

# Kashrus Kurrents

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## KASHRUS IN THE Workplace

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The new food trends that have been embraced by society at large have led to a similar preoccupation with food within corporate America. This development has obvious ramifications for the kosher consumer at the office. The following is a guide to dealing with *kashrus* issues in the workplace.<sup>1</sup> While it is impossible to address all the *kashrus* issues that may arise, this article provides an overview. As with all *halacha*, when questions arise, one should consult his *rav*.

**1) Eating in a Cafeteria Shared with Co-Workers Who Eat Non-Kosher** – Food on a plate, *may'iker hadin*, may be eaten even when placed on a non-kosher clean table. The *Baday Hashulchan*<sup>2</sup> notes that today, the general custom is to use a napkin (or a placemat or something of a similar nature) when eating on a non-kosher table, even if it is clean.<sup>3</sup> Although, in many cases a “*heker*” is required<sup>4</sup> when individuals eating kosher meat and dairy are sitting next to each other, a *heker* is not required when eating next to someone partaking of non-kosher food. A *heker* in such circumstances is unnecessary because there is no concern that one will partake of the non-kosher food if it is offered to him.

**2) Using Office Utensils and Cooking Devices in an Office with Non-Kosher Food** – May one use the following food-related items in an office that has non-kosher food?

- a) Water Cooler/Spring Water – Permissible
- b) Utensils used with hot food (mugs, cutlery used by anyone in the office, etc.) – Do Not Use<sup>5</sup>
- c) Metal Cutlery (e.g., forks, knives, spoons) – Do Not Use<sup>6</sup>
- d) Can Opener – Permissible, after ensuring that it carries no residue

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<sup>1</sup> Various specific *kashrus* issues at the workplace have been addressed in previous editions of *Kashrus Kurrents*, including the following – “Microwaving in the Workplace” by Rabbi Tzvi Rosen; “Don’t Drink The Coffee” by Rabbi Boruch Beyer; “Getting Into Hot Water-Urns and Pump Pots in *Halacha*” by Rabbi Zvi Goldberg; and an article from *Insights from the Institute*, Summer 2009, regarding entering non-kosher restaurants by Rabbi Mordechai Frankel. This article elaborates on the above topics and addresses numerous other *kashrus* issues. Note that there are often many *halachic* concerns that relate to the workplace that are beyond the scope of our discussion. A *rav* should be consulted concerning those matters. For general guidelines regarding an array of *halachic* issues in the workplace, see “Making It Work” by Ari Wasserman. Also, note that this article focuses on general year-round *kashrus* and does not address *halachos* related to *Pesach* (except where noted).

<sup>2</sup> *Yorah Deah* 89:102 based on the *Minchas Yaakov* 76:17, who says this is the opinion of the *Bach - Orach Chaim* 173.

<sup>3</sup> If the table is dirty, one is not using a plate (e.g., eating an apple without a plate), or if the food is hot, depending on the specific situation one may be required to use a napkin, placemat or something of a similar nature.

<sup>4</sup> Something noticeable that is not normally on the table (e.g., a keyring) that is placed between the plates in front of each party eating. See *Shulchan Aruch Yorah Deah* 88:2

<sup>5</sup> See also *Shach Yorah Deah* 91:3

<sup>6</sup> *B'dieved*, if clean forks or spoons were used with cold food, everything is fine. If they were used with hot food, or if a knife was used with hot or cold food, consult a *rav*.

## BALSAMIC VINEGAR Sour Grapes or Sweet Success



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Vinegar is one of nature’s most unique and versatile products. Folklore maintains that vinegar was discovered quite by accident, when wine was inadvertently left to sour. This resulted in the first batch of full-bodied wine vinegar. Indeed, the word ‘vinegar’ is derived from the French word *vinaigre*, which means sour wine. Euphemistically, the *Talmud* refers to a ne'er-do-well son of a righteous father as a *Chometz Ben Yayin*, “vinegar son of wine.”

Folklore aside, vinegar was well known in the time of *Tanach*. The *Torah* forbids a *Nazir* to drink wine vinegar or eat other grape and wine products. In *Tehillim*,<sup>1</sup> *Dovid Hamelech* asked to drink vinegar when he said, “*Vlitzmaie Yashkuni Chometz*”. In *Megilas Rus*, *Boaz*’s workers dipped their bread in vinegar.<sup>2</sup>

The Hebrew term for vinegar, *chometz* (pronounced ch-oh-metz), is similar to the word *chametz* (pronounced ch-aw-maitz), leavened bread products. This etymological similarity underscores the correlation between the production of vinegar and the leavening of bread. The chemical process that allows wine to “sour” into vinegar, effecting the leavening of flour and water, is known as fermentation. Fermentation is a natural conversion process by which yeast, a fungus found in nature, converts sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide. In wine or bread the natural sugar found in malted grains, such as barley or corn, or in fruit juices, such as grape juice or apple cider, undergoes this chemical transformation.

To create vinegar, a second fermentation process has to take place. In this process, bacteria converts the alcohol into acetic acid, the sour element of vinegar. There are two methods used for vinegar fermentation: the traditional vat method and the acetobactor generator process.

In traditional vinegar fermentation, the alcoholic liquid – usually wine – is placed in specially made oak barrel casks with plenty of air holes to allow for ample aeration. The alcohol in the wine is slowly converted into acetic acid until the proper level is reached. Once this takes place, the vinegar is ready. A classic Italian favorite, balsamic vinegar, is an excellent example of a traditionally aged vinegar. Whereas regular wine vinegar takes one or two years to ferment, the conversion of grape (juice) to balsamic vinegar requires 12 years to age.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tehillim* 69:22 – ולצמאי ישקוני חומץ

<sup>2</sup> *Rus* 2:4

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# KASHRUS IN THE Workplace



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e) Plasticware/Paper goods (unused) – Permissible

f) Hot Water from an Urn, Pump Pot, Instant Hot Water – In general, these are permissible. If one witnessed a co-worker submerging the spout into non-kosher food, the urn should not be used.<sup>7</sup> In many cases, however, one does not actually witness the co-worker placing the spout in the bowl but is concerned that it is a possibility. In those cases, one should make an assessment of the likelihood of this happening. If the spout is sufficiently far away from the tabletop so it would be unnecessary to bring the bowl up to the spout, one should simply wipe the outside of the spout and run a little water through it before filling a cup. If the spout is so close to the tabletop that a bowl would not fit easily without touching the spout, one should not use the urn. Regarding the steam rising from the bowl, for various *halachic* reasons, the spout remains kosher.<sup>8</sup> In such a case, one need only wipe the outside of the spout and dispense some hot water that should be discarded and then take hot water or coffee for use.

g) Coffee Urn – If the urn is used exclusively for coffee<sup>9</sup> then one may drink coffee from it.<sup>10</sup>

h) Keurig Machine – There was a time when a Keurig machine dispensed only coffee. Currently, however, soups containing non-kosher meat can also be dispensed.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, an office Keurig machine may not be used unless one can ascertain that it is being used for coffee only.<sup>12</sup>

i) Microwave Ovens – The easiest “no-questions-asked” way to use a microwave oven (including convection microwaves and those with a browning element) at work is to double wrap the food with a leak-proof wrapping. This can be accomplished by using two Ziploc bags or two separate pieces of Saran Wrap that fully cover and surround the food. One may also place the food into two plastic shopping bags. Either way, do not tightly cover the food as this may cause the container to explode. Alternatively, if there is a regular microwave oven (i.e., not convection or with a browning element), one may heat something uncovered if the product does not reach *yad soledes bo*.<sup>13</sup>

**3) Storing Kosher Food with Non-Kosher Food** – One may store kosher food in a closed container in a refrigerator that is also used to store non-kosher food. It is advisable to use a container that will adequately protect the kosher food should a co-worker’s lunch inadvertently leak.

The food may need a “*siman*” or seal. The guidelines are as follows: Meat, poultry and fish (i.e., food that could be *issurei d’oraisa* if switched) require two seals. Other products such as cheese, pizza, other dairy items, bread, and cake must also be sealed properly (one seal is enough for these potential *issurei d’rabonon*). One can create a double seal by placing the item into a bag from a supermarket that is found exclusively in Jewish neighborhoods

(i.e., not typically frequented by the general public) and tying it with a tight double knot in such a way that the only way to access the contents is by tearing the bag. The flaps adjacent to the knot are also tied tightly, creating a second seal. Alternatively, one may tie a tight knot on any shopping bag and wrap masking tape bearing one’s Hebrew signature around it to ensure that the only way to open the bag is by tearing it, thus destroying the “seal”.<sup>14</sup>

Another option is to have a *t’vias ayin*, meaning that it can be identified by observation. For example, three small circles might be cut out on a piece of salami that will be noted when subsequently retrieving the food. As long as others are unaware of this “*siman*”, the meat or other item may be presumed to be one’s own. Similarly, certain homemade foods (e.g., hamburger patties) are particularly identifiable, thereby satisfying the *t’vias ayin* requirement.

Food left in a communal fridge requiring the conditions listed above may, nevertheless, be eaten if the food’s owner is always in the room in which the refrigerator is located or could have walked into the room at any time. In such circumstances, the food’s owner qualifies as a “*yotzai v’nichnas*”, meaning that the *kashrus* of the food is being supervised. If, however, the food remains in the public refrigerator during a period of time when its owner could not have walked in (e.g., over *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* and, in some offices, late at night), the food may not be eaten without one of the requirements listed above.

**4) Food Brought By Others** – It is terribly uncomfortable to be unable to partake of food brought by non-Jews or non-observant Jews<sup>15</sup> who go out of their way to bring kosher food. Such food may be eaten, however, only if the product bears a reliable kosher certification and has been retained in a properly sealed package. In general, the same applies to food that is delivered from a kosher establishment.<sup>16</sup> Others should, therefore, be reminded of the necessary requirements in advance.

Meat, fish or wine may not be consumed if at any juncture they were unsealed without proper reliable supervision.<sup>17</sup> Unsealed cake or cookies that is represented to have been purchased from a kosher bakery may also not be eaten, unless either the product can be identified as coming from a kosher bake shop (i.e., *t’vias ayin*) or there is a receipt proving that the products were acquired that day (or night before) from the referenced bakery. As noted above, it is advisable to remind colleagues to ask the kosher bake shop employee to seal the box with tape or a sticker that identifies the source of the products. Homemade items from a non-kosher kitchen are, of course, strictly forbidden.<sup>18</sup>

Seals or special packaging are not required for items that do not require certification (e.g., salt or sugar).

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<sup>7</sup> The same may be true if a co-worker touched a dairy product to a spout that one wishes to use for *pareve*.

<sup>8</sup> This is because plastic does not become rapidly hot so the spout may not become hot; it will, therefore, not absorb the *taam* of the rising steam. If it does become hot, *halacha* considers that steam is deflected by the heat of the spout. See *Chelkas Yaakov* O.C. 204.

<sup>9</sup> Although one may not drink flavored coffee without a *hechsher*, the urn does not become non-kosher if non-certified flavored coffee is heated in it. If one knows that the urn contained *treif* items, the urn is also *treif* and may not be used. Hot chocolate would make the urn dairy, and if it has no *hechsher* it could make it non-kosher. Contact your local *kashrus* agency to determine if the brand of non-certified hot chocolate compromised the *kashrus* status of the urn.

<sup>10</sup> Note that coin operated coffee dispenser vending machines may generally not be used, as they often dispense non-kosher soup.

<sup>11</sup> Non-kosher chicken soup will render a Keurig machine *treif*. Dairy products will render it dairy. Non-certified flavored coffees will not render the Keurig non-kosher (see footnote 9). However, if such coffee is used one should clean the Keurig from any remaining non-certified coffee by dispensing hot water and discarding it before making kosher coffee.

<sup>12</sup> A Keurig that may have been used with non-kosher products or dairy (and one wants it to remain *pareve*), can be *kashered* as follows: Clean the Keurig well. Replace the cup holder with a new K-cup holder (a replaceable part). Do not use at all for 24 hours and then run a cycle of hot water to *kasher* the upper metal pin. This may not be so practical in an office, as a 24-hour down time is often difficult to facilitate.

<sup>13</sup> *Yad soledes bo* is 120° F. For more details regarding other microwave options, see “Microwaving in the Workplace” by Rabbi Tzvi Rosen at [www.star-k.org](http://www.star-k.org).

<sup>14</sup> Under certain conditions, a single “*siman muvhak*” (i.e., something extremely difficult to forge) is enough.

<sup>15</sup> The same applies to someone who keeps kosher but is a *mechalel Shabbos b’farhesya*. Consult a *rav* regarding *Shomer Shabbos* individuals who do not appear to keep your strict level of *kashrus*.

<sup>16</sup> If delivered by a non-Jew or non-observant Jew.

<sup>17</sup> If there is a way to ascertain the source of the food, a *rav* should be consulted for further guidance. For example, if deli sandwiches were delivered from a kosher caterer and upon receipt, non-Jewish or non-observant co-workers unsealed the packages to put out the sandwiches, generally they may not be eaten. However, if the caterer can identify his sandwiches by their appearance and confirm that they were prepared in his shop, *b’dieved*, the sandwiches may be eaten (i.e., *t’vias ayin* applies).

<sup>18</sup> Besides possible non-kosher ingredients and equipment, there may be a *pasakum* issue as well, as this *gezaira* could apply to items baked in the home of a non-Jew.





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# BALSAMIC VINEGAR

## Sour Grapes or Sweet Success



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The production of balsamic vinegar involves a long and careful process. The grapes have to be carefully crushed and are aged in special chestnut or mulberry barrels where fermentation and oxidation occur simultaneously. As the vinegar ages and evaporates, the vinegar is transferred to smaller cherry and mulberry barrels for further conversion. After 12 years, the balsamic vinegar is thick, full-bodied and almost condiment-like in consistency. Authentic balsamic requires as much as 12 years of aging; however, some of the mother balsamics used in this process are much older. In Modena, Italy, mother balsamic vinegars can be traced back 400 years. Due to the complex task of tracing balsamic vinegar through the matrix of time, authentic kosher balsamic would be nearly impossible to trace.

A prized bottle of authentic balsamic vinegar can fetch between \$150-\$275/100ml bottle! Today, the mass-produced balsamic vinegar sold in the United States is not authentic balsamic. In reality, it is regular grape *must* (the freshly pressed grape juice) with balsamic wine flavoring and coloring that captures the taste and appearance of authentic balsamic. The cheapest imitations are hardly aged; medium grades are aged two years, a fraction of the time of balsamic vinegar. Of course, this shortcut is reflected in the price tag.

Modern day vinegar companies use the acetobactor generator system to produce large amounts of vinegar quickly and efficiently. These generators range in size from 6,000 to 18,000 gallons. The word *acetobactor* is a contraction of two Italian words: *Aceto* (vinegar) and *bactor* (bacteria). *Bactor* refers to the bacteria used in these generators to convert the alcohol into acetic acid. In lieu of fermentation, 190-proof alcohol is brought in from outside sources to be converted. The generators are filled with a solution of water, alcohol and vinegar from previous processing, bacteria, bacteria food nutrients, and beechwood shavings. The generator is kept at a constant 85°F. The alcohol circulates through the generator and is converted into acetic acid. After being drawn off from the generator, the vinegar is filtered and standardized with water to its desired strength.

The strength of the vinegar, known as *grain*, is determined by the percent of acetic acid in the blend. 40 grain vinegar means that there is 4% acidity, 50 grain means that there is 5% acidity, etc. These are typically consumer strength vinegars. Industrial strength vinegar can go up to 200 grain acidity. Industrial strength vinegar is generally 12% acidity, or 120 grain. The raw materials used for the fermentation process play a fundamental role in the taste, color and fragrance of the vinegar variety. White distilled vinegar is made from petroleum or grains, such as corn and wheat; it is clear and tastes bitter. Apple cider vinegar is much more mellow and has an amber color; red wine vinegar has a much deeper red color.

### Glacial Acetic Acid-Synthetic Vinegar

Today, a product known as glacial acetic acid is used in industrial food production. What is meant by this term? Are glacial acetic acid and vinegar synonymous, and are there *kashrus* concerns?

Acetic acid is vinegar's sour component. Acetic acid can be concentrated into different strengths. When the acetic acid is concentrated to a strength of 12% or 120 grain level, the acetic

acid will freeze at 16.7°C (62°F). Acetic acid that possesses this property is commonly known as glacial acetic acid. The term "glacial" indicates a product that reaches this high freezing point.

Does the term "acetic acid" mean that it must be derived from vinegar? The answer is NO! It is a known fact that in the United States, acetic acid can be derived chemically more efficiently and economically than through a vinegar derivation. Industrial glacial acetic acid is typically produced through a chemical reaction of methanol (a petroleum derivative) and carbon monoxide, or through oxidation methods of synthetic acetaldehyde, and would not present any *kashrus* concerns.

### THE HALACHIC ISSUES

#### Are Wine and Wine Vinegar Created Equal?

There are many *halachic* differences between wine and wine vinegar. The *brocha* one makes on wine is *Borei Pri Hagafen*; the *brocha* on vinegar in an edible state is *Shehakol*. Obviously, wine vinegar that was processed from *stam yaynum* (non-kosher wine or non-kosher grape juice) would retain its non-kosher status. If an *akum* (non-Jew) touches non-*mevushal* wine it would become *stam yayin*, and would be forbidden. Yet, kosher wine vinegar that was fermented under kosher conditions from non-*mevushal* wine does not become forbidden if touched by an *akum*.

#### Good Vinegar Manufacturing Practices

Utilizing the traditional method of wine vinegar fermentation, the obvious requirement that must be met is that the kosher wine used in processing is *mevushal* and controlled by *Torah* observant workers throughout production. Any additional ingredients must be kosher, as well. Furthermore, the casks used to ferment kosher vinegar may not have been previously used to ferment non-kosher vinegar or wine.

In the acetobactor generator process, a wide array of alcohols can be used for the conversion process. These alcohols may be derived from a variety of sources. Natural ethanol can be derived from corn, wheat or sugar and synthetic ethanol can be produced chemically. Ethanol can be produced from other materials, as well. If the country of origin for the ethanol is a heavy producer of wine or grapes, there is a reasonable assumption that the imported alcohol could be derived from grapes. In that case, if the vinegar company uses grape-derived alcohol as their base product all the subsequent vinegar productions generated from this grape alcohol would be non-kosher! The repercussions of using non-kosher alcohol would be devastating. Vinegar is considered a *davar charif* product that is very sharp and pungent. Since a *davar charif* will not be nullified in a mixture of a 1 to 60 ratio, all of the product's condiments or sauces that were flavored or mixed with the non-kosher vinegar may also be forbidden.

### IN THE KITCHEN

#### Some Like It Hot: *Davar Charif*

*Halachically*, vinegar is considered to be a product that is both *charif* and *avida d'taima*, sharp and pungent. It is of *halachic* significance whether a kosher product was soaked or mixed into sharp vinegar or mild juices. If a kosher product, such as a cucumber, would be soaked in a 'mild' non-kosher grape juice,



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# KASHRUS IN THE *Workplace*

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**5) Attending “Kosher” Holiday Office Parties<sup>19</sup>** – It is imperative that the reliability of the *hechsher* be ascertained. Even when the *hechsher* on the food is reliable, one must determine the nature of the catering service since it may be in one of two forms. A “Fully Catered” event means that the kosher caterer presides over the entirety of the event, accompanied by the staff and *mashgichim*. In such instances, a reliable *hechsher* is sufficient.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, “Food Service” refers to a caterer simply delivering kosher sealed food to the event.<sup>21</sup> In such a case, a responsible *Shomer Shabbos* employee should be designated to open the seals and serve as “*mashgiach*”, from the time of the food delivery through the end of the party.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, attendees must know if the entire party is kosher or there is only a designated table. If it is the latter, specific details must be ascertained to avoid confusion. It is critical to know in advance which catering method is being used and plan accordingly.

Kosher non-*mevushal* wine at office parties should be presumed to have become non-kosher and should be avoided. Other concerns, worthy of consultation with a *rav*, apply to even *mevushal* wine.<sup>23</sup> A *rav* should be consulted when one’s job requires ordering non-kosher food for an office party or otherwise.<sup>24</sup>

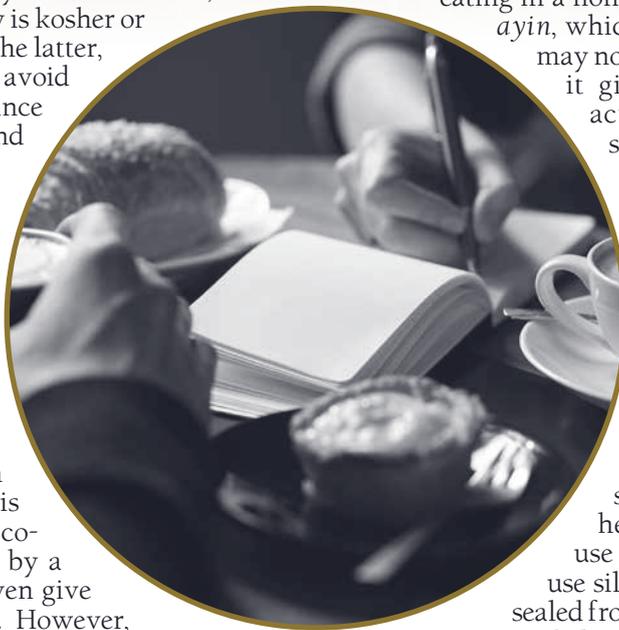
**6) Giving Holiday Gifts** – Even in December, when necessary, there is generally no prohibition in giving a co-worker a holiday gift<sup>25</sup> accompanied by a “Season’s Greetings” card. One may even give a gift of non-kosher food to a non-Jew. However, non-kosher food may not be given to a Jew, regardless of his level of observance. One may not give anyone – even a non-Jew – something that is *assur b’hanaa* (prohibited from deriving benefit), including *basar b’chalav* (a milk and meat mixture heated together), non-kosher wine or grape juice, or *chometz* on *Pesach*.

If one receives a gift of non-kosher food, one may either give it away to a non-Jew or exchange it for something else. However, if it is *assur b’hanaa* (e.g., a bottle of non-kosher wine)<sup>26</sup> it must be discarded.

**7) Company-Owned Chometz After Pesach** – It is critical that all *chometz* in the possession of a Jewish-owned company be sold to a gentile prior to *Pesach*. One should be on alert for the following scenario: A Jewish doctor or accountant owns (or is a partner in) a practice and delegates snack purchases to a non-Jewish employee. Typically, the owner may be unaware of the “inventory” of bags of pretzels in stock that were either not sold or were even actually being served during *Pesach*. If one works in such an office, one should be proactive to address the issue.<sup>27</sup>

**8) Eating in a Non-Kosher Restaurant<sup>28</sup>** – In addition to *kashrus* concerns, there are various *halachic* issues related to eating in a non-kosher establishment, including *maris ayin*, which means under certain conditions one may not perform a permissible activity because it gives the appearance of a prohibited action.<sup>29</sup> One of the reasons to allow someone to attend an important business meeting in a non-kosher restaurant is based on a *teshuva* from *Harav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l*,<sup>30</sup> who is lenient in cases of great need.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, when necessary, one may go into such a restaurant and either drink a kosher cold beverage or eat uncut raw fruit (e.g., uncut apple that one cuts with a plastic knife or eats as is) or uncut vegetables.<sup>32</sup> One can also eat a kosher certified “airline” type meal that was sent to the non-kosher restaurant and heated while properly sealed. One must use plasticware or, alternatively, one may use silverware and dishes that came properly sealed from the kosher caterer. Aside from airline-type sealed meals with a reliable *hechsher*, one may not consume any items that are heated or cut up in a non-kosher restaurant. This includes salads and most other items found there.

Those who work in a non-Jewish environment are often faced with difficult circumstances.<sup>33</sup> Performing *mitzvos* and avoiding *issurim* is, indeed, a “*kiddush Hashem*” fulfilled by so many *Yidden* every day with great *mesiras nefesh*. Fortunately, nowadays, there are so many more opportunities for kosher consumers in the workplace to enable *Yidden* to properly serve the *Ribbono Shel Olam* without compromise - *L’hagdil Torah U’lhaadeera*.



<sup>19</sup> Aside from *kashrus* concerns, attending such parties implicates other *halachic* issues not addressed in this article. A *rav* should be consulted.

<sup>20</sup> This is typically the case when an outside caterer with a reliable *hechsher* caters a hotel wedding.

<sup>21</sup> This system is often used when a restaurant delivers food to a *shul* for a *bris*.

<sup>22</sup> Eating at a table with others who are eating non-kosher food (often relevant at parties) was previously discussed in Section 1.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion regarding *halachic* issues related to social drinking with alcoholic beverages, see *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 114:1 and commentaries.

<sup>24</sup> For example, ordering non-kosher food for a Jewish office may be forbidden even if the employees are non-observant. Furthermore, ordering *basar b’chalav* products (e.g., pepperoni pizza) or *chometz* on *Pesach* even for a non-Jewish office may be prohibited.

<sup>25</sup> See *Rama, Yoreh Deah* 148:12, in the name of *Terumas Hadeshen siman* 195. (Note: This *teshuva* and *Rama* were censored. The newer volumes contain the original *nusach*, which addresses the “Eighth day of Nitte” and gift giving.) It should be noted that giving holiday gifts often avoids the *halachic* concerns of the prohibition of *lo sicheanem* when they are helpful in advancing good standing status at work. These details are beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>26</sup> *Stam yaynam* of a non-Jew is *l’chatchila assur b’hanaa* - see *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 123:1. If there will be a loss, consult a *rav*.

<sup>27</sup> We recommend that an employee at a company owned by observant Jews ensures that the owners have sold and properly stored all *chometz* snacks before *Pesach*. Absent such confirmation, one cannot assume it was done correctly. If the owner is Jewish but not observant, efforts should be undertaken to arrange a proper sale and *chometz* storage. If this is not possible, be cognizant of the *chometz she’avar alav haPesach* in the office and do not eat those snacks until the packages that were in-house during *Pesach* have been depleted, or the package that contains the *chometz* item you wish to consume was purchased after *Pesach*.

<sup>28</sup> For a full discussion, see article from *Insights from The Institute*, Summer 2009, by Rabbi Mordechai Frankel.

<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, someone who sees an observant Jew enter this establishment may incorrectly think that this restaurant is a kosher facility.

<sup>30</sup> See *Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim* 2:40, who is lenient regarding entering a non-kosher restaurant (for kosher food) if the person is “*mitztaer*” or very hungry. This would seem to allow any case of great need, including a business meeting one is expected to attend.

<sup>31</sup> Even when allowed, one should make every effort to avoid going to a non-kosher restaurant in a Jewish neighborhood, as this may create a bigger problem of *maris ayin* than going to a non-kosher restaurant that is not located in a Jewish neighborhood. Even in a non-Jewish neighborhood, if someone still recognizes the person he should explain why he was in a non-kosher restaurant. It could also be argued that nowadays, when a *frum* person is seen in a non-kosher restaurant with a group of non-Jews in a business-like setting, it is commonly understood that he is attending a business meeting and *maris ayin* would not be an issue.

<sup>32</sup> Only those fruits and vegetables that are not subject to infestation are permissible.

<sup>33</sup> One may not be *oveir* an *issur* to avoid embarrassment. Additional food-related *halachic* issues beyond the scope of our article include the recitation of *brochos* at the workplace and jobs that require cooking (e.g., a chef) or handling (e.g., a healthcare specialist who feeds patients) non-kosher food. Consult a *rav* for proper *hadracha*.



# SHAIMOS *guidelines*



RABBI MOSHE HEINEMANN  
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The *Torah* forbids discarding holy objects by throwing them into the trash. Some objects always have *kedusha* and must be placed in *shaimos*. Other objects gain *kedusha* once they are used for a *mitzvah* and need to be treated with special care.

## SHAIMOS

Objects which have innate holiness, *kedusha*, are *shaimos*. This means that, when discarded, they must be wrapped in plastic and buried. The following objects are included in this category:

1. A *Sefer Torah*.
2. *Sefer Torah* covers.
3. *Tefillin*, *tefillin* bags, *mezuzos*, and *mezuzah* covers.
4. *Siddurim* and *bentchers*.
5. *Seforim*, whether handwritten, printed, photocopied or downloaded and printed (e.g., *chumashim*, *siddurim*, *machzorim*, *seforim*, *Gemara*, *Shulchan Aruch*, etc.).
6. A quote from *tanach*, *chazal*, *Rishonim* or *Achronim*, that has been printed or written with the intention of explaining *Torah*, or to teach us how to conduct ourselves according to *hashkofos haTorah*.
7. Invitations from organizations and individuals that contain parts of *pesukim* are *shaimos*. However, if the words of the *posuk* are merely being quoted in order to make the sentence sound more eloquent and not to convey *Torah* they are not *shaimos*. This type of usage of a *posuk* is called a *melitzah*. For example, the sentence “*Kol Sason Ve’kol Simcha*”, as frequently included in wedding invitations, is a *melitzah* and is not *shaimos*.\*
8. Three consecutive words of a *posuk* from *tanach* that have been written in one line, with the intention of quoting *tanach* (as opposed to a *melitzah*, which is not *shaimos*)\*.
9. Any paper or material on which is written one of the names of *HaShem*. However, the Hebrew letters *IY”H* (*Im Yirtzeh Hashem*), *BE”H* (*B’eZRas Hashem*), and *B”H* (*Baruch Hashem*) may be discarded according to *halacha* and Jewish custom, although it is considered an act of piety to tear off those letters and put them into *shaimos*. The Hebrew letters *BS”D* (*B’siyata D’shmaya*) may definitely be put into the trash.\*
10. Pages of a *sefer* that became detached, or parts of the pages of a *sefer*, even if there is no writing or print on them.
11. A *sefer*’s cover, when removed, should be placed into *shaimos*.
12. Binding tape that became detached from a *sefer*.
13. *Parsha* papers, test papers, *limudei kodesh* homework and notes are *shaimos* if they fall into any of the above categories.
14. Letters or printed material in English of any other non-Hebrew language are *shaimos* if they conform to the above

stipulations. However, letters or printed material in the Hebrew language are not *shaimos* if they do not conform with one of these specifications.

## OBJECTS THAT WERE USED FOR A MITZVAH

Objects which have been used for a *mitzvah*, although they have no *kedusha* (innate holiness) may not be thrown directly into the garbage. One may burn them or wrap them in plastic and then place them into the garbage. The following objects are included in this category:

1. *S’chach* of a *sukkah*
2. *Tallis*
3. *Tzitzis* strings
4. *Tallis* bag
5. *Esrogim*, *lulavim*, *hadasim*, *aravos*

## NOT SHAIMOS

The following objects have no *kedusha* and can be discarded. These items do not need to be wrapped:

1. *Yarmulke* or *gartel*
2. Bookmark which was used in a *sefer*
3. Outer plastic bag which was used to protect a *tallis* or *tefillin* bag
4. Pictures of *gedolim*

## NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES AND TAPES

Newspapers and magazines which contain secular information should not be put into *shaimos* as they degrade the real *shaimos* that are buried with them, especially if the advertisements and pictures are not within the spirit of the *Torah*. The pages that do contain *Torah* may be removed and placed into *shaimos* if the other side of that page also contains *Torah* or is blank. Alternatively, the whole paper may be put into a bag which should then be put into another bag so that the paper is double wrapped, known as *kli besoch kli*. It can then be placed into the garbage or into recycling. Missionary material that contains *pesukim* may be burnt or double wrapped and discarded.

Tapes and CD’s containing *divrei Torah* and *shiurim* may be disposed of after they have been double wrapped in plastic.

\*In the above cases, the *shaimos* or *divrei Torah* may be cut away from the paper and buried if so desired.



# BALSAMIC VINEGAR

## Sour Grapes or Sweet Success



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

the cucumber would become non-kosher in 24 hours due to the principle of *kavush kemevushal*.<sup>3</sup> However, if a cucumber was soaked in non-kosher wine vinegar it would become non-kosher in the time needed to boil the product, *k'dei sheyartiach al ha'eish*.<sup>4</sup>

### Bitul – Nullification

If non-kosher wine was inadvertently mixed into a kosher blend of fruit juices, the non-kosher wine would be nullified if the percentage of non-kosher wine was less than a 1 to 6 part ratio. This is the *halachic* ratio needed to nullify non-kosher wine when it is mixed with water. However, the sharp tasting pungency of vinegar would not allow the wine vinegar to become nullified due to the fact that vinegar is a product that is *avida l'taima*,<sup>5</sup> added for taste.

### VINEGAR GOING KFP

*Pesach*, of course, presents a new host of *kashrus* issues. All of the fermentation ingredients have to be kosher for *Pesach* (KFP). The critical ingredient used in Kosher *l'Pesach* vinegar production is Kosher *l'Pesach* ethanol (alcohol). Kosher *l'Pesach* ethanol can be either naturally derived from beet sugar or produced synthetically.<sup>6</sup>

If the ethanol (grain alcohol) comes from barley, rye, oat, wheat or spelt, the vinegar produced from these sources would also be considered *chametz*. However, if the grain alcohol is derived from corn, rice or milo (a corn derivative), the vinegar is not considered *chametz* but is considered *kitniyos*. This vinegar would not be permitted for use by *Ashkenazic* Jews on *Pesach* but may be used by *Sephardic* Jews (who eat *kitniyos* products on *Pesach*), provided that the other ingredients, such as the nutrients, are reliably kosher for *Pesach*, as well.

### Chometz She'avar Alav HaPesach

The *halacha* is clear that it is forbidden for a Jew to possess *chometz* on *Pesach*. *Chometz* products must be consumed, destroyed or sold to a non-Jew in a bona fide sale, transferring it out of Jewish ownership before *Pesach*. Failing to do so would render the unsold *chometz* forbidden for Jewish consumption even after *Pesach*.

Is grain vinegar, or a product using grain vinegar as an ingredient, considered *chometz*? In order to provide the kosher consumer accurate pre-*Pesach* information regarding the *chometz*

or non-*chometz* status of products using vinegar as an ingredient (i.e., ketchup, mayonnaise, salad dressing or mustard), STAR-K researches the various vinegar producers and their sources of supply of startup material from U.S. grain alcohol producers. Typically, grain alcohol in the U.S. is corn-based. In Europe, the grain alcohol may be *chometz*. If the source is unknown, these vinegar-based products should be used, removed or sold with one's *chometz*.

What about purchasing products using vinegar after *Pesach*? Since it is a reasonable assumption that in the U.S., products using domestic grain vinegar are predominantly *kitniyos*-based, we are permitted to create a *halachic* assumption employing the principle of '*Holchin Achar Harov*', which states that we can reasonably assume that these products in question are *kitniyos*-based. Since *chometz she'avar alav haPesach* is a *din d'rabonon*,<sup>7</sup> a rabbinical enactment, we are permitted to rule leniently. In the case of a *sofek d'rabonon*, we rule leniently<sup>8</sup> - *sofek d'rabonon l'kula*. Therefore, these products do not present post-*Pesach* *chometz* concerns and may be purchased immediately after *Pesach*.

### Vinegar Eels

The last step of vinegar production is filtration through diatomaceous earth and/or mechanical filters to remove any impurities. Vinegar filtration is needed to remove unwelcome residents of vinegar production, namely vinegar eels.

What are vinegar eels? Vinegar eels are tiny nematodes, round worms that live in vinegar. They are usually found in vinegar barrels and feed off the bacteria that produce the vinegar. Vinegar eels are slender and grow to a length of 1/16" to 3/8". Filtration would generally alleviate any *chashash* of vinegar eels.

### CONCLUSION

It is indeed amazing to uncover the *niflaos haboreh*, Hashem's wonders, and how they manifest themselves in so many commonplace areas. Just as vinegar enhances food, it also enhances our appreciation of Hashem's bounty and the gifts provided by nature.



<sup>3</sup> Y.D. 1051. This principle states that it takes 24 hours for a kosher product soaking in a mild non-kosher liquid to be imbued with the liquid's non-kosher properties. A sharp or pungent liquid, '*davar charif*', would achieve its goal much more quickly.

<sup>4</sup> Y.D. 1052

<sup>5</sup> Y.D. 988 *Rema, Taz* 11. The principle of something that is *avida l'taima* is not *batel b'shishim* as long as one can taste the vinegar.

<sup>6</sup> Kosher wine vinegar is typically Kosher *l'Pesach*. Apple cider vinegar can also be produced Kosher *l'Pesach*, provided all of the ingredients are Passover approved.

<sup>7</sup> A rabbinical enactment

<sup>8</sup> *Sofek d'rabonon l'kula*



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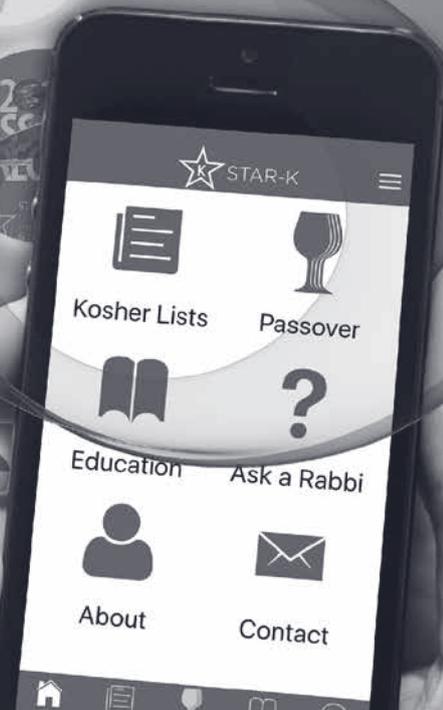
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