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KOSHER MEAT IN THE Marketplace

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Keeping kosher does not preclude being a locavore,¹ but it definitely presents substantial challenges, particularly for carnivores. Barely a handful of communities in the world today still host facilities where kosher meat is processed from slaughter to salting, and sold from steak to salami, all within close proximity to a kosher consumer base. Like most items in the modern marketplace, it's much more common to find beef and poultry products traveling vast distances from slaughterhouse to processor, and from distributor to retailer, before reaching the dinner table.

THE OLD WAY

This very untraditional configuration has uprooted the once prominent communal fixtures of *shochet* and *bodek* (one who checks for abnormalities that render meat *treifah*). It's also a complete departure from an extreme version of locavorism that was practiced in many pre-war European *kehilos*, which legislated bans on 'sh'chutay chutz', not allowing meat slaughtered in a different city to be sold in town. Besides protecting a major source of municipal income through meat taxes, such a policy also served to allow the local rabbinate to closely monitor and uphold *kashrus* standards.

The first generations of immigrants to America maintained this personal relationship with their meat sources. Up until the 1940s, at least 5,000² meat purveyors making a kosher claim blanketed New York City,³ even smaller Jewish communities accommodated hundreds of stores advertising kosher meat.⁴ Every neighborhood was served by multiple butchers who were entrusted to provide kosher meat.⁵ Trust was key because disorganized and fragmented certification regimes opened the door to rampant fraud. The temptation to cheat has always been strong, due to the higher price fetched by kosher meat and the limited methods of detecting kosher status of the final product.⁶ Systems from the Old World that effectively ensured kosher integrity no longer worked in a land of democracy and religious freedom.⁷

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1. The definition of a locavore is "one who eats food grown locally whenever possible." According to the 2008 Farm Act, the total distance that a product can be transported and still considered a "locally or regionally produced agricultural food product" is less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the state in which it is produced. Reflecting the growing trend, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture reports that local farmer's markets have quintupled in the past 20 years.

2. This figure is mentioned in *The Butcher Workmen: A Study of Unionization* by David Brody, Harvard University Press, 1964. Prof. Timothy Lytton in *Kosher: Private Regulation in the Age of Industrial Food* (p.27) writes there were 6000 NYC butchers in 1915 advertising kosher meat, of which, 3600 sold non-kosher too. Numbers of kosher butcher shops were tabulated under President Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act (1933) which attempted to directly interfere with the kosher meat trade. In 1935, the Supreme Court struck down the Act as unconstitutional when Schechter Poultry, a kosher business in Brooklyn, successfully sued the government.

3. The site of the UN building in NYC was formerly a slaughterhouse with kosher production!

4. *Chicago Jewish Chronicle*, Dec. 1, 1933 (flps.newberry.org), notes 370 Chicago area kosher meat markets systematically inspected by the Central Vaad Ha-Kashruth. In that same decade, about 300 Baltimore butchers made a kosher claim.

5. The 1935 banquet journal of the fledgling *Yeshivas Ner Yisroel* in Baltimore (founded 1933), contains an ad thanking the 34 butcher shops who each donated half a calf once a year. (Reprinted in *Yeshurun Journal* 18, *Kislev* 5767, p.170) By mapping the printed addresses one can appreciate the high density of kosher butchers, especially considering that this list represented just 1/9 of the total number in the city.

6. Albeit, spiritually sensitive people are known to possess an innate aversion to non-kosher meat. See *Chullin* 5b. Rav Chaim Soloveitchik recounted an incident with his father, Rav Yoshe Ber (the *Beis HaLevi*) who once visited Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin, rabbi of Brisk, during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. Before departing, R' Yehoshua Leib provided his distinguished visitor with half a chicken to eat during his journey for the *se'udah hamafsekes* prior to the *Yom Kippur* fast. When the time came to eat, R' Yoshe Ber felt something was wrong and did not partake of the chicken. Later on, he received a telegram from R' Yehoshua Leib informing him that a question arose concerning the chicken's kosher status. R' Chaim remarked that this episode does not demonstrate that his father was endowed with prophecy or even *ru'ach haKodesh*. Rather, it's a matter of course for someone who is always meticulous to avoid foods with even a questionable kosher status that non-kosher food will never cross his lips! (See *Toras Chaim*, R' Y. Herskovitz, p.185)

7. Prof. Lytton outlines various attempts to regulate the kosher meat industry in America throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and explains why each failed.

MAKING THE CUT ASSURING THAT *Glatt* REALLY MEANS *Kosher*

RABBI MOSHE HEINEMANN
STAR-K RABBINIC ADMINISTRATOR

It is written in our *Torah*, "Ubosor basodeh *treifa lo socheilu*" (*Shmos* 22:30), it is forbidden to eat *treif* meat. While the expression "treif" (non-kosher) has become the universal connotation for food that is not kosher, in truth, the word *treif* specifically refers to an animal whose flesh was torn or ripped. Technically speaking, if a kosher species of animal or fowl was attacked by a predator, the meat of the victim may be deemed *treif*. However, the meat of an animal improperly kosher slaughtered is not *treifah*, it is called a *neveila*. Technically, meat of a non-kosher animal species is the meat of a *temeiah*. Yet, the term "treif" has found its way through the portals of the slaughterhouse, as well as the aisles of the non-kosher meat section of the supermarkets. No matter what the name, all of these categories of meat are forbidden to be eaten.

The *halacha* requires that all animals and fowl used for kosher consumption be of a kosher species and slaughtered by a *shochet*. Once *shechted*, the freshly slaughtered animal or fowl must undergo a series of inspections (*bedikos*), assuring the health and wholesomeness of the animal. If the animal was found to have suffered an internal defect such as a rip, puncture, or broken bone, or if the animal appeared to be suffering from an illness or defect that was determined to be terminal had the animal lived, the animal would more than likely be *treif*.

While some *treif* characteristics may be determined by external examination, an animal or fowl cannot be kosher approved before being examined internally. The internal

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KOSHER MEAT IN THE Marketplace

RABBI MOSHE T. SCHUCHMAN
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A CURRENT SNAPSHOT

With the development of refrigeration and transportation networks, economic exigencies dramatically altered the *shechitah* landscape. It is easier and more cost-effective to deliver large amounts of post-slaughter meat packed into a truck or railcar than to transport livestock with its attendant needs for adequate spacing, food and shelter. Therefore, major beef production eventually consolidated into the Midwestern heartland,⁸ where the majority of cattle is raised and then transferred to modern feedlots containing over 100,000 head of cattle. Feedlots, which proliferated alongside the growth of the fast-food industry post-WWII, are designed to 'finish' cattle (usually 12-18 month old) by feeding them high protein mixtures consisting of grain, corn, hormones and antibiotics. A few months of this diet rapidly increases their weight and gives their meat the taste and texture consumers crave.⁹

Today, a few large plants with the capacity to *shecht* hundreds every day have replaced the formerly ubiquitous city slaughterhouses.¹⁰ Similarly, cattle-raising regions in Argentina, Australia, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Uruguay export kosher beef to markets in *Eretz Yisroel* and North America. Despite the struggle to remain viable, smaller beef operations still exist in Baltimore, Detroit (lamb), New Jersey, St. Louis, Toronto and Montreal. *Eretz Yisroel*, England, Poland, Ireland and France also sport operations for local consumption.

Commercial poultry growing is concentrated in the Northeast,¹¹ so the large kosher processors are located in Pennsylvania and New York, but there is also one in Iowa. *Eretz Yisroel*, Mexico, and Canada also have significant kosher poultry industries.

In the few localities which still maintain local *shechitah*, as well as a central recognized rabbinic authority in the realm of *kashrus*, an interesting phenomenon occurs when outside companies contract with slaughtering facilities and want to import their own *shochtim* and *bodkim*. Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Spector of Kovno, the eminent 19th century *posek*, issued strong rulings that require visiting *shechitah* teams to first present their credentials and gain approval from the local rabbinate before operating.¹² Even if all the meat will be exported and sold in other markets, they must adhere to the *kashrus* standards of that community. This occurs regularly in Baltimore, where *shechitah* teams arrive weekly from Lakewood and Brooklyn to work alongside the local professionals, all under the auspices of Rav Heinemann, *shlit"za*, STAR-K Rabbinic Administrator.¹³

CHANGES AROUND!

Outside companies and agencies sometimes undertake the expense of sending their own teams, even though qualified and experienced *shochtim* and *bodkim* already work in the plant. They believe their target market prefers to purchase meat produced by people who conform to their own distinctive modes of religious practice and custom. Some *Chassidic* communities take this demand further by insisting that even the wives and families of team members must follow their societal norms. As a result of this insistence, large kosher processors who seek wide-range marketability have stopped employing non-*Chassidic* *shochtim* over the past 15 years.¹⁴

8. Domestic *shechitah* now takes place in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Texas. There is also *shechitah* in California.

9. High quality beef is derived from Black Angus steer, slaughtered at 2 years and weighing up to 1500 lbs. Cull beef is used for ground and processed meats (deli, hot dogs) and comes from milking cows, mother cows, and breeder bulls that are past their useful prime. *Treifos* are more prevalent in cull animals. Grass-fed beef that avoids the feedlot system is also available.

10. Unlike chicken facilities, beef slaughterhouses are rarely Jewish owned. Non-Jewish ownership alleviates the burden of selling off *treifos* and the hindquarters; it also circumvents questions of *Matnos Kehunah*.

11. The time from when a chick is hatched until it's *shechted* is usually 6-8 weeks. Kosher birds are taken at 3-4 lbs; non-kosher is often heavier.

12. *Teshuvos Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon (Machon Yerushalayim 5770)*, *siman 33*. See also *Teshuvos v'Hanhagos II:365*.

13. The classic expression of a *shochet's* respect for a rabbi is to submit his knife for review when requested. The Talmud (*Chullin 18a*) records that a *shochet* who does not comply is subject to excommunication and banishment from working with meat.

14. The original difference between *Chassidic* and traditional *shechitah* was regarding the knife. For generations, knives were fashioned from forged steel. However, for various reasons, 18th century leaders of the nascent *Chassidic* movement introduced knives made from molten steel. Each type has its *halachic* merits. Prolonged and heated disputes on this topic split communities, although the *Alter Rebbe* of Lubavitch (*teshuvos* printed in the end of *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, siman 7*) wrote that each side has legitimate basis and neither should impugn the other's *kashrus*. Eventually, all *shochtim* uniformly adopted today's stainless steel knives. *Chassidic shechitah* nowadays is distinguished by the *shochet's* outward appearance (i.e., growing a beard and *peyos*, clothing style) and practices (i.e., immersing in a *mikvah* every day). There are no differences relating to the requisite piety of the *shochet* or the act of *shechitah* per se.

CHECKLIST FOR *Approving a Shechitah Facility*

RABBI SHMUEL HEINEMANN, KASHRUS ADMINISTRATOR

1. All the knives of the *shochtim* must be checked to ensure that they are sharp and without even the slightest 'pegima'. This must be done before and after the *shechitah*.
2. There must be a sink with running water near the place of *shechitah* for the *shochtim* to sharpen their knives.
3. Animals may not be prodded to the *shechitah* box with a plug-in electric prod.
4. The head restraint in the box which holds the animal during *shechitah* must be calibrated so that the animal's head cannot move during *shechitah*, but not so tightly that it affects the animal's breathing.
5. A system must be in place, to track any animal that becomes a *neveila*.
6. Animals may not be stunned at any time after the *shechitah*.
7. No hot water may be used on the animals anywhere in the slaughter house.
8. No electric current may be applied to the animal at any point, including when used to tenderize the meat or to facilitate removing the hide.
9. All organs, etc., of each animal must be numbered to identify the animal from which they came i.e., tongues, livers, sweet breads, tails, cheek meat, etc.
10. The *bodek* must be able to see the stomach(s) as they are removed from the animal to make sure there are no problems with the stomach(s).
11. There must be adequate space and time for the *bodek pnim* to be able to make an internal inspection of the lungs (*bedikas pnim*).
12. A table with running water and compressed air must be available for checking the lungs of the animals.
13. Meat and offal of *Glatt Kosher* and *Beis Yosef* meat must be tagged and marked accordingly by the *mashgiach*.
14. The *mashgiach* must note the date and time of the *shechitah* on each forequarter of meat and offal.
15. The chemical spray used to spray the meat to protect against *E. coli* and *listeria* must be checked to see if it is *Kosher l'Pesach*.
16. A daily accounting must be kept of how many animals are *Glatt Kosher* and how many are *Beis Yosef*.

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KOSHER MEAT IN THE *Marketplace*

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Other changes to the way kosher meat is sold came from the drive for consumer convenience. Formerly, the most arduous and time-consuming task performed in a kosher kitchen was the process of *kashering* meat by soaking, salting, and rinsing - a process that could take a few hours. A few decades ago, the *kashering* board went the way of the clothing washboard when kosher meat began to arrive in the kitchen as a ready-to-cook item.¹⁵ On-site *kashering* also benefits transportation from remote slaughtering locations because it relieves the pressure to reach the destination before the 72-hour maximum time allotment between *shechitah* and the pre-salting soak.

Another household routine that has been largely forgotten involves frequent trips to the neighborhood rabbi when abnormalities were discovered while cleaning a chicken. Someone had to be dispatched immediately to present the *shai'loh* to a *rov*, who would determine if the bird was *treifah*. Today, such *bedikos* are done in the processing plant. Rabbis lost this source of supplemental income, and consumers lost a chance to appreciate what kosher meat processing entails.¹⁶

In the educational realm, ordination curriculum has shifted with the times and most *rabbonim* are no longer qualified to make *halachic* decisions on the topics of *shechitah* or *treifos*. The inability of communal rabbis to navigate a slaughterhouse, let alone perform basic functions such as checking knives for smoothness and sharpness or examining lungs, is a major departure from the classic rabbinic model. In bygone eras, pulmonary knowledge was part of a rabbi's basic knowledge set with pedagogical skills just an added benefit. The *kashrus* expertise of contemporary rabbis primarily focuses on common issues that arise in the kitchen.

Job availability has also been severely affected by these changes. Procuring steady well-paying employment as a *shochet* or *bodek* often involves leaving one's family for the entire work week, or traveling across the country or overseas for weeks or months at a time. The alternative is to live in rural locations, isolated from the conveniences of cities with well-developed Jewish infrastructure.

Other jobs have been lost from the community of kosher consumers, as well. Many people are astonished to learn that the labor-intensive processes of salting

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15. A few *medakdikim* are still particular to *kasher* meat themselves at home. For the general public, *unkashered* meat is largely unavailable.

16. *Mashgichim* in the plant check each chicken, but things do infrequently slip by. STAR-K KOSHER CLASSROOM's free full color poster titled 'Common *Shailos* On Packaged Chicken' can be downloaded at www.star-k.org

Consumer Confidence

Often when consumers purchase meat from a butcher shop, or eat at a restaurant or catered event, they are unaware of the original *hashgacha* that certified the meat as kosher at its point of origin. They place their confidence in the retail establishment's kosher certification to determine the acceptability of the received product.

Some shoppers have a preference for meat produced by specific companies, trusting that this producer always conforms to a single set of kosher standards. However, unbeknownst to the consumer the company may actually produce their products at different locations, supervised by various *hashgochos* that do not all share the same standards. In January 2016, Congress repealed country-of-origin labeling laws for packaged meat products, making it more difficult for consumers to track where their meat comes from.

STAR-K certified meat/poultry companies and retail establishments consistently satisfy the requirements set by *HaRav* Moshe Heinemann, *shlit"a*, regardless of the brand name or kosher symbol that appears on the final packaging.

CURRENT LIST OF STAR-K CERTIFIED MEAT PROCESSORS AND RETAILERS:

HANGING (UNSALTED, NON-TRAIBORED), THAT NEED FURTHER KOSHER

PROCESSING

- Bierig Brothers - Vineland NJ (Veal and Lamb)
- George G. Ruppberger - Baltimore, MD (Beef and Lamb)
- JW Treuth and Sons - Baltimore, MD (Beef)

BOXED, KOSHERED AND TRAIBORED MEAT & POULTRY

- Ameriprime/Alony Glatt - Baltimore MD (Beef, Veal and Lamb)
- Bierig Brothers - Vineland NJ (Veal and Lamb)
- Birdsboro Kosher Farms - Birdsboro, PA (Poultry)
- Empire Kosher Poultry - Mifflintown, PA (Poultry)
- George G. Ruppberger - Baltimore, MD (Beef and Lamb)
- Glatt Ranch - Dallas, TX (Beef)
- Kol Foods - Washington, DC (Beef, Lamb, Poultry)
- M&D Glatt - Brooklyn, NY (Beef, Veal and Lamb)
- Prime Fleisch - Brooklyn, NY (Beef, Veal and Lamb)
- Quality Kosher/KJ Poultry - Monroe, NY (Poultry)
- Regal Glatt Kosher Meat - Brooklyn, NY
- Shuky Kosher, Mexico City - Mexico (Beef, Lamb, Veal and Poultry)
- Wise Organic Pastures - Brooklyn, NY (Poultry)

PROCESSED MEATS

- Aufschnitt Meats - Baltimore, MD
- Birdsboro Kosher Farms - Birdsboro, PA
- Holy Cow - Newark, NJ
- Kol Foods - Silver Spring, MD
- Quality Meat Processing - Monsey, NY
- Regal Glatt Kosher Deli - Brooklyn, NY
- Shuky Kosher, Mexico City - Mexico

BUTCHER SHOPS

- Glatt Mart - Brooklyn, NY
- Seasons - Baltimore, MD (*coming soon*)
- Seven Mile Market - Baltimore, MD
- Shlomo's Meat Market - Baltimore, MD
- Shoprite of Plainview, Kosher Experience - Plainview, NY
- Shuky Kosher, Mexico City - Mexico (four locations)
- Wasserman & Lemberger - Baltimore, MD

Furthermore, STAR-K maintains a detailed list of meat and poultry, certified by other *hechsheirim*, that is reviewed regularly, in person, by STAR-K *Shechitah* staff for acceptability per *Harav* Heinemann's guidelines. This list is constantly revised. *Mashgichim* working at STAR-K certified retailers, caterers, and restaurants verify that incoming meat to their facility originates only from STAR-K certified or approved sources.

Over the course of any given year, STAR-K responds to thousands of inquiries from consumers, *rabbonim* and local *vaadim* who are interested in ensuring that the meat they eat has been reviewed by STAR-K *Shechitah* staff and approved by *Rav* Heinemann, *shlit"a*. STAR-K is dedicated to providing kosher consumers and communities first-hand information on the *kashrus* standards of meat. For more information, contact us at 410-484-4110 or star-k@star-k.org.



KOSHER MEAT IN THE *Marketplace*



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to extract the blood and *traiboring* (also called *nikur*), which entails skillfully removing the forbidden fats, blood vessels and veins, is widely performed by non-Jews whose work is merely verified by a *mashgiach*. *Nikur* itself is becoming a lost art; unique customs formerly upheld by various communities are now disregarded, even in plants that otherwise maintain meticulous standards of *kashrus*.¹⁷

AGENCY ACCEPTABILITY

We have witnessed the evolution of kosher certification over the past half century. The responsibility of ascertaining *kashrus* has unwittingly been wrested away from local *rabbonim* and entrusted to capable *kashrus* organizations. A faint precedent for such an institutional modification can be found in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Dei'ah* 18:17), which records how communities in medieval times relieved local scholars of their obligation to periodically check on the local *shechitos* by appointing special inspectors for this task. The proffered justification for this divergence from the Talmudic system is that checking knives for the slightest nick requires a rare combination of qualities, including: diligence, alertness, patience, calm, and fear of Heaven, besides *halachic* knowledge. Certifying a meat processor today goes well beyond checking knives, especially in beef slaughterhouses where the kosher animals and their many pieces must be tracked and kept separate from their non-kosher counterparts. *Kashrus* organizations are charged with engaging professionals who meet all the *Shulchan Aruch's* qualifications at a minimum.

When determining the acceptability of an agency's certification on meat, it's important to distinguish between the level of competence needed to certify retail establishments or simple food processors, and a meat producer. *Ne'emanus*, a presumption of honesty and trustworthiness in someone who personally adheres to kosher regulations, has limits. For example, a regular *mashgiach* in a retail establishment can be relied upon to verify that the meat arrives from approved sources with requisite stamps and seals. However, without specialized training and experience in kosher meat production, he will be oblivious to the systems and nuances which must be observed during slaughter and meat preparation.¹⁸ Likewise, not all agencies are equipped to properly certify meat production.

The qualification for *Yiras Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, is applied generally to all aspects of *kashrus* but has greater emphasis with regard to kosher meat production.¹⁹ Subtle mishaps, such as vertical pressure on the knife or a slight pause while making the cut, can invalidate a *shechitah*. Rubbing a lung with too much vigor can rip off a *sirchah* (adhesion), making it appear *glatt* (smooth) when it is really just 'regular' kosher or actually *treif*. Since these mistakes are imperceptible to an onlooker, all involved personnel must be vetted to possess impeccable moral fortitude and not be swayed by any outside pressures, financial or otherwise.

17. Some *hechsherim* in Eretz Yisroel accept *untraibored* meat from the forequarters. A *rabbanut Rav haMachshir* once told Rav Heinemann that this laxity stems from the practice in some *Sephardic* communities to focus on the hindquarters, which contains the *gid hanashe* and *cheilev d'oraysa*, while being lenient in the forequarter where the concern is with *dam*, which can be remedied by making incisions in the veins. *Ashkenazic* custom is to be *menaker* the forequarters and discard the hindquarters entirely. Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff makes an interesting observation: an early source for not using the hindquarters is the *Radbaz* (#162), who was Chief Rabbi of Egypt in the 16th century, and he was *Sefardi*.

18. This principle is discussed in *Aruch HaShulchan*, *Yoreh Dei'ah* 119:2. *Ne'emanus* is further eroded when financial interests are involved. An illustration of this principle (in a different context) is found in *Rambam*, *Hilchos Eidus* 98 about a 13 year old boy who is legally acceptable as a witness while his testimony in real estate matters is inadmissible, because without business experience one is unable to notice or comprehend details and nuances relating to the transaction.

19. See *Rabbeinu Yonah*, *Sha'arei Teshuva* III:96, cited in *Beis Yosef* Y.D. end of *siman* 18.

Another element critical to quality kosher meat certification is transparency. The *halachic* system allows for variances in legal rulings and policy implementations. Therefore, it's important for an organization to be open to questions about its stances on relevant issues and how they implement and monitor their policies. STAR-K commended an outside kosher certifier when they were forthcoming about the leniencies they employ when grading meat according to the *Beis Yosef Chalak* standard (which is sought out by *Sefardim* and some *Ashkenazim*), with which we strongly disagree. Likewise, STAR-K welcomes well-meaning visitations from outside authorities who are interested in our certification standards.

THE STAR-K SYSTEM

All of these considerations together form the backbone of STAR-K's meat policy. Working under Rav Heinemann, *shlit"u*, there is an understood missive that preserving the kosher integrity of meat is the cornerstone of all *kashrus*. We recognize that *kashrus* organizations have replaced the role formerly assumed by local *rabbonim*. It's our solemn responsibility to ensure that only bona fide kosher meat is available to the consumer and that the label accurately represents the product (i.e., *Glatt* or *Beis Yosef Chalak*).

In order to fulfill that role, every single slaughterhouse and meat processor that serves as a vendor to STAR-K certified companies, restaurants, caterers, and stores is subject to regular audits, regardless of where it is located. This is performed by either Rav Heinemann or one of a select group of kosher meat specialists who report directly to the Rov. Companies that market their products with a STAR-K symbol are, of course, scrutinized much more frequently. Even when a plant is certified by another reputable *Rav haMachshir* or organization, STAR-K continually evaluates the strength of the kosher system and maintains regular contact with the *Rosh haShochtim*, or other responsible worker at the plant. This policy is not, *chalilah*, motivated by distrust; indeed, there is a great deal of cooperation among leading agencies; rather, this policy is unique to *shechitah* and meat production. It attests to the fundamental role of kosher meat in *kashrus* as well as STAR-K's responsibility to its consumer constituency.

Given the far flung nature of the modern meat industry and the somewhat complicated chain of supply, considerable attention and resources are allocated to this mission. At times, due to the internecine politics that seemingly have always infected the meat business, it takes a large measure of resilience and determination to uphold this policy. Following the Rov's direction, *shechitah* and its associated domains, form the integral core of a *kashrus* agency's *Avodas HaKodesh* so corners cannot be cut.

The German statesman, Otto von Bismark, purportedly remarked, "Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made." Even in times like ours, when there is distrust of the political process, kosher consumers and *rabbonim* must have full confidence that they can rely on their kosher certification to know how their "sausages" are made.²⁰

Rabbi Zvi Holland, a STAR-K Kashrus Administrator with expertise in the meat industry, contributed to this article.

20. In every generation, a handful of pious individuals exist who, unpretentiously, only consume meat if they personally investigated the *shechitah* and processing. See *Sh'lah HaKodesh*, *Sha'ar Ha'osisos - K'dushas Ho'Achilah* # 7 and *Teshuvos v'Hanhagos* II:359. Obviously, this lofty standard is reserved for accomplished *Talmidei Chachamim* who maintain a similar level of piety in all areas of life.



MAKING THE CUT

ASSURING THAT *Glatt*
REALLY MEANS *Kosher*



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examination determines that the internal organs are free from any holes, punctures, defects, or disease that would disqualify the animal and render it non-kosher.

During the internal examination (*bedikas p'nim*), it is especially common to find adhesions (*sirchos*) on the animal's lungs. An adhesion is an abnormal condition in which body tissues are united by fibrous tissues. These adhesions may be indicative of a puncture in the lung wall underneath the adhesion. A puncture of the lung will disqualify an animal and render it *treif*. However, at times the adhesion on the lung is not hiding a puncture. This can be determined through careful, skillful removal of the adhesion. Once removed, the adhesionless lung can be tested by blowing it up with air and submerging the lung under water. If air bubbles appear in the water, it is an indication that the lung has been punctured and the animal is *treif*. If the submerged lung is airtight, the animal is kosher but not *Glatt* kosher.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KOSHER, GLATT AND BEIS YOSEF GLATT?

It is important to understand the different standards of kosher meat. Just as the meat industry maintains the quality of its meat through its grading i.e., prime or choice, so too the world of *kashrus* maintains different standards. If the lung was found to be free of adhesions after the *shochet's* *bedikos*, the animal is deemed to be *Beis Yosef Glatt* kosher. *Beis Yosef Glatt* typically means that there were no adhesions to the lungs at all. *Glatt* kosher means that any adhesions found were exceptionally thin (like a sewing thread) and the adhesion peeled off easily, leaving no hole in the lung wall, and the adhesionless lung passed the air/water test. Kosher means that the lung had adhesions which were thicker or wider in nature; however, upon removal they did not leave any hole in the lung wall and the lung passed the air/water test. Generally speaking, it was the custom of Ashkenazic Jews of European descent to eat both *Beis Yosef Glatt* and non-*Glatt* meats, and to accept both as kosher. [Please note that *Beis Yosef Glatt* meat that is certified only by *Sephardic hechsherim* may rely on leniencies that are not acceptable to *Ashkenazim*.]

The *Glatt* criteria applies to the meat of *gassos*, adult cattle i.e., beef. This list includes the meat of steer, heifers, bulls, cows and buffalo. Therefore, a butcher could legitimately advertise *Glatt* kosher rib steaks and kosher rib steaks. However, deer, sheep, lambs, calves, and all fowl (chickens, turkeys, and ducks) always have to be *Beis Yosef Glatt* to be considered kosher. This means that adhesions are not removed from calf lungs, as such defects would render the calf *treif*.

Sometimes suppliers or proprietors will advertise *Glatt* kosher chickens to promote their product. This implies that the "*Glatt*" chicken is of higher kosher quality than "regular" kosher chicken, and that a chicken could be kosher without being *Glatt*. This is a myth, since **every** chicken in the United States must be *Beis Yosef Glatt* in order to be considered kosher. In Israel, the lungs of the chickens are checked due to the prevalence of Newcastle Disease. Indeed, there are two types of chicken that are sold in Israel - *Mehadrin* and non-*Mehadrin*. *Mehadrin* chickens, whose lungs are checked, are considered *Beis Yosef Glatt* while the non-*Mehadrin* chickens would be considered only regular non-*Glatt*.

Today, the baseline certifying standard of *kashrus* organizations for meat is *Glatt* Kosher. It can be reasonably stated that today's kosher consumer is caught up in a *Glatt* kosher versus *Beis Yosef Glatt* kosher frenzy. Meat purveyors,

suppliers and manufacturers are the first ones to capitalize on this growing phenomenon. The problem is that there is now a marked shortage of true *Beis Yosef Glatt* and regular *Glatt* kosher meat. Sometimes only 1 in 20 animals will be truly *Beis Yosef Glatt* kosher. Some have extended the *Beis Yosef Glatt* standard to include animals that were once only considered to be *Glatt* and have reduced the regular *Glatt* standard even more, almost to the point of *Stam* kosher. Consumers must have a high level of confidence in the kosher certification of their meat.

TRAIBORING

One should bear in mind that even if the meat is advertised as *Beis Yosef Glatt* or *Glatt*, the kosher meat process does not end with the examination of the lungs. There are many more steps that need to be taken before the meat reaches the homemaker's kitchen. Certain fats found in kosher domestic animals are forbidden by *Torah* law. These forbidden fats are categorically called *chailev*, and are found in all varieties of cattle, calves, sheep, and lambs. Fortunately, most of the forbidden *chailev* is found in the hindquarters of these animals. In the United States and most European countries, the hindquarters are not processed for kosher use. Nevertheless, according to Jewish custom, *chailev* removal includes not only actual *chailev* but also various parts of the animal that touch the *chailev*, fats that may be confused with *chailev*, and those parts whose nutrition comes from *chailev*.

Moreover, the forequarters of these kosher species contain various blood arteries, blood veins, glands, membranes and tendons that must be skillfully removed by a trained expert before meat can be *kashered* i.e., soaked and salted. There are a number of reasons for their removal. Predominantly, the veins, arteries and membranes must be removed because soaking and salting alone will not remove the blood. Removal of these and other parts allows the free flow of blood from the meat during soaking and salting. The removal process is referred to as "*traiboring*" in Yiddish, or "*nikkur*" in Hebrew. The skilled craftsman is known as a "*menaker*."

The art of *traiboring* is not new to the Jewish scene. This tradition has been practiced and handed down from generation to generation. Understandably, many communities have their own *traiboring* traditions with their individual differences and nuances. The following portions of the forequarter are *traibored* according to the Baltimore *minhag*:

BALTIMORE MINHAG:

Brisket

1. Two blood veins that run through the brisket
2. Veins on the inside of the brisket

Brust Deckel

1. Gland that is found within the fats
2. Tendon that runs through the *deckel* (*Litvishe* udder)

Chuck Sections

Fat, veins and the artery located at the first rib

Rib & Plate Sections

1. Removal of membrane skin covering all seven bones of rib and plates

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



MAKING THE CUT

ASSURING THAT *Glatt*
REALLY MEANS *Kosher*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

2. Blood veins and tendons that run alongside the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth ribs
3. Fat located on the back of the meat beyond the twelfth rib, fat below the ribeye (*traifena finger*)
4. Cartilage of the thirteenth rib

Pastrami

1. Veins that run through the pastrami
2. Fats that run on the inside below the vein
3. Pieces of cartilage attached to the breastbone

Neck

Two blood veins on either side of the neck

Skirt Steak or Tenderloin

1. Membrane is removed from the front and back sides of the skirt steak, fat is removed from the back side
2. Fat sinews from the bottom tenderloin are removed

Hanger Steak

1. Membrane is removed from the front and back sides of the hanger steak
2. All fat is removed from the surface

Shoulder

1. Vein on the bottom of the bone
2. Vein that travels the length of the bone and splits into three tributaries
3. Vein near the *deckel*

Tongue

1. Tip is snipped and the cartilage bones in the back of the tongue are removed
2. Two pump veins and two tendons on either side of the tongue are removed

LIVER

The white fat on the bottom side of the liver is actual *chailev* and has to be totally removed. Note: The white arteries on the side of the liver, as well as any white spots found under the skin of the liver, are not *chailev*.

All meat and poultry must undergo a soaking, salting and rinsing procedure, *hadacha umelicha v'hadacha*, before the meat can be further processed. This procedure must be initiated

within 72 hours of the slaughter of the animal or fowl. Some authorities permit the washing down of the meat within the 72 hour period to extend the time for the kosherization of the meat for another 72 hours. Most *Glatt*-kosher facilities do not permit this practice, unless the meat was actually soaked in water for a half hour within the 72 hour period. This extends the *kashering* time for the meat for an additional 71½ hours. The wash-down system has been severely abused and compromised in the United States. There are places that have been known to use a spray mist or damp rag instead of water to “wash down the meat.”

The soaking process must be done in the following manner. The meat must be soaked for a half hour in cool, but not freezing water (approximately 50°F and up). The exterior of the soaked meat must then be cleaned of any visible blood and then salted on all sides with *kashering* salt. In the case of poultry, the inside cavity must also be salted. The salt cannot be too fine, nor can it be too coarse. Table salt or popcorn salt is not suitable for *kashering* meat and poultry. The meat or poultry must be placed on a board or rack, which will allow the flow of blood from the meat. The salt must stay on the meat or poultry for one hour and is then rinsed off three times to remove all salt and blood.

Since *traiboring* is not always done in a slaughterhouse, the fact that meat is slaughtered in a reliable slaughterhouse and is *Glatt* kosher does not guarantee the final *kashrus* status of the meat. The process of *traiboring* and salting by a reliable butcher, kosher provision house, or homemaker must be done before it can be rendered as usable for the kosher home. It goes without saying, if the meat was procured from a “kosher” slaughter which did not fully meet *halachic* requirements, even the most stringent *traiboring* and *kashering* would still leave the meat in a state of questionable kosher status.

Integrity and reliability, not “*Glatt*,” “super-*Glatt*,” or “*Beis Yosef Glatt*” labels or signs, should be the true guidelines for the kosher consumer. All too often, the conscientious homemaker gets caught up in hearsay, fancy advertising, and fallacious claims without bothering to separate fact from fiction. Therefore, it is always advisable to purchase meat that has been endorsed by a respectable rabbinic authority or *kashrus* organization. It is certainly advisable to purchase meat and poultry from a butcher who displays genuine integrity and commitment to *Torah* and *mitzvos*, along with his reliable supervision.



STAR-K MEAT TEAM

Humane Standards Accreditation

While the act of *shechitah* itself is an exquisitely humane form of animal slaughter, the manner in which an animal is handled prior to reaching the *shochet* should also conform with the *Torah*'s sensitivity for *tza'ar ba'alei chaim* (the prohibition against causing unnecessary pain and harm to creatures). Our mission to certify meat products of the highest quality was recently enhanced when two prominent members of our meat team, Rabbi Zvi Holland and Rabbi Tzvi Shaul Goldberg, traveled to Iowa in order to take part in an accredited certification program through

PAACO (Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization). Instructors included world-renowned experts in the field of animal welfare such as Dr. Temple Grandin, professor of animal science at Colorado State University and consultant to the livestock industry. She is considered a leading authority on animal welfare.



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STAR-K Kosher Certification Hosts Winter Mashgichim Review Seminar

by Margie Pensak

On December 24, STAR-K Kosher Certification held its annual Winter Mashgichim Review Seminar at its Baltimore offices. Rabbis Mayer Kurcfield and Sholom Tendler conducted the day-long sessions, with the goal of reinforcing STAR-K food service policies and procedures. Attendees came from multiple states.

“Everybody at STAR-K knows that the *mashgichim* are the eyes and ears of our organization, and even though STAR-K is a worldwide *kashrus* organization, food service—a relatively small part of our activities—is probably the most important thing that we do,” noted STAR-K president Avrom Pollak.

HaRav Yaakov Hopfer, *Nasi Vaad HaRabonim* of Baltimore, in his *divrei chizuk* mentioned, “By taking your job seriously, it gives a community a sense of security knowing they are in good hands, and *Boruch Hashem*, we are.”

A highlight was the “Award of Excellence” presentation to Seven Mile Market manager/head *mashgiach*, Chaim Fishman, in recognition of 20 years of dedicated service to STAR-K and Baltimore. “It’s a humbling experience,” said Mr. Fishman. “My *machshava* has always been to ensure that STAR-K’s standards of *kashrus* are followed properly.”

Seminar participants, such as Ronnie Berman (Franklin and Marshall College- Lancaster, PA), Tzvi Shear (O’Fishe! Catering, Baltimore), and Barbara Price (a veteran *mashgicha*), all concurred it was a great opportunity to learn new information and share ideas. As Mr. Berman remarked, “It is always worth the trip to learn new policies and to get *divrei chizuk*; it is the impetus to keep us going.”

Both Rabbis Kurcfield and Tendler agree that the seminar serves a few important goals. Firstly, to ensure everyone is up to date on all STAR-K policies and procedures. Secondly, to offer a forum for *mashgichim* - some of whom have worked 25+ years - to ask questions and discuss ideas as a group. Finally, to allow the *mashgichim* to interact with *Rav* Heinemann, *shlit”a*, and the entire office staff, which gives them tremendous *chizuk* knowing we appreciate and support their vital *avodas hakodesh*. “It was clear to us that we succeeded!”

In his concluding *divrei bracha*, STAR-K Rabbinic Administrator *HaRav* Moshe Heinemann said, “A *kashrus* organization is only as good as its *mashgichim*. They are the ones who actually do all the work. Without good *mashgichim*, we may never know about the problems and better ways of how to do things. It all depends on the ones who really administer the *kashrus*. It’s all up to you.”



STAR-K Kosher Certification

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