GOOD THINGS COME IN Small Packages
RABBI ZUSHE YOSEF BLECH

The Torah extols Eretz Yisroel as the land blessed with seven types of produce: wheat, barley, figs, grapes, pomegranates, olives, dates (D’varim 8:8). Most types of fruit are harvested once a year. Since fresh fruit spoils quickly, the challenge has been to find a way to enjoy them year round. Modern processing methods, such as canning and freezing, allow for a form of preservation similar to that of fresh fruit. Older methods, however, involved processing the fruit into a new product markedly different from the original, but with equally tasty and desirable traits. Dried grapes – raisins – are a case in point. Grapes are harvested in the fall within a span of about six weeks. Some of the crop is eaten as fresh fruit, and much is squeezed to make wine. From the times of Tanach, however, grapes were preserved by drying them in the sun to form raisins, which could be stored for long periods of time. Raisins were a concentrated source of nutrition and tasted great. They have been consumed by Jews for thousands of years. In fact, one of the rations used by David haMelech’s army was raisins. While the lowly raisin has enjoyed a long history, it has also been the source of much halachic discussion.

Traditionally, grapes were dried by spreading them out on mats and placing them in the sun; today, this remains the most common method of drying them. Since the raisins lie in an unprotected environment, there is a concern of insect contamination. Indeed, the question of insects in raisins became a major point of discussion about six months ago, with some Poskim recommending that raisins not be eaten at all. This halachic issue, however, is not new. The TaTz (Y.D. 84 s.k. 12) specifically discusses the halachic status of raisins and concludes that they are permitted, based on a Shicho S’Yeka: (1) It is not clear that the raisins contain insects, and (2) Even if they did, perhaps the insects hatched after the grapes had been harvested (which would classify them as lo pirsu – they had not traveled on ground – and would thus be permitted). Although the Mishkenos Yiaiku may have disagreed with the TaTz, there seem to be additional reasons to be lenient in our case. Most importantly, the insect that is most often found in raisins is called drosophila. It typically appears only after the grape has been harvested, thus strengthening the argument that raisins containing this insect would be permitted.

As such, most hashgacha agencies have concluded that raisins handled in accordance with acceptable manufacturing standards pose no halachic concern of insect infestation. However, kashrus concerns regarding raisins do not end with possible insect infestation. We all know how sticky raisins can be, and usually consider this one of its endearing characteristics. In mass

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production, however, clumped raisins pose a major handling problem. Trying to get just the right number of raisins into a box of Raisin Bran would be almost impossible if they all stuck together. Manufacturers have resolved this issue by coating raisins with oils and/or glycerin, allowing them to be mixed and handled like any other particulate matter. From a kashrus perspective, however, these two ingredients can adversely affect the inherently kosher status of the raisin. Glycerin is derived from fat, and even vegetable oil can pose major kashrus concerns. While raisins sold for retail use are not coated with oils or other chemicals, often those used in the baking industry and other food processing applications are treated and would require a reliable kosher certification.

The use of oils in the production of raisins, however, is much more ancient than the production of Raisin Bran. As grapes grow on the vine, they resist losing moisture by producing a waxy coating on their skin, known as the “cuticle.” While this defense against desiccation (drying out) may be useful to the fresh grape, it inhibits the drying process necessary for raisin production. Eventually people realized that if they could modify this waxy layer, grapes would dry more quickly. One way of solving this problem is to dip grapes in a hot caustic soda solution before dehydration. This causes fine cracks to form on the skin of the grape, allowing moisture to escape more quickly. While this process poses no kashrus concerns, the raisins become sticky because the sugary juices escape through the cracked skin. Another solution is to modify the cuticle to increase its permeability. For thousands of years, farmers would dip grapes into a mixture of olive oil, wood ashes (caustic soda), and water – essentially a form of soap! The mixture would weaken the wax in the cuticle and allow moisture to pass through it more easily, thus hastening the drying process.

More recently, however, scientists have developed treatments called “grape dipping oil,” which involves water, fatty esters, and a caustic agent. These products not only hasten the drying process, but also tend to prevent the browning of light colored grapes. This produces a “golden raisin” without the use of bleaching compounds, such as sulfur dioxide. Since golden raisins are more prone to this process, some authorities are worried that these raisins treated with fatty esters pose a kashrus concern. As such, many hashgacha agencies now require a reliable kosher certification for golden raisins, as well as imported raisins of all types. Others, however, feel this is insufficient since the fatty esters in question are invariably derived from vegetable sources, and the caustic agent used in the production of the dipping would render the product inedible.

Raisins play a role in the life of the Jew on a weekly basis, in the form of Friday night Kiddush. The production of kosher wine poses many difficulties, given the seasonal availability of grapes and the halachic stringencies involved in their processing. Nowadays, we do have ready access to an abundance of kosher wine. This was not always the case in past generations, especially in colder climates where grapes did not grow and kosher wine was expensive and hard to find. The common solution to this problem was raising. This was made by grinding dried raisins, mixing them with water (allowing the grapes to rehydrate), and fermenting the reconstituted grape juice. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 272:6) rules that raisin wine has the same halachic status as wine made from fresh grapes. Indeed, raisin wine was often the only option available to Jews in Europe. [Much halachic discussion takes place, however, regarding the exact qualifications of raisin wine. For example, the Tur rules that if the raisins are completely dried out, then the process of rehydration would still disqualify them. Also, the ratio of water to the raisins cannot exceed one to six. Given these and other halachic complexities, the B’ur Halacha recommends that one use regular wine if at all possible.]

The ability to consider raisin wine the equivalent of regular wine, however, has its halachic downside. Raisin “juice” is often used as an ingredient in baked products, especially bread. This is because it is an all natural source of color and sweetness, aids in maintaining moisture, and is a mild natural preservative. Given the fact that juice derived from soaked raisins has the halachic status of grape juice, however, it is subject to all the rules of Shemayam. As such, it cannot be produced or handled by non-Jews until it has been cooked (m’vushal), just as any other kosher wine or grape juice. Given the common use of raisin juice in the manufacture of food products, this issue has raised significant concern. One solution, adopted by Rav Elyashiv shli”a, is to cook the raisins before processing them into juice, thus, any juice that is subsequently expressed from them maintains a status of m’vushal. Some kashrus organizations do not agree with this approach and require that the juice itself be cooked before it can be considered m’vushal.

Given the concerns of raisin wine and raisin juice, one might think that the simplest way to halachically enjoy a raisin is just to eat it without any processing whatsoever. Unfortunately, things are not so simple, especially if one is not very hungry. Indeed, it is preferable that one never eat a single raisin at all! The reason is as follows: When eating a single raisin, one must certainly pronounce a Bracha Rishona (Bar Eze), but as far as the Bracha Acharona, after eating a single raisin is concerned, things are not so simple. Generally, one is not required (or even permitted) to make a Bracha Acharona until one consumes a k’zayis (the size of an “olive”) of any given food. While Posekim dispute the exact size of an “olive,” everyone will agree that a single raisin does not qualify; therefore, it would seem that one would not recite a Bracha Acharona. The problem is that a single raisin is considered a Berya – a “complete” item – and there is a dispute amongst the Posekim as to whether eating a Berya is equivalent to eating a k’zayis. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 210:1) rules that one should avoid eating a “whole” fruit that is less than a k’zayis in order to avoid a Bracha l’Vatala (wasted brachah). When eating raisins, therefore, it is recommended that one eat several – or none at all – which gives a whole new meaning to the phrase, “Bet you can’t eat just one.”

As previously mentioned, sun-dried raisins have been around for thousands of years, as have the kashrus concerns they may pose. Raisins are, therefore, uniquely positioned to exemplify Shlomo haMelech’s admonition: “V’ayn kol chadash tashas ha’dashmah” – “... And there is nothing new under the sun.” (Koheles 1:9).
For some of you who think that all colleges are "treif", STAR-K Certification knows that is not the case. STAR-K certifies eight kosher restaurants, take-outs, and concession stands on seven college campuses on the northeast coast.

The increasing number of kosher amenities on American college campuses seems to be a trend, with liberal arts colleges seeking opportunities to attract Jewish students. Kosher kitchens, and other investments of Jewish life on campus, act as magnets to attract the estimated 90% of Jewish students who attend college. For some of them, STAR-K Certification's presence on campus may be offering a very first taste of Judaism, literally and figuratively.

Rabbi Ephraim (Ely) Flamm, the director of the Jewish Collegiate Network, an affiliate of The Eitz Chaim Center, an adult outreach organization in Baltimore, says that there is no question that Kosher has grown on the Maryland college campuses over the years. "I work with unaffiliated and very marginally involved students, meeting them on their turf," says Rabbi Flamm, who co-founded the organization over 20 years ago with his wife, Penina, and the backing of Mrs. Hannah Storch. "The Kosher program has grown and has helped build Jewish life on campus. It is not unusual for non-observant friends of those who are kosher observant to mingle in the dining area. I have had students who became kosher and observant because of this. The Kosher program builds a certain nucleus of students that grows, and it expands rapidly."

Rabbi Mayer Kurcfeld, the kashrus administrator who has both engineered and overseen STAR-K's certified kosher operations on campus, since the first kosher kitchen opened on the Goucher College campus in 1999, clarifies the concept of Kosher on campus today.

"Initially, these Hillel-run kosher programs were a separate entity," explains Rabbi Kurcfeld. "The college's kosher kitchen was located in a separate facility that was frequented by Jews, alone. The reality of the situation today is that kids are traditionally kosher, but they want to eat with their non-kosher friends, as well. At all of the newer college kosher facilities, you can sit with anybody and the kosher food is available to Jew and non-Jew alike. The model has changed to make kosher accessible to everyone, and it now has a food court type of look, similar to the one you see at shopping malls. You go into one common area to sit, food is served on disposables with disposable paper placemats. We have a mashgacha temdud (supervising Rabbi) who is on the premises at all times of production and operation) in the prepping and serving areas, and it is STAR-K's policy to prepare only gliat kosher and cholev yosef foods. Individual pre-packaged foods can be non-cholov yosef, under reliable national certifications, eaten at the discretion of the student."

Avigail Summers is a Torah observant freshman who attends Goucher College in Towson, Maryland, a suburb of Baltimore. Sending her daughter 1500 miles away from their Denver home was made a bit easier for Avigail's mother, Devorah, knowing that the college of her choice had a reliable kosher food plan.

"When looking at colleges, it was a top priority to find a school that offered a meal plan with a reliable hashgacha (kosher certification)," says Mrs. Summers. "Finding any school that will offer a kosher meal plan can be daunting. Often, a school will have a Hillel affiliation, but not necessarily a kosher kitchen or access to a meal plan. Knowing that Goucher is under the Star-K is very comforting."

"Avigail has made many new friends and has come to learn that although they are not affiliated, they are Jewish," Mrs. Summers continues. "Even though these kids have not signed up for the kosher meal plan, they too are allowed to eat at Hillel from the kosher kitchen once a week. Many of these students, even though they are not religious or observant, come to Hillel for Friday night Shabbat dinner. They comment on how good the food is, how comfortable the environment is, and that Hillel provides more of a dining room like they have at home instead of a cafeteria style room. They really appreciate the home style touches. In some respects, Goucher and Hillel, whether intending to or not, have provided a type of kiruv (outreach) by allowing all of the Goucher students to partake in the kosher meal plan. By no means does Hillel promote any agenda, they just welcome everyone. I feel this is beneficial to all and creates a greater sense of community."

How difficult is it to provide these students with the opportunity to keep kosher on campus? Rabbi Kurcfeld says that the challenge of setting up the new generation of kosher facilities on campus, such as those on the Franklin & Marshall, Dickinson and Muhlenberg campuses, simply entailed the mechanical details. "I made a presentation reviewing the basic rules and technical aspects of Kashrus to representatives of both the college

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symbol. An irreparable labeling error in any of these components can land a crippling blow to a company’s expense account. When the Star-K discovered a labeling error on one of their company’s soon-to-be marked products, the company promptly and responsibly destroyed their entire inventory of new packaging film and took a loss of over $50,000.00!

In today’s world of niche marketing, manufacturers are constantly looking for new marketing opportunities. A new and very lucrative marketing source has been discovered in the ultra-Orthodox segment of the kosher populace known as the heimishe olam. Years ago, the wide variety of all American kosher foods were only available at the heimishe market, nor was the heimishe olam interested in entering that arena. Currently, just about everything is available to the heimishe niche market, which is very interested in mehadrin min hamehadrin all American kosher food. Specialty production manufacturing takes place in just about every corner of the world, producing just about any product imaginable.

Years ago, private label manufacturing was in its infancy. Nowadays, private labeling and contract manufacturing are booming businesses, the heimishe olam not withstanding. Many heimishe companies market under their own brand name with their own special packaging. At times, they will use the existing manufacturer’s packaging with a sticker.

In order to reduce packaging costs, private label companies have opted to place a special sticker over the contract manufacturer’s existing packaging. This is a relatively inexpensive method to package a heimishe product and charge a premium. The question is: Are all stickers created equal? What is behind all the impressive Hebrew writing and extra rabbinical certifications?

In the case of snack foods, where a national kashrus organization doesn’t require Ishul Yisroel for potato chips or pas Yisroel for pretzels, a heimishe hechsher will send a mashgiach to turn on the fires or boiler at the start of production. It goes without saying that when the special production mashgiach is present, the ingredients are checked and the run is monitored for the client. At times, certain ingredients are substituted since a heimishe hechsher may accept one particular brand of oil or flavor blend but reject another. For example, in the case of a kosher specialty production of a bubble gum filled lollipop, a kosher gum base was substituted to make the kosher bubble gum instead of the company’s regular non-kosher bubble gum counterpart.

Another aspect of a heimishe specialty production is the elimination of rework from their product. Typically, when products are manufactured mistakes are likely to occur during the production. In order to minimize loss and waste, companies will blend the mismanufactured items into subsequent runs. This process is known as rework. Bakeries rework old bakery goods into their freshly baked products. Candy companies will regrind and remelt misshapen candy. Margarine companies remelt sticks of margarine, discard the old wrappers and send the margarine through the votaters a second time. If a heimishe label appears on a product, it can possibly mean that no rework items were allowed for the special production.

On the other hand, at times the standards of the national agency are totally acceptable to the heimishe company, and the label is stuck on as a marketing tool. Nothing is different except that the heimishe consumer would not purchase the product without the appearance of the name of a Rav Hamachshor in Hebrew and pay a premium price for the sticker. It is unfortunate that this type of sticker casts aspersions on the reliability of the regular kosher certification that appears on the package. It also causes consumers on a limited budget to pay a premium for a Hebrew sticker. Sometimes, stickers are used by the certifying agency to help a newly certified company get started. Occasionally, a newly kosher certified manufacturer will request to deplete pre-existing inventory before printing new packaging. Since destroying packaging materials can be very costly, the hashgacha agency will allow the manufacturer to print labels containing the name of the company, the product, and the kashrus symbol to affix to existing packaging. New packaging would incorporate the kashrus symbol on the package.

Another frequent appearance of stickers emerges during Passover production. If a product bears a generic sticker stating “Kosher for Passover,” the innocent unassuming Passover shopper has no way of knowing whether or not the label is legitimate. Under no circumstances should a product be purchased with a generic sticker that simply bears a kashrus symbol and the words “Kosher for Passover,” without the name of the company or product incorporated onto the sticker. To the credit of national kashrus agencies, products are carefully monitored and standards are rigorous. This includes monitoring what goes into the product, as well as how it is packaged.

The unprecedented growth of the kosher food industry has proven to be very lucrative for honest, hard working manufacturers. Yet, there are those few opportunists who engage in mislabeling some products with kosher symbols or labels in order to sell their products. Although misuse of a kosher symbol is a trademark violation, there are products that surface with unauthorized kosher markings on the packaging. It goes without saying that it is easier to misrepresent a product as being kosher when a sticker appears on the item. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the kosher consumer to be aware and vigilant to ensure that they purchase products that are properly labeled and reliably kosher. Caveat emptor – Let the buyer beware!
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(only when bearing Star-K symbol)

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CBL NATURAL FOODS,
COCONUT DIVISION
SRI LANKA
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INTERVENDORS
THE NETHERLANDS
NUTS & SEEDS; SNACK FOODS

KRINOS FOODS CANADA
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OLIVES; OLIVE OILS

LATE JULY ORGANIC SNACKS
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MANTAB, INC.
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Eden Prairie, MN
NUTS & SEEDS

SWEET CITY FOODS, SUSHI DIVISION
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TOPCO
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MOROCCO
OLIVES

ALOK OIL INDUSTRIES
INDIA
NUTS & SEEDS; OILS/OILIVE OILS

ANQING BOYUAN BIOCHEMISTRY SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
CHINA
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ARGENTINA
OILS/OILIVE OILS

ARI KAYISI TARIM URUNLERI
TURKEY
DRIED FRUIT

BAB DIS TICARET MADEN INSAT
TURKEY
ALCOHOL

CDG ENVIRONMENTAL
Bethlehem, PA
INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

CHENGDU RUNDE PHARMACEUTICAL CO LTD.
CHINA
HERBAL EXTRACTS

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INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

HUILERIE LOUED
TUNISIA
OLIVES/OILVE OILS

HEZE SANQING FOOD
CHINA
CANNED FRUIT; CANNED VEGETABLES

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FLAVOR & EXTRACTS

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CHOCOLATE PRODUCTS

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Glendale, NY
GELCERINE

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OTIS MCALLISTER, INC
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CANNED FRUIT; FRUIT BLENDS/PUREES

PRODROMA BIO TECH
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FRUIT (DRIED)

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RESINS; SPICES & SEASONINGS

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STERILTOM
ITALY
TOMATO PRODUCTS

SULSAN A.S.
TURKEY
FRUIT (DRIED)

SUPERVALU
Eden Prairie, MN
NUTS & SEEDS

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MEAT/Poultry PROCESSOR

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INDIA
COFFEE

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FRUIT (CANNED); VEGETABLES (CANNED)

XUXUO NINGXING FOOD
CHINA
FRUIT (CANNED)

YONGJII POINTER FOODS
CHINA
VEGETABLES (CANNED)

ZSCHIMMER & SCHWARZ, INC.
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(only when bearing Star-D symbol)

The Star-D is a kosher symbol of the National Council of Young Israel (NCYI). The Star-K, in its relationship with the NCYI, administers the kosher of the Star-D. All Star-D products are dairy – cholov stam (non-cholov issur).

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ESTABLISHMENTS
(see letter of certification)

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Insights from the Institute

RABBI MORDECHAI FRANKEL
DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF HALACHAH

My doctor has told me that I have sleep apnea, and advised me to use a sleep apnea machine. Can this device be used on Shabbos?

Sleep apnea is a disorder characterized by abnormal pauses in breathing or instances of abnormally low breathing during sleep. Obstructive sleep apnea, the most common form of the disorder, is caused by the relaxation of the walls of soft tissue in the airway of the throat during sleep. Common symptoms include loud snoring, restless sleep, and daytime sleepiness. Sleep-disordered breathing is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, high blood pressure, arrhythmias, diabetes, and sleep deprived driving accidents. Recent studies have shown that sleep apnea affects about 16% of men and 5% of women between 30 and 65 years of age.

Untreated obstructive sleep apnea can have life-threatening consequences. Upon comparing men with sleep apnea to similar men without sleep apnea, one study found that the apnea patients were two and a half times more likely to develop diabetes over a six year period. Another study found that apnea patients were five times more likely to have serious car crashes. Data from further studies strongly suggest that obstructive apnea significantly contributes to the development of cardiovascular disease.

For moderate to severe sleep apnea, the most common treatment is the use of a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) device. The patient typically wears a plastic facial mask connected by a flexible tube to a small bedside CPAP machine, which generates the required air pressure to keep the patient’s airways open during sleep. The CPAP machine delivers a stream of compressed air via the hose to the mask, splinting the airway (keeping it open under air pressure) so that unobstructed breathing becomes possible, reducing and/or preventing apneas. The CPAP machine assists only in breathing in which can subsequently be brought to a medical professional. Rabbi Heinemann contends that a condition which is cumulatively life-threatening is certainly no less severe than a condition of incapacitating illness. Therefore, a person with sleep apnea can certainly do anything on Shabbos which would be allowed for a choleh kol gufoh. A choleh kol gufoh may ask a non-Jew to perform a melacha on his behalf on Shabbos. Thus, a person may ask a non-Jew to activate a CPAP machine on Shabbos. However, it is impractical to ask a non-Jew to do this every time a person sleeps on Shabbos.

A Jew is permitted to carry out an issur derabnonin with a shnui (in an irregular way) on Shabbos for a choleh kol gufoh. Therefore, a person would be allowed to activate a CPAP machine by putting on the mask with a shnui. However, it is difficult to find an appropriate shnui for this activity. The Chayei Odom states that if it is not possible to use a shnui, one is allowed to perform an issur derabnonin for a choleh kol gufoh. Based on this ruling of the Chayei Odom, Rabbi Heinemann paskens that a person may use a CPAP machine on Shabbos.

Philips Respironics has informed me that, at the highest setting, the water in the humidifier may reach 125ºF, and the hot plate which is heating the water may reach 130ºF. Water should not be heated to this temperature on Shabbos, as the temperature is above the shuir of yad soledes bo. Therefore, the humidifier should be used only on Shabbos at a lower setting which will keep the water temperature below yad soledes bo, or the humidifier should be turned off for the duration of Shabbos. Some CPAP machines record information concerning the patient’s sleep patterns onto a chip, which can subsequently be brought to a medical professional. Rabbi Heinemann paskens that there is no need for the patient to remove this chip before Shabbos.

Respmed has informed me that some models of the CPAP machines, which generate the required air pressure when the mask is worn, also have a setting to enable the machine to generate the air pressure as soon as it is turned on. Switching to this setting will allow the patient to use the CPAP machine with a time clock. The user manual should be consulted to ascertain whether or not this is an option. CPAP machines made by Respironics are activated only when the mask is worn.

In conclusion, a person who has sleep apnea should discuss with his doctor which CPAP machine would be medically best for him. If he is presented with a choice of machine models, he may want to discuss with his Rabbi which of them will best minimize the halachic issues of Shabbos use. He should use the CPAP machine on Shabbos, and he should do what he can to minimize the halachic issues of Shabbos use.

Halachic queries regarding all topics may be presented to The Institute of Halachah at the Star-K by calling 410-484-4110 ext. 238 or emailing halachah@star-k.org

5. 3. http://www.zomet.org.il/?CategoryID=320&ArticleID=504

grades 6-10

RABBI MORDECHAI FRANKEL
DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF HALACHAH

Leadership in

Kashrus Education
Star-K on Campus

CONTINUED FROM PAGE

food services and the food service industry,” notes Rabbi Kurcfeld. “My challenge was to custom-tailor kosher facilities, from scratch, which worked easily within the framework of the respective schools. I mapped out exactly how the kitchens would be set up logistically for milk and meat, approving the blueprints before the construction began.”

The STAR-K certified KOVE (an acronym for KOsher, VEGan) station in the Dickinson College dining hall in Carlisle, Pennsylvania serves its 10% Jewish student population and others such non-standard kosher fare as citrus London broil, coffee-rubbed brisket and falafel chicken. It is open for lunch and dinner, Sunday through Friday afternoon.

Keith Martin, the director of dining services at Dickinson’s KOVE, says, “The KOVE has been very well received by Jewish and non-Jewish students alike. It is not uncommon to see long lines at The KOVE, and we expect interest to grow.”

He chose to pursue kosher certification at Dickinson because, “Given Dickinson’s strong Judaic-studies program, Hebrew language and study abroad offerings in Israel and extraordinarily active Hillel chapter, we thought a certified-kosher dining option would further enrich Jewish life at the college,” explains Mr. Martin. “Our hope is that students will see this new addition as a sign of Dickinson’s commitment to making the college an exciting place to explore Jewish heritage. The KOVE will give both Jewish students who keep kosher and all Dickinson students a delicious dining alternative.

“Dickinson has an excellent reputation for serving high-quality, delicious food in its student Dining Hall,” he continues. “When the college made the commitment to offer a certified kosher dining option, it was important that the food and the service reflect that same quality. After researching the available options, we chose Star-K.”

Interestingly enough, Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, despite its Lutheran affiliation, boasts a 34% Jewish student population. Responding to the needs of the kosher consumer and others with dietary restrictions, it recently opened The NOSHERY, featuring two separate kitchens: NOSHERY North and NOSHERY South. NOSHERY South offers meat meals and NOSHERY North offers pareve/dairy dishes to its student body. It plans to be open to the public at some point in the future.

John Pasquarello, the general manager of Muhlenberg College Dining Services, says that he pursued kosher certification because, “We wanted to make sure our customers had food products and ingredients that meet all kosher requirements. We chose STAR-K because of their commitment, expertise and resources to supervise kashrus laws. Our relationship has been a true partnership. We couldn’t be more happy with STAR-K.”

A few years ago, Franklin & Marshall College, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, opted to offer its more than 20% Jewish population healthier kosher options at KIVO (an acronym for Kosher, International, Vegan/Vegetarian, Organic). Open seven days a week, it serves only dairy dishes for brekfast and choice of dairy or meat dishes for lunch and dinner. The only kosher food operation in Lancaster is open to the public, as well, while college is in session for all-you-can-eat prices.

Rabbi Hayim Schwartz, the executive vice president of the Rabbinical Seminary of America (Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim), had the opportunity to eat at KIVO with his family during a recent visit to Lancaster. He was so impressed with the kosher dining hall, he wrote the following to John Burns, the president of Franklin & Marshall College:

“You are to be commended for offering an option such as KIVO for your Jewish and other students. Many colleges do not have kosher dining facilities, with full-time mashgiach supervision from such a reputable institute such as the STAR-K of Baltimore. While I am sure the KIVO operation must cost Franklin & Marshall College a pretty penny, this letter is confirmation that your people are doing a great job operating KIVO and represent your college in the best possible way.”

Ronnie Berman and Mark Powers are KIVO’s two mashgichim (kosher supervisors). “The response has been tremendous from students across the board,” says Mr. Berman. “The athletes come in for our burgers and hot dogs because they are so good. We also cater to any student with special needs. On both sides, we maintain a gluten-free area, for those students with Celiac disease. We carry gluten-free wraps and “bread” and always try to have a gluten-free entree.”

“I think that we are doing a tremendous Kiddush Hashem by having kosher food available to non-observant students,” continues Mr. Berman “Also, Mark and I are available to answer questions from all the students. There is a large lack of knowledge of kashrus amongst the non-Jewish world. Many people think that we have blessed the food to make it kosher. Unfortunately, we’ve found many Jews who think the same. When I can educate people about the beauty of keeping kosher, I especially find my work very rewarding and fulfilling.”

Likewise, for STAR-K, the logistics of setting up a kosher kitchen on campus and overseeing its operation goes beyond the actual certification of the food itself. As Rabbi Kurcfeld put it, “Not only do I get a tremendous amount of nachas when I see the students enjoying deliciously prepared kosher food, it gives me great satisfaction to know that these colleges have offered the students the opportunity to eat kosher—an opportunity they never had before.”

STAR-K WINDOW: A VIEW FROM WITHIN

As kosher consumers, we walk into a supermarket or go online and choose the products we prefer that sport the kosher symbol we trust. How many of us, the majority of which are not employed by a kosher supervision agency, really understand what goes into making those products worthy of bearing kosher logos?

Star-K’s new blog, Star-K Window, will take you behind the scenes of Star-K supervision. Acting as your window into the world of food production and kosher certification, it will help you understand the in’s and outs of a kosher certification company and the challenges the ever-changing industry faces as they arise.
LAST CHANCE TO MAKE A
STAR-K Shidduch!

Six years ago, STAR-K undertook the goal of trying to solve the Baltimore singles situation, typical of many Orthodox communities throughout the U.S. Offering a cash incentive for a period of one year to anyone who successfully arranged a shidduch for a woman in Baltimore’s Orthodox community, STAR-K hoped that its gift would act as a dual incentive: first, for professional shadchanim worldwide in order to put Baltimore women on the top of their singles lists, and second for “would-be shadchanim” and acquaintances to keep Baltimore women in mind.

STAR-K has since renewed this Shidduch Incentive Program annually, raising the initial gift from $2,000 to $2,500. We are pleased to announce that this program has been a great success, as well as an inspiration for other cities to help their singles. To date (no pun intended!), STAR-K has paid out $320,000 for a total of 134 matches. Regrettably, STAR-K will no longer be able to fund this program. However, all shidduchim made before Purim 5771 (March 20, 2011) will be honored.

Check for Insects ebook

Star-K’s online CHECK FOR INSECTS site has received millions of visitors since it became available last year. We have continually updated the site’s information based on current conditions and have enhanced its features based on your feedback. The most frequent request we receive is to create a printable guide that can be used offline and in the home.

The CHECK FOR INSECTS ebook is now ready and available as a free download. Visit www.checkforinsects.com for more information.
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STAR-K Kosher Certification

A non-profit agency representing the Kosher consumer in promoting Kashrus through Education, Research and Supervision.

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