcar company can now access information on where to receive a kosher wash and links to information regarding the different types of ‘kosher wash’ services (i.e. maintenance vs. upgrade wash) offered to suit your needs. The addresses on the map are linked to Waze for drivers on the road using mobile devices.
National Raisin Company was started in 1969 by three brothers, Ernest, Krikor and Kenneth Bedrosian. The company was established as a collective bargaining concern because the farmer-businessmen brothers felt added clout was necessary to effectively compete in the marketplace. Since that time, the company has grown to be one of the largest raisin processors in the world.

Linda Kay Abdulian, President and CEO of the company, credits much of its success to partnerships like the OU, where high standards and credibility are paramount. National Raisin is the number one provider of store brand dried fruit, and is a major supplier to commercial bakeries, cereal manufacturers and dairies. National Raisin collectively owns or helps manage over 4,000 acres of raisin vineyards and prune orchards. They are also fig handlers and have begun an active farming partnership in the date industry as well. In addition to raisins, prunes, figs and dates, the company procures and distributes other agricultural products from its worldwide base of suppliers.

National Raisin was started as a family-owned and operated company and has remained true to its roots. The day-to-day management responsibilities have been passed down to the next generation, a group of highly qualified executives who refer to themselves as “G2.” Linda Kay, who, like her siblings, grew up in the business, speaks highly of the OU-National Raisin relationship. She has been instrumental in continuing this path of partnership that her father and uncles started years ago. “We have been proud partners with the Orthodox Union for as long as I can remember. Every one of the 164 million consumer packages and bulk sales boxes we produced last year had the OU symbol of excellence. It’s been our crown jewel since I was a little girl.”

National Raisin sells finished packaged goods to most major food chains, supercenters, drugstores and membership stores as well as
ingredient product to many food manufacturers. While most of National’s customers now require OU certification, National Raisin was OU sanctioned many years before that. National Raisin is aware of its unique opportunity as it applies to family life during the holiday season, when baking activity and the resulting dried fruit usage is high. “A large part of our products are sold during holiday periods,” says Ms. Abdulian, “and our consumer data suggests that a high percentage of raisins sold during that period are used in baking. Since baking is celebrated and brings families together, we know the OU symbol adds security and peace of mind. That’s very important to us.”

National Raisin Company’s Mission Statement begins, “To provide safe, high quality food products...” which also reflects the OU’s core values. Indeed, National’s recently updated Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative highlights its ongoing commitment to Honesty, Service, Respect, Safety & Excellence. Jane Asmar, National Raisin’s VP Marketing and Sales adds, “It’s all about being a good provider and a good citizen to the world, and OU certification helps us immeasurably to convey that message. We want our customers and our consumers to know that we are serious about taking responsibility for the company’s effects on environmental and social well-being.

"National leads the industry in innovative solutions to maximize sustainability. It is home to California’s largest private solar power plant, which produces enough power to supply over a thousand homes. The anaerobic digester, a covered biologically balanced ecosystem the size of three football fields, converts wastewater into potable water used for irrigation as well as producing renewable natural gas for even more additional sustainable energy.

National Raisins’ commitment to the OU requires additional time and effort, which Ms. Abdulian acknowledges enhances the value of the OU partnership. “We know, 100 percent, that our customers care more about the high standard and value of OU-certified product than they do about National Raisins’ scheduling challenges or extensive sanitation procedures. Where else and how else could you promote that powerful of a message so simply as the OU symbol?”

Visitors are impressed with the Fowler, California plant, which is consistently being updated. The facility practically buzzes with excitement and high levels of automation. NRC has one of the most sophisticated production facilities in the world, which stands in stark contrast to the limited amount of executive and administrative offices, which are, literally, trailers. Ms. Abdulian laughs it off and points to the massive building: “THAT’s where the magic happens!”
Amid the explosive growth of the U.S. kosher food industry in recent years, a new survey has found the OU symbol of the Orthodox Union to be consumers’ most preferred kosher certification.

### WHEN OU WAS COMPARED WITH OTHER KOSHER SYMBOLS

- The OU symbol was the best known and **most widely-recognized** kosher certification symbol by a wide margin among Jewish and non-Jewish respondents.
- By a 3 to 1 margin, OU is the symbol **most often found** on the food purchased by respondents.
- By a 2 to 1 margin, respondents named OU as the symbol they would select as their **first choice to purchase**.
- Consumers’ overall opinion of OU-certification is significantly higher than all other certification symbols.
- By a 2 to 1 margin, OU is the **symbol that comes to mind** when a respondent is asked to think of kosher certification.
- By a 4 to 1 margin, kosher observant Jews perceive OU to be “the standard” of kosher certification, and purchase OU-certified products over products with other certifications.
- Jewish and non-Jewish consumers who purchase kosher food on occasion perceive the OU symbol as standing for **the safest and cleanest foods**.

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www.oukosher.org | For more information please contact OU Marketing 212.613.8372
A Hint of KVINT Makes the Difference for Newly Certified Molodovan Wines

The Tiraspol Winery & Distillery, known as “KVINT,” is one of the biggest manufacturers of alcoholic beverages in Moldova. The factory was founded in 1897. (Moldova, once part of the Soviet Union, is an Eastern European country located between Romania and Ukraine. It is known for its production of wine.)

The unique climate, the richness of the soil, the complexity of the terrain, the proximity to the Dniester River, and the sea air create favorable conditions for growing high-quality grapes. Modern European equipment, the most advanced technology and unique recipes allow the company to manufacture drinks that compete successfully with many famous brands.

KVINT possesses its own vineyards spread over 2,000 hectares. On the company’s lands, more than 20 grape varieties are featured, including traditional French varieties such as Ugni Blanc, Colombard and Folle Blanche, whose vines were imported from France. Our plantations feature the most modern agricultural machinery manufactured by leading brands such as Pellenc, John Deere, and New Holland.

In our cellars we keep about 11 million liters of absolute alcohol of wine-distilled spirits aged in wood from one to 60 years. Such a broad choice of spirits of different ages gives our blenders an unlimited freedom to create new compositions. The presence of a blend of spirits, distilled from native grapes, makes our brandy an inimitable masterpiece, featuring its distinguishing national trait, a signature of this land!

Our distillery and winery annually produce 20 million bottles of brandy (aged from three to 50 years) and other hard liquors such as vodka, gin and calvados, as well as table and vintage wines. The company employs leading Italian enologists who have great experience in the creation of high-quality beverages.

Since 2000, the company has been certified according to ISO 9001. The factory operates with production control and a research laboratory, equipped with the most modern equipment necessary for the quality control of manufactures from the grape berry to the finished product.
The presence of the company's own design bureau, which employs highly qualified professionals, allows us to promptly redesign existing beverages or develop and bring new products to market.

The products of KVINT are well-known and appreciated in many countries of the world, including Western and Eastern Europe, Russia, North America, the Middle East, China, Africa and Japan.

In search of new sales markets, Tiraspol Winery & Distillery, KVINT, took on a completely new approach, that is, the production of kosher products; the company now follows the strict guidelines for kosher production. Our drinks have become very popular in Israel and among Jewish communities in the United States, Germany and Russia. In the first stage in the development of production and sales of kosher products, the factory produced and sold for export kosher Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot wines, Brandy KVINT and most recently we added Divin (Brandy) KVINT three years old (aged in oak barrels not less than three years).

The OU’s Rabbi Nachum Rabinowitz commended KVINT on its cooperation with the OU Kosher team. Kosher wine requires a real commitment, one which KVINT met admirably.

It should be noted that today many people, who aspire to a healthy lifestyle consume kosher products. Tiraspol Winery & Distillery, KVINT, plans to continue production of OU kosher products in order to meet the needs of even the most sophisticated consumers, since kosher certification guarantees the buyer the highest quality products.

WWW.OUKOSHER.ORG,
the world's most frequented kosher website, features OU certified companies and their products on its OU Featured Companies section. Close to 1,000 companies are already posted.

In order to be posted at no cost, please submit the following information to safrane@ou.org:

- Name of company or brand to be featured
- jpg image in 75x120 px
- Website link
- 25-75 word description of your products/company

You can apply to be featured at oukosher.org/featured-company-application/
behind the Union Symbol

NEW TO THE OU Tropical and Irresistible Hawaiian Host® Chocolate Covered Macadamias are OU Certified

Hawaiian Host®, Inc., the manufacturer of Hawaii’s original chocolate covered macadamias, has officially received kosher certification from the Orthodox Union. The kosher certification aligns with the company’s mission of producing exceptional chocolate and macadamia confections and snacks that share the aloha of Hawaii with the world. Now even more consumers can enjoy the Hawaiian Host® taste.

It all started with Mamoru Takitani who dreamt of becoming the best candy maker in the world. His recipe for chocolate-dipped macadamia nuts created a sensation on his home island of Maui and he moved to Oahu when the time was right. Takitani purchased Ellen Dye Candies, a small candy shop, and renamed the company Hawaiian Host®. People fell in love with Takitani’s secret milk chocolate recipe. Visitors near and far traveling to Hawaii raved about Hawaiian Host®’s uniqueness and taste; they found them to be the perfect gift for friends and family members back home. And the tradition continues. Takitani’s magical recipe for the delicious, mouthwatering chocolate-dipped macadamias has been a Hawaii favorite for generations ever since.

Hawaiian Host® embodies and is founded upon the same standards and merit that Mamoru Takitani lived by: hard work, innovation and commitment to excellence. This is evident through the hard work and long hours that goes on behind the scenes of every box of chocolate covered macadamias. Take for example, the process to grow and harvest macadamia nuts. Macadamia nuts are not plucked from a tree, but harvested by hand after they have fallen to the ground – a sign that they have reached its full ripeness. The macadamia nut is the hardest nut in the world to crack, meaning the process of gathering and hulling the nuts play a large factor into why they are deemed so rare and valuable. Only the highest quality, grade “A” macadamia nuts are then hand-selected, dry roasted at precise temperatures and covered in Hawaiian Host®’s signature chocolate. Hence, “Genuine. Classic. Original.®” is not
merely just a tagline for Hawaiian Host®, but three words that have resonated throughout time. The unique quality of handpicked, dry roasted macadamia nuts paired with rich and creamy chocolate guarantees goodness in every bite.

As one of Hawaii’s premier brands, Hawaiian Host® produces over 250 million chocolate covered macadamias each year and continues to be one of the most popular gifts of Hawaii for both local residents and visitors. Today, Hawaiian Host® has more than 250 confectionary products sold in more than 23 countries across the globe. They are always in search of innovative ways to bring new creations to their consumers and in an effort to continue growing and expanding their market, Hawaiian Host® sought to become kosher certified. With OU certification, even more chocolate enthusiasts can now enjoy the taste of Hawaiian Host’s decadent chocolate covered macadamias.

Hawaiian Host® is currently taking the appropriate steps in reflecting this new kosher certification on all of its packaging. The first kosher certified labeled products are expected to hit the shelves this summer are their Boutique Bags, AlohaMacs® in their creamy milk or rich dark chocolate and Maui Caramacs®, which uses an original homemade caramel recipe enrobed in their signature milk chocolate.

Hawaiian Host® has shared that this new step toward kosher certification opens numerous doors of opportunity to reach even more consumers than before. There are only just a few visitors who leave the islands without bringing along a box of Hawaii’s original chocolate covered macadamias (or any of their other famous indulgences) with them because it truly is the perfect gift of aloha for those wanting to give something special and unique to their family and friends.

For more information on Hawaiian Host® products and the brand, please visit their website at www.hawaiianhost.com.
The Adirondack Distilling Company is a craft distillery headquartered in Utica, NY (halfway between Syracuse and Albany). With its first production taking place in November 2012, the award-winning distillery now makes four OU Kosher-certified products: vodka, gin, white whisky and bourbon.

Three friends, Bruce Elwell, Steve Cox and Jordan Karp, with their shared love of spirits, especially vodka, began talking in 2010 about going into business together. With a history of home brewing and even some bootleggers in their ancestry, making vodka was not just a fantasy, but a good business.

In 2011, with the purchase of an historic building, they opened the Adirondack Distilling Company on Varick Street in Utica. Using state-of-the-art equipment, a custom-crafted copper still from Germany, and a proven distilling process, Adirondack Distilling Company became central New York’s latest gem.

The company produces hand-crafted, internationally award-winning, premium spirits from locally sourced corn and water from the Adirondack Mountains, meaning that all of our spirits are naturally gluten free. Hand-crafting allows us to laboriously choose what parts of the alcohol make the cut as finished product into your bottle. Therefore, our spirits are known for their unique flavors and remarkably smooth finishes.

Here are our OU-certified products:

ADK VODKA is chill filtered for 6–8 hours over Herkimer Diamonds. Chill filtering over Herkimer Diamonds (a doubly terminated quartz crystal) produces the cleanest, clearest of spirit.

ADK GIN has 10 different botanicals and essentials oils, one of which, an Alpine Bilberry, is native to the Adirondack region boasting a tart berry taste. The result is a gin with a complexity of flavor and a one-of-a-kind taste.
1000 STILLS WHITE WHISKY is not your grandfather’s clear whisky. We lightly age this spirit in an un-charred, White American oak barrel. You will find the true clean taste of corn whisky with slight oak overtones.

601 BOURBON is Central New York’s first legal bourbon. We make our bourbon from 100 percent New York State corn with no other grain or caramel color and flavoring. This is honest, corn bourbon, tasting how bourbon was meant to taste.

In June 2015, my husband Bruce, co-owner and president of Adirondack Distilling Company, and I participated in the Summer Fancy Food Show in New York. We met a gentleman who had an interest in exporting our products to Israel. He simply loved our products and our company story. A few weeks after the show we received a call from Timini Co. in Israel. They had heard great things about our products and expressed a desire to import them. From there we started our OU certification process. Now, not only are we OU certified, but we are also certified OU Kosher Kitniyot for Passover. We are so proud to have this opportunity to export our products to Israel and just as proud to be able to offer these hand-crafted OU Kosher products here in the United States.

We already have won a substantial number of awards for our four OU Kosher products. Here are a few of them:

ADK VODKA:
- Silver Medal - 2014 World Vodka Awards, London

ADK Gin:
- Silver Medal - 2014 New York Wine & Spirits Society Competition

1,000 Stills White Whisky:
- Double Gold - 2014 NY Wine and Spirits Society Competition
- Gold Medal - 2014 SIP International Spirits Competition

601 Bourbon:
- Silver Medal – 2015 San Francisco World Spirits Competition.

The distillery is always seeking new ideas to grow geographic distribution, including private labels.
No Tricks at Trickling Springs Creamery: OU Certification Expands Consumer Market Base

Trickling Springs Creamery was founded in 2001 in Chambersburg, PA by two friends, Gerald Byers and Myron Miller, with the goal of processing premium milk from local farmers for the local community. These two men established high standards for their farmers including what they feed their cows, how they care for their animals, and how they maintain their land's eco-sustainability. A large part of their program involves giving cows access to pasture year round and feeding a grass-intensive diet. All our milk is minimally processed using low-temp pasteurization, simple ingredients, and no additives in our whole milk or creams.

In 2002, we became certified as an organic processor and started selling organic products throughout the greater Mid-Atlantic region. As our reputation for quality organic grass-fed dairy products grew, we were privileged to expand distribution across the eastern seaboard region. Gerald Byers says, “I never could have imagined the growth we experienced since we started 15 years ago. We are very thankful to our retailers and consumers for the support they’ve shown us. Customers remind us daily that they expect us to hold to the values we started with and to deliver only the best; we do our best to deliver on that expectation.”

In 2012, we launched our Trickling Springs FarmFriend brand, separating our Organic and Natural product brands. That same year we had the opportunity to begin processing fresh goat milk from a community of four family goat farms located in central Pennsylvania. We launched the production of both fresh goat milk and raw goat milk cheese. At the start of 2014, we signed a lease for a certified organic farm and processing plant in Southeastern Missouri. This plant was processing cultured products, so we moved production of our yogurt smoothie and cheese lines to Missouri, freeing up much-needed space for our fresh milk, cream, butter, and ice cream production in Chambersburg.
As we grow, we are committed to developing sustainable organic farming in the Mid-Atlantic area. In early 2015, we launched our Farmer-for-Life™ program to encourage farmers to make the transition from conventional farming to organic farming. This program incrementally pays farmers for each step they make along the journey toward their certification as organic farmers. That same year we also achieved SQF level 2 certification and OU Kosher Certification at our Trickling Springs Ranch processing plant in Koshkonong, Missouri.

Trickling Springs Creamery produces products under two marketplace brand names: Trickling Springs Organic and Trickling Springs FarmFriend. We source all our milk directly from our community of family farms, which grass-feed their cows, giving them access to pasture year round. Our standards are based on the concept that the cows should be treated as the mothers they are. And we believe that to process the best product, we need to have the best raw milk coming into our plant. Our Organic brand is USDA-certified organic and Non-GMO Project verified. Our FarmFriend brand is in process of Non-GMO Project verification.

We chose the OU Kosher certification in order to expand our consumer market base and serve a demand of our customers. We also have seen a big increase in manufacturers looking for Non-GMO or Certified Organic grass-fed dairy ingredients. Many of these manufacturers are already producing kosher-certified products and needed our products to be kosher to be able to use them. The OU Kosher certification has definitely expanded our marketplace.

Today, we purchase milk from 27 Organic dairies, 7 FarmFriend dairies, 10 FarmFriend goat dairies, and 1 certified Organic goat dairy.
Food! For some people, food is just fuel to keep their bodies going. They may have several foods that they like and eat on a regular basis, and that’s okay as long as they are reasonably healthy. Other people, like me, consider food to be more than just fuel. To me, food is like art for the taste buds. I find food to be the perfect friend and companion. A friendship is defined as a relationship of mutual affection—well that about sums up my relationship with food!

In my role as marketing director for OU Kosher, I am introduced to new products from around the world as companies seek kosher certification by the world’s largest and most recognized kosher symbol, the OU. Food manufacturers understand the importance of kosher as a way to enhance their marketability to the consumer. As 2015 came to a close, I looked back and felt a great sense of culinary satisfaction. I worked on a lot of new projects for OU Kosher last year, and I’ve sorted through the OU’s most notable food moments of 2015. Please join me as I take you on a journey through the foodie highs of 2015.

Stronger flavors were definitely on the menu in 2015. McCormick & Company, one of the OU’s prominent certified clients, developed the hottest new spices in 2015, including; McCormick’s Japanese 7 Spice and Shawarma Spice Blend. These globally-inspired flavors truly enhance any dish.

Salt also played a significant role in 2015. Salt brightens the intensity of any food. This year, the OU certified many artisanal salts, such as 424m Below Sea Level’s unique Garlic Salt with Dill, Grinder Salt with Organic Rosemary and Spinach or Hot Chili Pepper Salt. Also new to the kosher spice category, and sure to add sizzle and flair to any creation, the OU-certified Spice Island’s Himalayan Pink Salt, and Chipotle Salt Blend.

Pumpkin and Ginger Spice popped up in almost every food category. From latte’s to baby food, to snacks and preserves, these spices found their way into the kosher category with the OU certifying Peachy Pumpkin Spiced Amaranth Organic Baby Food by Baby Gourmet Plus; Pumpkin Pie Flavored Taffy by Anastasia Confections; and Pumpkin Praline Muffins by Atlanta Bread.
Blakehill Preserves created a unique line of jams including Summer Peach & Ginger Conserve, and Celestial Seasonings introduced Simply Balanced Ginger Green Tea K-cups.

2015 also saw consumers showing a preference for dark, bitter notes in their food, especially in the chocolate and coffee categories. Even classic cocktails were crafted with old-fashioned bitters as one of the essential ingredients. At the OU, we saw many new flavors and products emerge, such as, Amella’s sea-salt caramel chocolate and Asher’s peppermint vanilla-crème drop. The kosher industry also saw a caffeinated caramel milk chocolate bar from Awake—sure to keep you going for hours.

Another important category in 2015 was coffee. Coffee is more than a morning ritual for some people – it’s a social thing. Coffee brings people together—neighbors, spouses, co-workers on line at the local café. There’s a reason the term “coffee klatch” came into our vernacular. Coffee is naturally friendly and is consumed by at least 54% of Americans over 18 every single day, including me! With new varieties of flavors such as Mocha Java and Hawaiian Kona Hapa by Barrie Coffee Roasters, and Community Coffee’s, Vanilla Crème Brulee, Mardi Gras King Cake and Pecan Praline flavors, coffee lovers everywhere had exciting new flavors to choose from. And of course, we can’t forget cocktails. Following the trend, cocktails saw an increase in apple, chocolate and coffee flavors as well as a surge in strong, robust and bitter flavors. Honey was big in the spirits category this year, with a new Honey flavor from Absolut Vodka, along with Bitter Cherry and Smokey Tea options.

Chocolate and beverages were not the only foods that saw stronger flavors. Vegetable products were also in resurgence. Mezzet brands introduced Stuffed Zucchini, Stuffed Cabbage Leaves and Eggplant in Tomato Sauce. Cauliflower was mashed, roasted, eaten raw or steamed. It was even crafted into a gluten-free pizza crust by Absolutely Gluten Free.

While we’re on the topic of gluten-free, there were literally thousands of gluten free products that obtained OU kosher certification in 2015. Allie’s Gluten Free Goodies were certified with mouthwatering flavors such as Chocolate Chunk Cheesecake Brownie and Red Velvet Cake. All But Gluten brands introduced their gluten-free Chocolate and Vanilla cupcakes, along with their amazing gluten-free pizza shells.

Another key flavor this year was anything smoked—the demand for smoked foods added sizzle and new flavors to proteins, vegetables, butters, cheeses and even cocktails. Agri Star produced a delectable line of smoked deli meats, while Amira Foods developed a new line of
smoked basmati rice. Cal-Snax created a unique line of Tangy Smokey Barbecue Kale Poppers. The deep flavor of smoked foods made them a unique delicacy among gourmet-inclined consumers in 2015.

And finally, nutritious and fermented foods saw a rise this year with foods such as yogurt and tempeh, which contain live cultures and aid in digestion. Chobani, certified by the OU since its inception, created exciting new flavors like, Low-fat Maple and Plum Flavored Greek Yogurt. I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention my personal favorite, the decadent Non-Fat Strawberry Chocolate Truffle Greek yogurt.

There is a lot to look forward to in 2016 for food trends. We can expect to see more foods that fit our fast lifestyle as well as more natural and less processed food and drink as consumer demand motivates companies to remove artificial ingredients from the foods they manufacture.

Getting back to basics has boosted ancient grains and superfoods such as quinoa and chia. We should continue to see growth in these categories, as well as products in the sports nutrition, energy, and protein categories. As people become more health conscious and active, companies will create products to appeal to this growing population.

Social media is also shaping how we look at food. I have dozens of friends who post every dish they make or enjoy at restaurants on an almost daily basis. As the world becomes more diverse and global due to social media, people everywhere want what they see their friends are having! They want more high-quality food they can feel good about putting in their bodies and posting online.

So stay tuned, 2016 is gearing up to be an exciting year for kosher food.

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PHYLLIS KOEGEL SERVES AS MARKETING DIRECTOR AT OU KOSHER. RESIDING IN WOODMERE, N.Y., PHYLLIS GRADUATED FROM PACE UNIVERSITY WITH AN MBA IN MARKETING AND HAS TRAVELED THE WORLD FOR OU KOSHER SEEKING OUT NEW AND EXCITING FOOD MANUFACTURERS EAGER TO OBTAIN OU KOSHER CERTIFICATION.
GET YOUR PRODUCTS FEATURED

Email Safrane@ou.org
a short blurb of text and an image of the product you wish to feature on our OU Kosher social media accounts.

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