

Kashrus Kurrents

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It has been called nature's candy and is a sweet source of nutrition whose popularity is on the rise. Commensurate with its growing popularity is its demand. In today's global economy, the dried fruit trade literally spans the entire globe - apples from China, prunes from Bulgaria, figs from the Middle East, dates from Tunisia, raisins from South America, and of course apples, peaches, plums, raisins, figs, and dates from the good old U.S.A. Naturally, this growth presents a whole new set of challenges to *kashrus* agencies. How do they send a *mashgiach* to supervise date productions in Pakistan, raisin productions in Iran, or plum productions in Bulgaria? Let's learn about this popular healthy snack alternative.

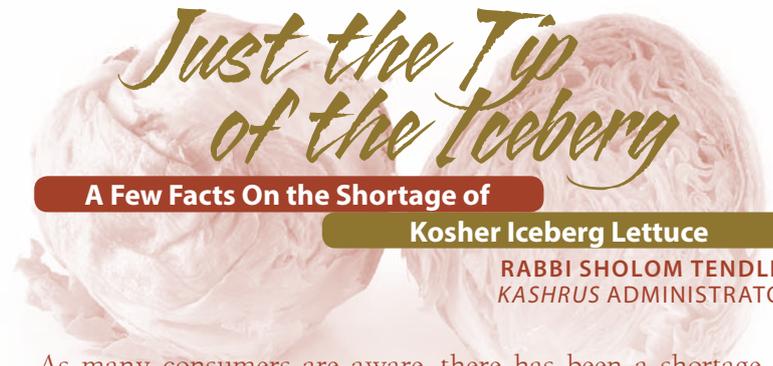
THE PROCESS

Fruit is dried through a process known as dehydrating, which removes enough moisture from the fruit to retard the growth of bacteria and mold while retaining the great taste and nutrients of the fruit. The two most popular methods used to dehydrate fruit are **sun drying** and **tunnel drying**. The best, most cost-effective and least problematic technique is to take advantage of the sun, the *Ribbono Shel Olam's* natural dehydrator.

Sun drying avoids many of the *kashrus* issues that are perhaps problematic in other methods, such as oven or tunnel dried fruits and vegetables. When a fruit is sun dried, there are no kosher release agents or other processing equipment to consider. However, there is more to sun drying a fruit than just setting it out in the sun. Sun drying a fruit or vegetable properly requires great care and know-how. Every variety has its own protocol. Turkish apricots, for example, are dried where they are grown - in the Malatya region of East Turkey. Farmers must exercise great care as the apricots dry. Sun burning, poor cutting, or mushy fruit ruins this cash crop. The fruit must be dried to a certain moisture level, gently sliced, and the pit removed. (Next time you eat an apricot, look at the slit on the side). The fruit is then dried further to 24% moisture level, until it is ready to be collected and sent for further processing.

Sun drying appeals to the health-conscious consumer because relatively few processing aids are used in the drying process. However, sun dried fruits and vegetables are not additive-free. Pesticides are used to prevent infestation. In the case of light colored fruit,

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As many consumers are aware, there has been a shortage of Kosher-certified iceberg lettuce on the market over the last few months. Many people have been wondering why this shortage suddenly happened this year and when it will end. While it is true that iceberg lettuce is generally easier to clean and check than romaine, it still poses some of its own unique challenges. To clarify this issue, it is important to understand some background about how iceberg lettuce is grown, harvested and processed.

HOW ICEBERG GROWS

Iceberg lettuce initially grows open, just like romaine [see pic. 1, page 3], during the first few weeks of its development, before cupping over and closing up. Once it cups, all of the newer leaves grow inside the closed head [see pic. 2, page 3]. If the time period when it was open was subjected to high levels of insect pressure, insects could crawl inside the open head and become trapped once the head cups over. They can then live quite comfortably inside this enclosed space - as they are well fed (with lettuce) and well protected from any applications of insecticides. During this time, they can reproduce very rapidly and therefore it may not be unusual to find entire families of insects inside a head, even all the way to the core. It is for this reason that the *entire* head must be checked every time, and not just the outer leaves.

INSECT PRESSURE FACTS

Most of the year, iceberg has less insect pressure than romaine or other leafy vegetables because it is a closed head. It is also typically less attractive to insects (and people!) because it is less green and has less nutrients than other lettuce varieties. For these reasons, Kosher-certified iceberg is normally widely available throughout the year. But when seasons change or there are unusual weather patterns, insect pressures can increase.

There are two primary growing regions in the United States. during the winter (November-April), the Yuma, AZ, region is

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Dried Fruit

NATURE'S WAY OF WRINKLING GRACEFULLY

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such as apricots or golden raisins, sulfur dioxide is added to lighten the color. Some fruits use sodium metabisulfite as a preservative. Ascorbic acid could also be added. An organic sun dried fruit, however, is typically additive-free. It contains neither pesticides, additives such as sodium metabisulfite, nor chemicals used for fumigation. A good example of an organic fruit is a natural apricot, which is much darker in color and has a very different taste than its light colored, sulfured counterpart.

Another method of drying fruit is known as **oven or tunnel drying**. The benefit of this method is that the process includes a dehydrator that is climatically controlled, and the fruit is not subject to the moods or pitfalls of Mother Nature. Nevertheless, the kosher consumer must be aware that inherent in tunnel dried fruit are more processing issues than in sun drying. It is not uncommon for oven dried fruit to use oils or release agents which require kosher certification. Some tunnel-dried raisins in Bulgaria are dipped in hot water before drying. Dried cherries from Michigan, the cherry capital of the world, is an excellent example of tunnel-dried fruit.

Most fruit, once dried, require no additional additives or sweeteners; others, however, do require the addition of processing aids or sweeteners. For example, some apricot companies season their apricots with fruit flavoring to give their apricots a unique taste. Potassium sorbate is added to prunes and sultana raisins. Pineapple, mango, and papaya from Thailand are sweetened with sugars and flavors (kosher certified Thai dried fruit companies have kosher approval for year-round use).

At times, the dried fruit undergoes further processing known as **glace**, meaning that the dried fruit is cooked in sugar and honey glazed. Consumers might find glace orange peels from Italy on their supermarket shelves. Glace is a process whereby liquid sugar – glucose – is infused into the fruit to give it a bright sheen and longevity. Often the fruit is colored to give a bright luster, hence the name glace. It is common for glace red cherries to be naturally colored with carmine, a lustrous natural red color derived from crushed coccineal beetles, which are not kosher. Obviously, synthetic colors do not present *kashrus* problems, however, carmine does.

Banana chips from the Philippines are another popular dried fruit. After drying, they are fried in vegetable oil and seasoned with flavorings. These products obviously require more rigorous supervision. It is interesting to note that in the Philippines, only refined vegetable oil is used which minimizes the concerns of non-kosher oil. Nevertheless, kosher certified banana chip plants are monitored regularly.

When you hear the name Thompson, Currant, Sultana or Golden you think raisin. Raisins are probably the most globally marketed fruit on the market. They are grown not only in California but also Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Greece, Turkey and South Africa, as well. They often come into this country in boxes marked "Raisins". It is very common for raisin producers to coat the fruit with a minute amount of oil to keep the raisins from sticking. Some companies use vegetable oil, such as soy or cottonseed; others may use specially formulated oils. Sometimes, the manufacturer states that the oil is GMO-free or non-GMO. This designation

means that the vegetable seeds or oils used to make the oil are free from any genetic modification. Typically, these oils are referred to as polishing oils and are kosher certified.

PASSOVER ISSUES

One of the most important areas of the kosher dried fruit industry is Kosher for Passover fruit, as well as regular kosher. This is a new year-round certification request. Assuring that dried fruit is Kosher for Passover can be an arduous task. It is common practice for dried fruit producers to roll fruit pieces in flour to prevent them from sticking together. Rice flour is commonly used for apricots, oat flour for dates, and soy oil is typically used for raisins. These products obviously cannot be certified for Passover use. However, the question remains whether the non-floured dried fruit qualifies for Kosher for Passover certification. Before certifying any fruit for Passover, great care must be taken to ensure that the non-floured whole dried fruit is adequately segregated from the floured pieces, or that ascorbic acid is not used in the field. Many companies flour their fruit pieces in a separate room or separate area in the plant. However, this does not always guarantee segregation. In one instance, it was discovered that the flour shaker used to coat the date pieces created an oat powder cloud which spread and covered the packaging belts in an adjoining room. For Passover certification, this situation was disastrous. The solution was to package the Kosher for Passover dates in a different packaging area of the plant.

In the past, we have had requests for Kosher for Passover sugar sweetened pineapple from the Philippines. When we researched the project, we discovered that corn syrup was commonly substituted for liquid sucrose. The rabbi told us that it would be very difficult to segregate sugar lines "...even if the *mashgiach* would live in the factory." Needless to say, we did not do a Kosher for Passover production.

In Argentina, we faced a different Kosher for Passover issue. A manufacturer wanted to import prunes that were specially produced for Passover use. In his facility, only prunes were processed in drying ovens. The company took great pains to clean the ovens for this production, and everything appeared to be in order ... except for one item. Potassium sorbate was sometimes added to the prunes to regulate their moisture level. It is usually not difficult to purchase synthetic Kosher for Passover potassium sorbate in the U.S. However, the particular potassium sorbate that this company used has been produced in China, which today is a major player in the manufacture of chemical food ingredients. Typically, Chinese potassium sorbate is a derivative of corn or rice, which is a *kitniyos* (legume) source. Consequently, this manufacturer's product was disqualified for *Pesach* use.

Packaging equipment used for both Kosher for Passover and non-Kosher for Passover productions usually present challenges for companies that want to manufacture special Kosher for Passover productions. Some mixes tend to blend snack crackers, candies and an array of salted, roasted, and fried items which would require careful cleaning and supervision before certifying a Kosher for Passover fruit production.

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Just the Tip of the Iceberg

A FEW FACTS ON THE SHORTAGE OF KOSHER ICEBERG LETTUCE

RABBI SHOLOM TENDLER
KASHRUS ADMINISTRATOR



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home to most of the country's growing operations.¹ The rest of the year (April-November), the Salinas, CA, region is the main growing area. This past winter, the Yuma region was subjected to above average temperatures and humidity. This caused very high levels of insect pressure in all the crops. Even once it subsequently cooled down, those initial weeks of abnormally warm weather were precisely the time when much of the iceberg crop was in its preliminary growth stages.²

It was initially hoped that the insect pressure would subside once the seasons changed and the growers moved to California, especially since the lettuce that was to be harvested in Salinas in April had been planted during the cold winter. But the insect pressure in California has also remained elevated, as a result of the longstanding drought. Interestingly, the Salinas Valley actually sits on the largest underground river in the world, which means that produce grown there requires almost no rainfall. But since the surrounding areas do not have that benefit, insects from all the surrounding mountains (which are bare of vegetation due to the drought) have swooped in and infested the lush Salinas Valley produce fields.

“TRIPLE WASHED” – REALLY?

As noted above, iceberg tends to be easier to wash effectively than romaine. It is typically less infested and its leaves are smoother and firmer than romaine's; therefore, it is harder for insects to cling to them. This is especially true in a home kitchen, in which a decent wash will often lead to the lettuce passing the insect check. In industrial settings, however, where there can be thousands of pounds of produce washed throughout the day, a whole new set of challenges must be addressed.

In many plants, industrial washing systems operate constantly. The wash water is generally used again and again on the same processing lines.³ This means that you can have thousands of pounds of lettuce essentially being washed in the same water. If the lettuce has high levels of insect infestation, the sheer volume being processed increases the possibility that insects washed off the leaves will build up a presence in the water and either re-attach themselves to the produce or simply end up in the bagged finished

product. Although the wash water is gradually turned over every few hours, the rate of replenishment may not be fast enough to avoid insect buildup.

Additionally, there are many different types of washing systems used in different companies, from flume systems and hydro loops, to shaker/sprayer tables and simple conveyor rinse tanks. The exclusive or combined use of any of these can permit a product to be called “triple washed.” Yet in terms of insect removal, some of these systems can hardly be considered significant or effective. Therefore, the fact that lettuce is claimed to be “triple washed” is not necessarily an indication of adequate cleansing from insects, unless it has a proper *hashgocho* verifying the *kashrus* of that particular product.

In order for processed iceberg to bear a reliable *hechsher*, careful monitoring is necessary. If the iceberg is only minimally infested, which in most years is the case, a decent wash system will usually be adequate to remove all the insects. If it is highly infested, however, it is unlikely to be certified without a rigorous set of filtration or flush systems in place in which the water either gets filtered properly or is flushed with enough fresh water on a constant basis to avoid insect buildup. Due to the fact that infestation levels can fluctuate and change suddenly, careful monitoring by trained *meshgichim* is necessary. This is why STAR-K has always required commercially produced iceberg to bear a reliable certification.

CONSUMER AWARENESS

We hope these seasonal/weather issues will end soon, allowing more iceberg lettuce to pass inspections. Consumers are urged to always check bags of prewashed lettuces for reliable kosher symbols that ensure the produce is properly certified and that no further checking is required.

There is much written about the tremendous rewards and *kedusha* that we merit by avoiding forbidden foods,⁴ particularly insects. During these turbulent times, when we are faced with great challenges to maintaining our level of *kedusha*, as well as the physical threats to many of *Acheinu Bnei Yisroel*, may our heightened awareness of these issues be a source of merit for all of us and strengthen the level of *kedusha* in our lives. May we all be *zoche* to a *Kesiva Vchasima Tova*.



PICTURE 1



PICTURE 2



FULL HEAD

1. The Belle Glade, FL, area also has significant output, although not nearly as much as Yuma.
2. Iceberg can take anywhere from 60-120 days to grow, depending on the weather. In Yuma, the average is 80-90 days. We actually reviewed the weather history and saw that much of the iceberg that was harvested in February and March, when the insect pressure levels were high, was planted and started growing during unseasonably warm weather.
3. This is done for three reasons: (1) environmental - to conserve water; (2) financial - to save money on water usage costs; and (3) to save money on costs associated with cooling the wash water and maintaining a proper temperature of 34-36° F. Since cooling water is very costly, they reuse the already cooled water.

4. ע' יומא ל"ט ע"א, חכמת אדם סי' ל"ח ס"ק כ', ערוה"ש סי' פ"ד ס"ק ס"ד, העמק דבר עה"פ והי"תם קדושים (ויקרא י"א, מ"ד)



CHARTING THE COURSE OF *Shmitta 5775*



RABBI DOVID STEIN
STAR-K REPRESENTATIVE IN ISRAEL

The *mitzvah* of *shmitta* poses many challenges for those who live in *Eretz Yisrael*. The main challenge, of course, is for the farmers. However, the consumer has his challenges, as well. It is always preferable to purchase produce from stores that have reliable kosher certification to ensure that there are no *halachic* problems. If there is no such store available, one must be certain not to transgress the laws of *shmitta* in the purchase, consumption, or interaction with *shmitta* produce. These are the different categories of *halachos* that one has to take into consideration:

1. *Sfichin*
2. *Kedushas shevi'is*
3. *Schora* (doing business) with *shevi'is* produce
4. *Dmei shevi'is* (*shevi'is* money)

The laws of *sfichin* refer to a rabbinic prohibition of eating produce that started to grow during the *shmitta* year,¹ i.e., the plant started to grow from *Rosh Hashanah* תשע"ו until תשע"ז. This is the opinion of the *Chazon Ish*, the most widely accepted custom among *Ashkenazim* in *Eretz Yisrael*. Regarding grains and legumes, there is a different critical date after which *sfichin* are not permitted to be eaten. Obviously, if one wants to buy vegetables he/she must be certain that the vegetables did not start to grow during the *shmitta* year. How can one know when the produce began to grow if it is bought in a store that is not under reliable rabbinic supervision?

In order to overcome this problem, charts were developed with the information needed to ascertain whether the produce started to grow during *shmitta*. For example, it takes between 58 and 78 days after a tomato seed is planted until it produces its first ripe tomato. It takes a few more weeks until the new tomato crop constitutes a majority of the tomatoes in the market. Until that time, we may be able to say "*kol deparish meruba parish*," and assume that the fruit in question comes from the prevailing majority in the marketplace, which in this case is a non-*shevi'is* product. The date on the chart is usually when the majority of the vegetable production is *shevi'is* (although there are charts that give the date of the first produce on the market). One should be mindful of the cut-off date for a particular type of produce before buying any fruits or vegetables that might possibly be prohibited for consumption resulting from *sfichin*.

Kedushas shevi'is applies to all vegetables picked during the *shmitta* year. Picking, *lekita*, invests the vegetable with *kedushas shevi'is* when it is picked during the *shmitta* year.² Since many vegetables (such as carrots and potatoes) can be stored for relatively long periods of time, most of the produce

in the market does not have to be picked during the *shmitta* year until well after *Rosh Hashanah*. The date on the chart for a given vegetable for *kedushas shevi'is* indicates when a particular type of produce was picked during the *shmitta* year.

Besides the *issur* of *sfichin*, there are other issues regarding produce grown during the *shmitta* year without rabbinic supervision. The following are a few examples:

***Shamur v'neevad*:** Some authorities prohibit using produce that was "guarded" (*shevi'is* produce is supposed to be "*hefker*," ownerless, and permitted to be taken by anyone) or upon which non-permissible work was performed during *shmitta*. Produce without rabbinic supervision can fall under this category. The *Chazon Ish* permitted the use of *shamur v'neevad b'shaas hadchak* (in difficult circumstances).

***Schora*:** Doing business with *shevi'is* produce. One is not permitted to buy produce that has *kedushas shevi'is* (weighing, buying in a regular store, etc.) in the usual way.

***Mesiras dmei shevi'is l'am haaretz*:** When one buys *shevi'is* produce for immediate use, the money that is used to pay for the item is imbued with *kedushas shevi'is* and may be used only to purchase food. Therefore, it is not permitted to give this money to a storekeeper who will not observe the laws of *shevi'is*.

There are ways to circumvent the above noted problems. If one uses a credit card, there is no issue of *dmei shevi'is*. If one buys *behavlaa* (two things together, but paying only for the item that does not have *kedushas shevi'is*), there may not be a problem of *schora*.

If one buys produce in stores that have reliable rabbinic supervision, one does not need to refer to the charts. Produce that has *kedushas shevi'is* should be marked (sometimes there are codes). If you do need to use the chart, there is a column indicating when *sfichin* and *kedushas shevi'is* end. Produce that was picked during the *shmitta* year will always have the application of *kedushas shevi'is/sfichin*. Produce picked in the eighth year (תשע"ז) has *kedushas shevi'is/sfichin*, either until the new crop starts or until *Chanukah* (whichever comes first.)

***Biur*:** Produce that has *kedushas shevi'is* can be kept at home only while there is some of the same produce still in the fields. The column for *biur* indicates when one must dispose of all the produce (take it outside and make it *hefker*), after which time it can be taken back inside the house. If the *z'man biur* elapsed, and *biur* was not performed, the produce is forbidden to be eaten. The times for *biur* are very inexact, and it is not a good idea to store a lot of produce towards the end of *shmitta* (less than three meals for the whole family are exempt from the laws of *biur*).

1. רמב"ם הלכות שמיטה ויובל פרק ד' הל' ב' וד'

2. רמב"ם הלכות שמיטה ויובל פרק ד' הל' י"ב מהגמרא ר"ה דף י"ב



LAST DATES OF *Kedushas Shevi'is, Sefichin and Biur* 5775/5776

The following are ending dates of *Kedushas Shevi'is, Sefichin* and the dates of *Biur*.

ITEM	KEDUSHAS SHEVI'IS/ SEFICHIN UNTIL	DOES SEFICHIN APPLY?	BIUR	ITEM	KEDUSHAS SHEVI'IS/ SEFICHIN UNTIL	DOES SEFICHIN APPLY?	BIUR
Almonds	17 Av 5776	No	1 Cheshvan 5776	Kimmel (caraway seeds)	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²
Apples	17 Sivan 5776	No	21 Teves 5776	Kiwi	17 Av 5776	No	1 Adar I 5776
Apricots	7 Nisan 5776	No	20 Tamuz 5775	Kohlrabi	18 Cheshvan 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Artichoke	25 Kislev 5776	No ³	6 Tamuz 5775	Lemon	16 Iyar 5776	No	1 Elul 5776
Asparagus	25 Kislev 5776	No	No Biur ⁴	Lentils	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²
Avocado	16 Tam uz 5776	No ³	1 Av 5776	Lettuce	3 Cheshvan 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Banana	11 Tishrei 5776	No ³	No Biur ⁴	Lychee ²	6 Iyar 5776	No	11 Tishrei 5776
Barley	25 Iyar 5776	Yes	20 Sivan 5775	Mango	17 Sivan 5776	No	1 Shevat 5776
Basil	25 Kislev 5776	No ³	No Biur ⁴	Medlar (Shesek)	16 Shevat 5776	No	1 Tamuz 5775
Beans	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²	Melon ⁹	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Beets	10 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Mint	25 Kislev 5776	No ³	No Biur ⁴
Blueberries	No Kedushah ²	No	No Biur ²	Mushrooms	Laws of Shmittah are not applicable		
Broccoli	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	15 Iyar 5775	Mustard	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²
Butternut Squash	15 Teves 5776	Yes	15 Tishrei 5776	Nectarine	21 Adar I 5776	No	1 Teves 5776
Cabbage (White)	4 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Oats	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²
Cabbage (Red)	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Olives	16 Tamuz 5776	No	6 Sivan 5776
Carob	15 Elul 5776	No	1 Adar I 5776	Olive Oil	16 Elul 5776	No	6 Sivan 5776
Carrots	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Onion (incl. powder)	1 Shevat 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Cashews	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²	Oranges	17 Av 5776	No	15 Sivan 5776
Cauliflower	24 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Paprika (fresh)	28 Av 5776	Yes	20 Kislev 5775
Celery	24 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Parsley (incl. root)	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Cherries	17 Nisan 5776	No	15 Tamuz 5775	Peaches	21 Adar I 5776	No	1 Teves 5776
Chickpeas	25 Sivan 5776	Yes	1 Av 5775	Peanuts	28 Av 5776	Yes	No Biur
Cinnamon	No Kedushah ²	No	No Biur ²	Pears	9 Sivan 5776	No	11 Tishrei 5776
Coriander	10 Cheshvan 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Peas (Dried)	No Kedushah ²	No	No Biur ²
Corn (Fresh)	10 Tishrei 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Peas in Pod	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	7 Sivan 5775
Cranberries	No Kedushah ²	No	No Biur ²	Pecan ¹¹	15 Elul 5776	No	19 Teves 5776
Cucumbers	5 Cheshvan 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Pepper (Powder ¹² B&W)	No Kedushah ²	No	No Biur ²
Cumin	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²	Pepper (Jalapeno)	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Dates	6 Elul 5776	No	14 Adar I 5776	Peppers ¹⁰	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Dill	29 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Persimmon	26 Sivan 5776	No	15 Teves 5776
Eggplant ⁸	15 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Pineapple	25 Kislev 5776	No	No Biur ⁴
Esrog ⁷	17 Sivan 5769	No	1 Shevat 5776	Pistachio	No Kedushah ²	No	No Biur ²
Fennel	1 Kislev 5776	Yes	1 Cheshvan 5776	Plums (Euro. Longated)	16 Tamuz 5776	No	15 Cheshvan 5776
Figs	29 Adar II 5776	No	25 Kislev 5776	Plums (Japanese Round)	17 Nisan 5776	No	15 Cheshvan 5776
Garlic	25 Adar II 5776	Yes	5 Sivan 5775	Pomegranate	9 Tamuz 5776	No	1 Teves 5776
Ginger	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²	Pomelo	17 Av 5776	No	1 Sivan 5776
Grapefruit	17 Av 5776	No	1 Av 5776	Popcorn	11 Av 5776	Yes	No Biur
Grapes	6 Adar II 5776	No	14 Nisan 5776	Poppy Seeds	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²
Grapes for Wine	17 Sivan 5776	No	14 Nisan 5776	Potatoes	4 Teves 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Guava	16 Tamuz 5776	No	1 Teves 5776	Pumpkin	1 Shevat 5776	Yes	1 Cheshvan 5776
Horseradish	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴				
Hyssop	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²				
Kidney Beans	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²				

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LAST DATES OF *Kedushas Shevi'is, Sefichin and Biur* 5775/5776

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

ITEM	KEDUSHAS SHEVI'IS/SEFICHIN UNTIL	DOES SEFICHIN APPLY?	BIUR	ITEM	KEDUSHAS SHEVI'IS/SEFICHIN UNTIL	DOES SEFICHIN APPLY?	BIUR
Pumpkin Seeds	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²	Sunflower Seeds	11 Av 5776	Yes	7 Elul 5775
Radish	13 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Sweet Potatoes	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	No info.
Radish-Small	8 Cheshvan 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Tarragon	No Kedushah ²	No ³	No Biur ⁵
Rice	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²	Tomatoes	13 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Sabra	17 Cheshvan 5776	No	16 Shevat 5776	Turnip	15 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Scallion	20 Cheshvan 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴	Walnut	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²
Sesame	No Kedushah ¹	No ¹	No Biur ¹	Watermelon	25 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Soya	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²	Wheat Products ⁶	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²
Spelt	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²	Zucchini (Squash)	3 Cheshvan 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴
Spinach	1 Kislev 5776	Yes	No Biur ⁴				
Strawberries	4 Kislev 5776	Yes	1 Tamuz 5775				
Sugar	No Kedushah ²	No ²	No Biur ²				

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of Rabbi Shaul Goldman in the translation of the above chart.

1. *Gidulei Nochri* - in Israel
2. Imported
3. Multi Year plant
4. Available all year
5. Intended for Flavor Only
6. Most wheat products used in Israel are of imported wheat and not subject to *shmittah* laws. This must be ascertained from the baker or from the packaging label.

7. Most *esrogim* for *Succos* 5776 (2016) will be available from the crop harvested through *Otzar Beis Din* and, therefore, the rules of *kedushas shvi'is* apply.
8. Most eggplant between *Cheshvan* and *Adar Aleph* are from the Southern Aravah and gentiles.
9. In the winter, most melons are from Southern Aravah.
10. From *Kislev* until *Adar Aleph*, grown in areas that may not have been inhabited during *Aliyas Bavel*.
11. 90% is from Import.

Dried Fruit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

TO CHECK OR NOT TO CHECK - THAT IS THE QUESTION

Along with the rise of general consumer awareness, one of the most daunting *kashrus* challenges that kosher certification faces today is making sure that fruits and vegetables are *halachically* insect-free. Kosher food certification is now working with effective pest management programs in the field, as well as cleaning/washing procedures and preventative measures in their processing facilities. However, we know that with all the herculean efforts and well meaning intentions, nature is still nature and no system is infallible.

Halacha clearly forbids us to eat *toloyim*, insects. The *halacha* also tells us that the obligation to check for insects in a fruit or vegetable is directly tied to the regularity and propensity of insect presence in a particular fruit or vegetable.

In short, fruits and vegetables can be categorized into four general groups:

1. **Category 1** - Produce that never requires inspection; fruits and vegetables that do not have infestation issues e.g., bananas
2. **Category 2** - *Aino Matzui*, rare to occasional; produce that one is not *halachically* obligated to be checked
3. **Category 3** - *Miut Hamatzui*, occasional to prevalent; produce requiring further checking¹
4. **Category 4** - *Muchzak*, prevalent; produce that cannot be used without special handling and is not recommended for consumption

1. STAR-K follows the opinion of the *Mishkenos Yaakov* that the cut-off point between a *miut hamatzui* and *aino matzui* is 10%. This means that if an insect is found in 1 out of 10 portions, the insect presence in such a variety is considered *miut hamatzui* and the variety must be checked before eating. For example, if one is checking dates a portion size is four dates. Therefore, if one checked 40 dates (10 portions) and they were 100% clean, the dates would fall into the *aino matzui* category, and no further checking would be necessary. If any insects were found in the sample, it is considered *miut hamatzui*.

The need to control infestation and disease is of paramount concern for any fruit producer, dried fruit notwithstanding. If an infested container was used for a shipment, that container would be rejected and the manufacturer would suffer a great loss. All dried fruit is subject to some insect control. When dried fruits enter the production facility, they are placed in a special chamber and are treated with methyl bromide, a gas used to kill any insects. These fruits are then washed. The insects are then separated from the fruit before going through further processing. Furthermore, as an added precaution, if the fruit remains in the factory for 90 days this treatment is repeated. Even organic fruit is subject to some degree of treatment for possible infestation, usually involving freezing the fruit to kill any insects.

Based on these processing practices, statistics indicate that as long as the dried fruit is properly stored in a cool and moisture-free environment, infestation should be minimal. However, storage conditions that are less than optimum can promote new infestation. STAR-K ensures that proper insect control is in place at each production facility that it certifies. However, once it leaves the production facility proper storage conditions are beyond the *hashgacha's* control. As such, there are a number of dried fruit items that are more susceptible to infestation and STAR-K recommends checking a few of those items in each container in order to ensure that it was properly processed and stored (i.e., dates, figs and carob).

Undoubtedly, with our greater understanding, we will certainly appreciate the efforts of all of the hardworking men and women throughout the world who bring us these popular treats and allow us to truly appreciate the fruits of their labor.



NEW UNDER STAR-K KOSHER CERTIFICATION

FALL 2015/5776

CONSUMER PRODUCTS

(only when bearing Star-K symbol)

ALTER ECO AMERICA PBC

San Francisco, CA
QUINOA

ANHUI BEIBAO FOODS

CHINA
CANNED FRUIT

AMEXIM, INC.

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PICKLED PRODUCTS

APOSTOLOS NACOS SINGLE MEMBER P.C.

GREECE
OLIVES

ARABICA COFFEE

Garfield, NJ
COFFEES

BIG Y FOODS, INC.

Springfield, MA
ICE CREAM CONES

CAFF COFFEE

Brooklyn, NY
COFFEES

CENTRAL GROCERS, INC.

Joliet, IL
BAGELS

COST PLUS MANAGEMENT SVCS

Oakland, CA
COFFEES

DAN-D FOODS

CANADA
COCONUT PRODUCTS

FLAMINGO, LLC

Palm Beach Gardens, FL
CANNED FRUIT

FLP, LLC

Tempe, AZ
PLASTIC PRODUCTS

H&M WAGNER

Glen Burnie, MD
COFFEES

INGLES SUPERMARKETS

Black Mountain, NC
COFFEES

INNHERB ISRAEL LTD.

ISRAEL
ESSENTIAL OILS & OLEORESINS; VITAMINS & NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

MAMA'S MUNDEL BREAD

Owings Mills, MD
COOKIES (SPECIALTY)

MARGARITA'S TORTILLA FACTORY

Lockhart, TX
TORTILLAS/TACOS

MATERNAL SCIENCE, INC.

Montvale, NJ
TEAS

MOLINO NICOLI SPA

ITALY
CEREAL PRODUCTS; GLUTEN-FREE PRODUCTS

NATURE'S WAREHOUSE

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SALADS (PREPARED); SAUCES & DIPS

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UNITED KINGDOM
HERBAL EXTRACTS

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SPICES & SEASONINGS

ON POINT, INC.

Montvale, NJ
COFFEES

ORIGINAL LIVING COCONUT, LLC

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COCONUT PRODUCTS; ICE CREAM & NOVELTIES

RIGGIO DISTRIBUTION

Detroit, MI
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SEDANO'S MANAGEMENT, INC.

Hialeah, FL
ICE CREAM & NOVELTIES

SHINN SPRING WATER CO.

Birdsboro, PA
WATER

SIAM MUD MUK

THAILAND
COCONUT PRODUCTS

TECNO SPA

ITALY
KITCHEN APPLIANCES (SABBATH COMPLIANT)

THE FRESH MARKET COFFEE DIVISION

Greensboro, NC
COFFEES

U-LINE CORPORATION

Milwaukee, WI
KITCHEN APPLIANCE (SABBATH COMPLIANT)

WEAVER NUT CO.

Ephrata, PA
NUTS & SEEDS

WEGMANS FOOD MARKETS COCONUT OIL DIVISION

Rochester, NY
COCONUT PRODUCTS

INDUSTRIAL/ INSTITUTIONAL PRODUCTS

(see letter of certification)

ACCURATE PACKAGING & FULFILLMENT

Mechanicsburg, PA
VITAMINS & NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

AGRI EXIM GLOBAL PHILIPPINES

PHILIPPINES
COCONUT PRODUCTS

ALTER ECO AMERICA PBC

San Francisco, CA
QUINOA

APOSTOLOS NACOS SINGLE MEMBER P.C.

GREECE
OLIVES

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COCONUT PRODUCTS

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FRUIT (CANNED)

GREEN VIRGIN PRODUCTS

Tampa, FL
HERBAL EXTRACTS

GUILIN ZHUORUI FOOD INGREDIENTS

CHINA
INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

HANGZHOU OUQI FOOD CO., LTD.

CHINA
NUTRITIONAL COMPONENTS; VITAMINS & NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

HEBEI JIAFENG PLANT OILS

CHINA
SEED OILS

HIGH HOPE FOODS

CHINA
FOOD ADDITIVES

HUBEI XIQUAN FOOD & BEVERAGE

CHINA
CANNED FRUIT

INNER MONGOLIA UNISPLENDOR

CHINA
INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

JIASHAN JIANQUIAO BIOCHEM

CHINA
AMINO ACIDS

LINCHENG GOLDEN SUGAR FOOD

CHINA
AMINO ACIDS

LINYI DASHAN FOOD CO., LTD.

CHINA
CANNED VEGETABLES

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FRUIT (DRIED)

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MUN KSJO ROTTERSAC

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PARCHMENT PAPER

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CANNED FRUIT

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CHINA
VITAMIN COMPONENTS

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WATER

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FOOD ACIDS

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CHINA
ACIDS & ACIDULANTS

WUHAN ZONECHEM NATURAL PRODUCTS

CHINA
VITAMIN COMPONENTS

WUXI TIANFENG FOOD INGREDIENT

CHINA
SWEETENERS

XINING YUANLING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE SCIENCE & TECH

CHINA
FRUIT (CANNED)

YICHANG TIANYUAN CANNED FOOD

CHINA
VEGETABLES (CANNED)

ZHUCHENG HUAYUAN BIOENGINEERING

CHINA
FOOD ACIDS & PRESERVATIVES

NEW UNDER STAR-D

(only when bearing Star-D symbol)

KOSHER DAIRY The Star-D is a kashrus symbol of the National Council of Young Israel (NCYI). The Star-K, in its relationship with the NCYL, administers the kashrus of the Star-D. All Star-D products are dairy - cholov stam (non-cholov Yisroel).

BLENDING SOLUTIONS

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JUICE & JUICE CONCENTRATE

ERIN MCKENNA'S BAKERY

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TASTY TECHNOLOGY, LLC

Commack, NY
BAKERY SUPPLIES; BAKING MIXES; DRY MIXES

THE FRESH MARKET DRY MIX DIVISION

Greensboro, NC
BAKING MIXES; COOKIE MIXES; PANCAKE MIXES

URBAN ACCENTS

Chicago, IL
PANCAKE MIXES



Got Questions? STAR-K HAS ANSWERS BY MARGIE PENSAK

To further promote the mission of *halacha* observance “beyond milk and meat”, STAR-K Kashrus Administrator Rabbi Zvi Goldberg hosts a monthly 30-60 minute TeleKosher Conference Series. Listeners call in from across the U.S., Israel, Spain, Peru, Canada, and elsewhere around the world to learn about topics ranging from *A Visitor’s Halachic Guide to Hospitals to Modern Appliances and the Kosher World*.

“We try to pick a timely topic, one that will grab people’s attention, and not only about *kashrus*,” notes Rabbi Goldberg. “If there is inclement weather, we might discuss the *halachos* relevant to storm weather and what you can do about it on *Shabbos*. Obviously, before *Pesach* we talk about *Pesach*. We even received some requests for a webinar every day for two weeks prior to last *Pesach*. That wasn’t feasible, but our dramatically increased daily email and phone call volume were testimony of the need for consumers to get answers to their queries—from March 4 to April 1, 2015, the STAR-K Hotline received approximately 8,600 calls.”

“It’s most gratifying when the viewers are engaged and chatting with us, then we know we are accomplishing our goals,” says Rabbi Goldberg, who encourages audience participation. “There are lots of lectures people can listen to, but very few places to go to interact live with *kashrus* professionals. Some listeners are colleagues of ours from other agencies, which is especially gratifying. We all learn from each other!”

STAR-K’s Advanced *Halacha* Webinar Series features STAR-K’s Rabbinic Administrator, *Harav* Moshe Heinemann, *shlit”a*, who has always been on the cutting edge of advanced technology and *halacha*. Past webinars include such topics as *Eruvin* (a two-part series for *eruv* professionals that discusses *hilchos Eruv*, as they apply to the challenges of a city-wide *eruv*); *Mikvanar* (addresses questions that arise during *mikvah* construction and maintenance), and *Chicken Shayla* Webinar (teaches how to differentiate between a chicken’s perfectly normal imperfection resulting from processing and an imperfection that presents a true *shayla* in need of being addressed by one’s *rav*).

Ask our Kosher experts your questions, the last Wednesday of each month at 12 noon, EST. For signup info, visit www.star-k.org/telekosher. Join the live video broadcasting via the web, Smartphone or telephone. Replays are available on STAR-K’s Vimeo channel <https://vimeo.com/channels/721503>.



STAR-K Kosher Certification

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