Examining Conflicts of Interest in Food Certification

should someone be stigmatized because he has a conflict of interest? Apparently, the mainstream media feels this way and ethics review boards often highlight this as a red flag. People are not the only ones who are challenged by this issue. Organizations whose trust and authority hinge on an image of integrity must deal with perceived conflicts of interest, both on the corporate level and with regard to individual employees.

Food certification agencies, whether they oversee kosher, organic, non-GMO, gluten-free or a host of other popular standards, must all face the inevitable question: How do they ensure that compliance judgements are based on whether the client is meeting its regulatory requirements, without regard to financial considerations?

Government bodies, such as USDA, FDA and health departments largely avoid this question – on the corporate level – because they are funded independently of the businesses they certify. Individual inspectors are screened to keep them from evaluating businesses with whom they have an outside relationship. However, governments are neither equipped nor qualified to service niche certification markets. Therefore, the job of certification falls to private sector organizations which must charge fees to remain viable. Given this arrangement, when choosing a certification to rely upon, consumers may wonder how compliance monitors maintain impartiality. How are they shielded from the monetary link between the certifier and certified company?

**Deal-Breaker? Not Necessarily**

If one adopts a perspective that all conflicts of interest are scandalous, then ultimately this question may remain an unresolved ethical conundrum. Yet, if one is open to a discussion on how certifying agencies can design and maintain systems to protect the integrity of the certification process, the result will lead to increased consumer confidence, lingering imperfections notwithstanding.

Contrary to assertions commonly espoused by skeptics and opponents, the existence of a conflict of interest is not necessarily a deal-breaker. In most cases, once the conflict is revealed, the situation can be remedied by increasing transparency in other areas. A conflict of interest becomes an absolute disqualification only when public trust completely erodes.

A present example where conflicts of interest are tolerated, at least officially, is in the newly famous Title 18 Section 208 of the U.S. Code. 1. Including food safety, fair trade, and ethical sourcing.

2. Although government agencies encounter a different set of conflicts stemming from special interest groups, political expediencies, and bureaucratic roadblocks.
Leadership in Kashrus Education

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the United States Code. This exempts the President and Vice-President from the restrictions imposed on government officials whose financial holdings can profit due to their position in public office. Apparently, the law assumes that if the electorate chose them to lead the executive branch they are considered sufficiently trustworthy to make decisions for the benefit of the nation and not their own pockets. (The Jewish stance is leiv m’lachim b’yad HaShem!) In halachah, a conflict of interest is also not necessarily taboo. *Rambam* (Ma’achalos Asur us 87) rules that a butcher, without any oversight, is believed when he says he removed forbidden fats (cheilev) and the sciatic nerve (gid hanasheh) from meat that is sold by weight, even though doing so reduces his profits. Nevertheless, this trust is not automatic. The halachah includes a provision that the butcher must be a person of upstanding moral character and muchzak b’kashrus – possessing an impeccable reputation in matters of kosher food production. Elsewhere (Shechitah 10:14), Rambam writes that an established butcher of good repute, proficient in the laws of kosher meat production, can be trusted even when his primary source of livelihood comes from selling kosher meat. We don’t assume that financial gain will sway his kashrus determinations. In fact, some butcher shops in bygone communities and the food was still accepted as kosher. Even when the individual is known to be righteous, we are concerned that the opportunity to make money may sway him to improperly designate meat as kosher. Halachah mandates avoiding ch’shad, engaging in activity that onlookers may misconstrue as dishonest.

Accordingly, Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De’ah 18:18) rules that shochtim (those who check for defects that would render the animal a t’reifah) are paid only when their work results in kosher meat, but not when the meat is deemed non-kosher. Even when the individual is known to be righteous, we are concerned that the opportunity to make money may sway him to improperly designate meat as kosher. Halachah mandates avoiding ch’shad, engaging in activity that onlookers may misconstrue as dishonest.

**The Rambam’s viewpoint is reconcilable. Aruch HaShulchan (18:43) writes that fundamentally (mei’ikar hadin) a knowledgeable, upstanding person is considered trustworthy and, unless otherwise demonstrated, the presumption is that he will not attempt to present non-kosher food as kosher for the sake of financial gain. Even so, communities throughout the centuries have enacted reasonable precautions to safeguard against the temptation of fraud. Many of these enactments were subsequently enshrined in halachah.**

**Certified Advantage: Exploiting halachic confidence to operate without outside certification comes with significant responsibility and risk. After establishing a person’s innate trustworthiness, Rambam proceeds to describe how if a butcher is found to be a charlatan a steep penalty is levied for even a first-time offense. The proprietor loses all kosher credibility and is forced to close his business. To restore his previous reputation, remorse and penance are not enough. He must move to a different location and exhibit unsolicited displays of honesty before regaining his former status.**

An advantage of retaining the services of a certification agency is that in the event a mistake is made, instead of being forced to leave town as the Rambam prescribes, the certifier can investigate the matter. If it’s determined that the proprietor acted in good faith, they can help formulate a plan to restore consumer trust. Another benefit to obtaining kosher certification is that even a business that is not staffed by people involved in kosher qualifications becomes eligible to produce kosher certificated foods, provided it meets the certification requirements.

Even when there is no wrongdoing, a trust-based model doesn’t work in communities with large populations where the people don’t know each other very well on a personal level. Especially in today’s business climate, where products must reach a broad market in order to be profitable, it is impossible for customers to verify the good reputation and competency of every food provider. Therefore, credible kosher certification plays a critical role in the food industry.

In recent years, the secular world has joined the kosher handwagon with a proliferation of other forms of outside food certification, comprising a multi-billion-dollar industry. Sales depend on good distribution abilities, and major food distributors and supermarket chains now carry only products from manufacturers with independently audited food safety and quality credentials.

**I’ll Eat In Your House, Not In Your Store**

Kosher certification fills a need for small-scale cottage industry businesses, as well. Many consumers innately recognize that commercially produced food should be certified, even when produced by friends or acquaintances, as the following anecdote illustrates:

A wealthy Eastern European Jewish businessman regularly visited his rebbeh, always bringing a gift of goose fat that he personally rendered. Years passed, the businessman’s fortunes declined, and he was left without a source of income. He approached his rebbeh for advice, who counseled him to transform his hobby of rendering goose fat into a commercial operation. Soon enough, the fellow was back on his feet with a new thriving business. During his next trip to the rebbeh, with a generous amount of goose fat in hand, he was astounded when instead of graciously accepting the gift the rebbeh asked him if his product had a hashgachah. For so many years the rebbeh accepted the gift based on personal trust alone! What had changed? The rebbeh gently explained to his chossid that the difference was quite simple. When rendering goose fat was merely a personal activity, his ne’amanos (halachic trustworthiness) was sufficient. However, now that it became a for-profit endeavor it needed a hechsher! A request for certification is not a disparagement of one’s honesty. Au contraire, certification is offered only to businesses whose management is appraised as honest! The truism “locks are on doors to keep honest people honest” can be adapted to “food producers are certified to keep kosher food kosher.”

**Dealing with the Question**

Once the necessity for the institution of a kosher certification agency has been established, let’s return to our original question: What

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in a hydraulic press, the cocoa bean exudes fat that is yellow in color, similar to rich dairy butter; hence, the name cocoa butter. Unlike dairy butter, however, cocoa butter is thicker, blander, and hardens at room temperature. What remains behind in this extraction process is a massive solid cake which, when ground, will be known as – you guessed it – cocoa powder. Ironically, for the chocolate manufacturer the main commodity product is the cocoa butter and the by-product is the cocoa powder.

Cocoa liquor that is produced from premium cocoa beans is rich enough to form chocolate. Cocoa liquor made from standard cocoa beans lacks richness and, therefore, cannot be made into chocolate without the addition of cocoa butter.

**THE CHOCOLATE-MAKING PROCESS**

Sugar, chocolate liquor, cocoa butter, milk powder, flavors and lecithin as an emulsifier are the primary ingredients of chocolate. When these products are blended together, as we will soon see, they meld to form liquid chocolate. Interestingly, liquid chocolate is over 50% sugar. The percentages of the other ingredients vary according to the type of chocolate being manufactured.

There are three major types of liquid chocolate: dark chocolate, milk chocolate, and white chocolate. Dark chocolate is a combination of cocoa liquor, cocoa butter, sugar and flavorings such as vanilla or vanillin. Sometimes a dairy ingredient, such as traced butter oil (not to be confused with cocoa butter) is added as a flavor ingredient. Milk chocolate contains powdered milk and milk crumb, a combination of milk and sugar that is added to the “dark chocolate” mix. White chocolate is not a conventional chocolate as it contains no cocoa liquor or cocoa powder, only cocoa butter. White chocolate is also known as a compound chocolate because additional vegetable fats are added to the ingredient base.

All varieties of chocolate undergo three basic steps of chocolate production: a) kneading the ingredients into a paste, b) grinding the paste into semi-granular particles, and c) blending the ingredients in a conch. Solid chocolate requires tempering as a final step to finish the product.

**THE QUALITY IN THE CONCHING**

**What is Conching?**

As any good cook or baker will tell you, there are certain tricks of the trade that set a “great” product apart from a “good” or “ho-hum” product. The trick of the chocolate trade is quality ingredients blended in a blending machine called a conch. The chocolate blending process is known as conching. The conch is a large rotary blender that blends the chocolate mass for hours on end at a temperature of approximately 140°F. The chocolate may be conched for over 12 hours in order to fully homogenize the ingredients. Lecithin, an emulsifier, is added to help blend the ingredients. Conching releases any bitter aromas and flavors in the liquified chocolate and allows all the remaining delicious chocolate flavors and aromas to mature fully and develop into a symphony of chocolaty taste.

If the chocolate is being sold as liquid chocolate, no further processing is required. Industrial chocolate is shipped to the manufacturing customers in a heated transport, in which a constant temperature of 112°F is maintained to prevent solidification or hardening. Customers are typically bakeries, ice cream manufacturers or candy makers who will further process the chocolate.

Solid chocolate must be tempered after conching in order to give it its luster. In the tempering process, the chocolate is heated to 113°F, quickly cooled and slightly heated to 90°F. The tempered chocolate is then ready to be molded into any variety of forms: large 50 pound cubes, 25-pound bars, or consumer sized chocolate drops.

With this overview, let us examine the issues that confront kosher chocolate making.

**Ingredients**

As with any manufactured food product, all ingredients require strict kosher certification. Mashgichim travel to cocoa bean plantations around the world. All the additional ingredients require reliable kosher certification.

Interestingly, ingredients used in European chocolate processing may present many more challenges than in domestic chocolate production. In Europe today, genetically modified raw materials are strictly avoided. One example of a genetically modified grain is the soybean, used to produce lecithin and emulsify and blend the ingredients being conched. Nearly all soybean crops worldwide have been genetically modified. Consequently, lecithin has come under scrutiny in Europe and European chocolate producers have looked to find suitable alternatives to lecithin. The newest trend alternative in Europe is sunflower lecithin.

Alternatives to lecithin were researched, and a seemingly innocuous product called ammonium phosphatide is used as a lecithin alternative. This product itself poses no kashrus problems. One company in Denmark that manufactures ammonium phosphatide was a totally non-kosher facility, thereby requiring massive kosherization. Due to the demand, kosher ammonium phosphatide is available.

Reliable kosher traced butter requires strict kosher supervision. It goes without saying that the vegetable fats used to manufacture kosher compound chocolate must have reliable kosher certification, because these vegetable fats can be produced in the same facilities as tallow or lard.

**In Search Of A Pareve Conch**

What is the greatest nemesis to chocolate? Water – just ask any balabusta who uses melted chocolate in homemade recipes. When mixed with chocolate, even minimally, water causes the chocolate to solidify almost instantaneously into a solid block that can’t be remelted! Consequently, chocolate manufacturers passionately avoid the introduction of water into their facilities at all costs. Recognizing this problem, how do kosher chocolate manufacturers overcome the issues of compatible conches that may be used indiscriminately for pareve and dairy chocolates without using water?

One possibility is to dedicate conches exclusively for dairy and pareve productions. This method is used in certain chocolate production facilities because sufficient amounts of both pareve and dairy products are manufactured to justify the separation. Most kosher chocolate companies felt that segregating conches is expensive and impractical.

This problem has plagued kosher chocolate manufacturers for many years. Their solution was that in lieu of water, the conches would be kashered by sha’ar mashkim, using liquid dark chocolate. The Shulchen Aruch poses the question regarding whether liquids other than water may be used for kosherization. The Remah is opposed to using sha’ar

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1. The “khashering dark chocolate” serves as a substitute for khashering water and is known in halachic terms as sha’ar mashkim.
measures can be implemented that will eliminate, or at least minimize, the inherent conflict of interest? Even if there is no halachic dilemma posed by a conflict of interest, and even if organizations were staffed exclusively with professionals possessing impeccable moral character, the Turner imperative of “v’yishar be’er” (Devarim 32:22) empowers us to bolster public perception and pre-empt suspicions of impropriety.

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 21 establishes the operating rules for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Subpart M deals with, “Accreditation Of Third-Party Certification Bodies To Conduct Food Safety Audits And To Issue Certifications.” Section 1.657 is entitled, “How must an accredited third-party certification body protect against conflicts of interest?” These regulations primarily address safeguarding against individuals associated with the certifying agency from having any financial ties to the certified entity. They also set parameters of legitimate payment for services and disallow anybody working for the certifier from accepting anything that can be construed as a bribe.

In the kosher certification sphere, the federal guidelines should be just a starting point for the agency’s organizational structure. Since kosher is, at its essence, a spiritual matter with ramifications on one’s soul and eternal relationship with the Creator, the expectations should be much higher.

In a democratic and capitalistic society, each organization is obviously free to determine their own guidelines in this realm. Moreover, just because a certifier implements tight protocols to guard from conflicts of interest, their actual kashrus standards could be quite lacking. Conversely, a certification may well deserve their excellent reputation despite a perception of having conflicts of interest.

With that disclaimer in mind, what follows are some observations that this author has noticed during his tenure as a kashrus administrator concerning how a kosher certifier can effectively counteract the perceived challenge:

**Leadership** – The leaders who form the backbone of the organization and set the tone in the workplace are known to be beyond reproach, setting a strong example in both their personal and professional lives. In the words of Yisro (18:21), “…sonay votzah.” (See Rashî, Devarim 115)

**Separation of Divisions** – The agency’s regulatory department must have independent authority, with autonomy to evaluate the merit of a certification based on compliance with the kosher system, without regard for financial repercussions.

**Checks and Balances** – All certification approvals or denials are reviewed by multiple parties. Also, there is a peer review system to continually monitor that policies are followed.

**Numerical Strength** – A large organization is adequately funded so that its operations and staffing remain unhampereed, even if major accounts are discontinued. Its solvency does not depend on retaining any client.

**Incentive-less** – Although incentive models are a terrific way to motivate employees and make them feel appreciated for their hard work, no certification administrator should be rewarded for securing any client. There are also no consequences if a company is released for failing to comply with certification standards.

Anonymous Presentations – When questions arise regarding a company’s policy compliance, the core issues can be presented for adjudication by the certifier’s posek (or posekim) without regard to the company’s identity, unless that is also a factor in the specific halachic decision.

Gift Acceptance – Kashrus professionals often work long and sometimes erratic hours on behalf of the companies they service, and their efforts are usually appreciated. A firm policy regarding acceptance of gifts must be in place.

Fee Structure – While we certainly take tremendous pride when our certified companies are successful, certification fees are a function of the resources required to administer the certification and maintain kashrus standards, not the company’s profitability.

Transparency – The certifier readily discloses its standards.

Conformance – While there is ample room for individual variances across continents, the method to resolve conflicts of interest is the same. Protecting the integrity of kosher certification is paramount, to the degree that financial issues do not even qualify as an “interest.”

Disclosure – CFR Title 21 sec 1657 part (d) requires that third-party certification bodies must maintain an up-to-date list on their website of all “the eligible entities to which it has issued food or facility certifications.” Similarly, reputable kashrus organizations disclose the identity of all companies enrolled in their certification program for public examination.

Non-Profit Status – A “for-profit” organization can operate with the same level of integrity and ethics as a “non-profit.” However, a “non-profit” is subject to additional oversight and external scrutiny that may contribute positively in preventing malfeasance.

Whether one is a lone rabbi in a small town who bears the responsibility of providing his community with kosher offerings, or part of a global organization overseeing networks of professionals stretching across continents, the method to resolve conflicts of interest is the same. Protecting the integrity of kosher certification is paramount, to the degree that financial issues do not even qualify as an “interest.” In the absence of competing interests, there is no conflict. A certifier who consistently functions with these principles will earn the trust and respect of both consumers and companies alike.

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8. The one allowance mentioned is: “Lunch of minimal value provided during the course of an audit and on the premises where the audit is conducted, if necessary to facilitate the efficient conduct of the audit.”

9. Membership in AKO (Association of Kashrus Organizations) requires a commitment to abide by a certain threshold of halachic application and administration expertise. Within AKO, a range of standards exists and there is no expectation of reciprocity. Additionally, member organizations may not use their admittance for promotional means.

10. See Remah, Yoreh Deiah 1571 and commentaries regarding the obligation to absorb monetary loss instead of transgressing issurim. Causing others to eat non-kosher food involves numerous issurim.
When Challah Separation Goes A-Rye

Q:

“Q: before we discuss how to proceed, let us clarify one point. The word “challah” has two meanings. It is used as the name of a bread which is braided, baked and commonly eaten at Shabbos meals. It is also used to describe a small piece of dough that was separated from a larger batch of dough in order to fulfill the halachic obligation of hafrashas challah. We are using the word “challah” in that second sense. Let us discuss the case where challah was mixed with dough and can no longer be recognized. If the batch of dough that the challah fell into had a volume which was 100 times as much as the volume of the challah that fell in (or more), the challah is botul and the whole mixture may be eaten. Even though the shiru of bitul is generally I part in 60, for challah the shiru of bitul is I part in 100.3

Rav Yaakov Emden writes that this halachah of bitul applies only when the challah is mixed into a different dough, not when it is mixed back into the very same dough from which the challah was separated. In our scenario, where the challah was added back into the same dough from which it came, Rav Yaakov Emden points that bitul will not help. However, the majority of Poskim disagree with this and say that in this case the challah would be botul.4 Generally, there is not 100 times as much dough as there is challah and we cannot rely on bitul.

The question, therefore, remains how should one proceed in that case? There is a halachah that a person who makes a neder (vow) may nullify his neder through a process known as hataras nedarim. A verbal declaration that a piece of dough should be challah is halachically a neder in a neder that hataras nedarim nullifies the declaration. Therefore, in our scenario where the challah was mixed into the dough, the person who separated the challah should perform hataras nedarim and then separate challah again.5

The person who separated challah should perform hataras nedarim in front of a beis din of three men who are all over the age of bar mitzvah. (In Eretz Yisroel, where the obligation to separate challah is from the Torah, the members of the beis din should be adults or older teenagers. The beis din may include men who are either related to each other or to the person performing hataras nedarim. However, a husband cannot be part of a beis din for his wife’s hataras nedarim. The three people do not need to be talmidei chachamim, but they do need to understand the basic concepts of hataras nedarim. The person performing hataras nedarim should stand and the beis din should sit. The person should say that he/she regrets having designated the dough as challah, and that had he/she known that it was going to be remixed into the dough it would not have been designated as challah. The beis din should respond that the neder is annulled, which is customarily done by stating, “Muttar lach, muttar lach, muttar lach.” Hataras nedarim may be performed either during the day or night. (Hataras nedarim may be performed on Shabbos if it is being done le’tzorech Shabbos or le’tzorech mitzvah.6

Generally, the person who separated the challah must personally appear before beis din and cannot send a shaliach on his/her behalf. For example, a father cannot appear before beis din on his daughter’s behalf. However, a woman may send her husband as a shaliach to perform hataras nedarim on her behalf. He should not gather three men specifically for this purpose, but instead should find three men who are already together (e.g., in shul after davening).

After performing hataras nedarim, challah should be separated again. If there is sufficient dough to require a brachah, the challah should be separated with a brachah. Even though a brachah was already recited over the first challah, since hafrashas challah was nullified a second brachah must be recited over the new hafrashas challah. Even though this results in the same brachah being recited twice, the person is not considered to have uttered an unnecessary brachah levatalah.7 For further information regarding hafrashas challah, see “When You Need to Knead: A Guide to Hafrashas Challah” by Rabbi Dovid Heber at https://www.star-k.org/articles/1197/when-you-need-to-knead-a-guide-to-hafrashas-challah/.

A:

I made some dough in order to bake bread and separated challah. When I wasn’t looking, someone inadvertently took that piece of separated challah and added it back into the rest of the dough. Now that the dough and challah are all mixed together, how should I proceed?

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mashkim and forbids its use for kosherization. However, the Remah permits kashering with sha’ar mashkim if one has already done the kosherization, b’dieved. It is STAR-K policy not to kasher with sha’ar mashkim. However, some kashrus agencies in the U.S. and Europe rely on the lenient position, even though the Shulchan Aruch frowns upon that method of kosherization.

Another interesting caveat to this question is whether liquid chocolate, or more specifically cocoa butter which is a solid at room temperature, may be considered a liquid and could, therefore, be used as a kashering liquid. Interestingly enough, when the Mishna Berura discusses the issue of egg matzah the Chofetz Chaim, zt”l, mentions that fats are categorically considered a liquid,\(^3\) sha’ar mashkim, and would be permitted to be used as a kashering liquid for those who allow this type of kosherization.

**Milk Allergens To The Rescue**

Many companies do not keep their conches separate and will conch dark and milk chocolate interchangeably. However, milk is an allergen and in our “allergy ridden” world pareve chocolatiers owe milk a debt of gratitude. In order to keep dark chocolate allergen-free in some companies, the dark chocolate conches and the tempering lines have been segregated. Tempering is the process through which the liquid chocolate is cooled, giving it its luster and shine. It allows the liquid chocolate to solidify smoothly without any white spots. Typically, the tempering line is used for both milk and dark chocolate. In this case, the holding tanks, cooling tunnels and belts are totally separated so kashering with sha’ar mashkim has become a non-issue.

**Brochah Recited On Chocolate**

As we saw through our tour of chocolate manufacturing, the cocoa bean is the fruit of the Forestaro and Criollo trees. However, the cocoa bean is indistinguishable in its chocolate form. The question is: Does a fruit product that has been pressed into a paste, such as dates into date paste or apricots into fruit leather, retain its Borei Pri Ha’etz status because the original product in its pressed version is recognizable? The Shulchan Aruch concludes that since the fruit product retains its original status, the brochah does not change. However, the Remah explains that this is not the case regarding a fruit that totally loses its original form. Therefore, the proper brochah for chocolate would be Shehakol. However, other halachic opinions posit that since the cocoa bean was grown for the purpose of making chocolate, this is the essence of the fruit. In spite of the fact that it loses its original identity, the brochah should be Borei Pri Ha’etz. The case in point in the Shulchan Aruch discusses spices that were ground and sweetened. The brochah on sweetened ground spices is Borei Pri Ha’etz because spices are made to be ground. Applying the same logic to the cacao bean, since the purpose of the cacao bean is to be grown and liquified into chocolate, some Poskim are of the opinion that the brochah on chocolate should be Borei Pri Ha’etz; the consensus of halachic opinion is that the brochah is Shehakol.

It is a known fact that chocolate contains over 50% sugar. Sugar is processed from vegetables such as sugar cane or sugar beets. In truth, the Shulchan Aruch also deals with the brochah recited over sugar.\(^6\) In any event, the amount of sugar used would not affect the brochah on chocolate since the purpose of the sugar is to sweeten the cocoa ingredients. Sugar, therefore, is viewed as a secondary ingredient (tafel) to the cocoa liquor even though sugar is chocolate’s primary ingredient.\(^5\) According to all opinions, the brochah remains Shehakol.

In the case of chocolate-covered nuts and fruits, such as peanuts, almonds or raisins, does the combination of chocolate with nuts or fruits affect the brochah? Most definitely! However, there are many opinions regarding the proper brochah. The Mishna Berura views the fruit as the ikar ingredient, and the chocolate that sweetens the fruit as secondary. The brochah on chocolate-covered fruits and nuts would follow the item that the chocolate is sweetening in the case of fruit or nuts, Borei Pri Ha’etz, and in the case of peanuts, Borei Pri Hoadama. However, other Poskim reason that the brochah is subjective and would follow the item that is more desirable.\(^9\) Still others maintain that the item that is more plentiful would be the dominant ingredient, while some halachic authorities maintain that one should recite two brochos on chocolate-covered peanuts because both are of equal importance.\(^10\) Interestingly, the brochah of Borei Pri Ha’etz would suffice, b’dieved, for a chocolate and fruit combination because the brochah on chocolate may be Borei Pri Ha’etz, as mentioned earlier. Rabbi Moshe Heinemann, shlita, Rabbinic Administrator of STAR-K, maintains that the brochah is subjective. If the chocolate is more desirable, the brochah would be Shehakol; if the raisin is more desirable, the brochah on a chocolate covered raisin would be Borei Pri Ha’etz.

Shlomo Hamelech, when extolling the virtues of Bnei Yisroel, Torah, and mitzvos exclaims metaphorically, “Vayochal p’ri megadav,” “And he ate His delectable fruits.” Indeed, this verse could certainly apply to the delights of chocolate, the most delicious fruit in the world.

Many thanks to David Lachevere, of Cargill Chocolate, who graciously and enthusiastically reviewed this article.

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2. Orach Chaim 425:5, Remah
3. Orach Chaim 462, Mishna Berura 26
4. Orach Chaim 2027
5. Orach Chaim 2037
6. Orach Chaim 20215
7. Orach Chaim 203, MB 13
8. Orach Chaim 204, Be’er Hetev 19
9. Rav Ovadiah Yoel, zt”l
10. Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l. Orach Chaim Ill 31
11. Rav Yoel Shalom Eljasiv, zt”l (Yosu Moshe)
NEW UNDER STAR-K KOSHER CERTIFICATION

CONSUMER PRODUCTS
(only when bearing Star-K symbol)

ALBERTSONS, LLC
Pleasanton, CA
POP CORN

BRASSICA PROTECTION PRODUCTS
Baltimore, MD
COFFEE, TEAS

BURAPA PROSPER
THAILAND
GLUTEN-FREE PRODUCTS, RICE

CAPITAL CEREALS
THAILAND
RICE

CHARISSA, LLC
Cutchogue, NY
SPICES & SEASONINGS

CST SERVICES, LLC
NUTS & SNACKS DIV.
San Antonio, TX
SNACK FOODS, NUTS & SEEDS

DEMOULAS SUPERMARKETS, INC.
Yorkville, IL
COFFEE

DESIGNPAC GIFTS LLC
Irwin, PA
VEGETABLES (CANNED)

EARTH FARE
Fletcher, NC
FRUIT (CANNED)

EAT YOUR MAIL
Lakewood, NJ
COOKIES

ENAXUS CO., LTD.
THAILAND
COCONUT PRODUCTS

EURO MID INC.
Houston, TX
PLASTIC FILMS

GROW & BEHOLD FOODS
Bronx, NY
MEAT/Poultry PACKING, POULTRY PRODUCTS (STAR-S)

HARRY & DAVID OPERATIONS
Medford, OR
VEGETABLES (CANNED)

LA GENERALE ALIMENTAIRE JOUDA
TUNISIA
SAUCES & DIPS

LEAHY-JFP
Glenside, PA
FRUIT (CANNED)

LIDL US LLC
Arlington, VA
SNACK FOODS, FRUIT (DEHYDRATED)

MAZZA ALIMENTARI S.R.L.
ITALY
VEGETABLES (CANNED)

MILLPRESS IMPORTS LLC
Bethlehem, PA
OILS

NEW ORGANICS, INC.
Kernwood, CA
COCONUT PRODUCTS

NOAH’S ARK, SALAMI
Teaneck, NJ
DELICATESSEN; MEAT/Poultry PACKING

NORTHEAST MARKETING PINEAPPLE DIV.
Lakemere, MA
FRUIT (CANNED)

NORTHERN FOOD I/E INC.
Westbury, NY
VEGETABLES (DEHYDRATED)

OLIVES GARDENS
JORDAN
OLIVES, VEGETABLES (CANNED)

PEET’S COFFEE & TEA
Emeryville, CA
COFFEE

REDHAWK FOODS
San Francisco, CA
FRUIT (DEHYDRATED); SNACK FOODS

SAMING FOOD CORP.
PINEAPPLE DIV.
THAILAND
FRUIT (CANNED)

SAVOR BRANDS, INC.
Chesterfield, MO
VEGETABLES (CANNED)

SERENDIPITA
Manhasset, NY
TEAS

STE LHDN SARL LES HUILERIES NARJIS
MOROCCO
OLIVE OILS, OLIVES, DETERGENTS & CLEANSERS

SUN HING FOOD
San Francisco, CA
RICE

THE CLASS PRODUCE GROUP
Jessup, MD
FRUIT (FRESH PACKAGED); VEGETABLES (FRESH)

TSAMMA, LLC
Kennes, IL
JUICE & JUICE CONCENTRATES

VENUS LABORATORIES
EARTH FRIENDLY PRODUCTS, ECOS
Cypress, CA
DETERGENTS & CLEANSERS

INDUSTRIAL/ INSTITUTIONAL PRODUCTS

AGRI EXIM GLOBAL PHILIPPINES
PHILIPPINES
COCONUT PRODUCTS

AGRO INDUSTRIA NEW AGRA LIMITADA
CHILE
FRUIT (DRIED)

ALGONQUIN PRODUCTS
Dartmouth, MA
DETERGENTS/CLEANSERS

BOBAI WONWAY FOODS
CHINA
FRUIT (CANNED)

BOZKURT ZIRAI URUNLERI
TURKEY
FRUIT (DRIED)

CACUTTS BOTANICS
CHINA
AMINO ACIDS

FORTIS HYRUN
CHINA
CELLOUSE

GREEN GARDEN PRODUCE
FRUIT (CANNED); VEGETABLES (CANNED)

HAGENA GMBH & CO.
GERMANY
BAKERY SUPPLIES

HUNAN KANG BIOTECH
CHINA
HERBAL EXTRACTS

OLIVES GARDENS
JORDAN
OLIVES, VEGETABLES (CANNED)

J.L. PRIESTLEY FOOD INGREDIENTS
UNITED KINGDOM
VEGETABLES (DEHYDRATED)

LA GENERALE ALIMENTAIRE JOUDA
TUNISIA
SAUCES & DIPS

NANTONG HUGE BIO-TECH
CHINA
VITAMINS & NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

NEWSTAR GOURMET USA HARISSA DIV.
Brooklyn, NY
SAUCES & DIPS

OLEO ENERGIES, INC.
CARIBEA
LUBRICANTS

OLIVES GARDENS
JORDAN
OLIVES, VEGETABLES (CANNED)

PDL/PAPETERIES DU LEMAN
FRANCE
PAPER PRODUCTS

PIYASIRI WANIT CO., LTD.
THAILAND
INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

PROFOOD INTERNATIONAL, INC.
Naperville, IL
BAKING MINES

PT AGRO SARIMAS INDONESIA
INDONESIA
CRUDE PALM OIL

QIANJUAN XINYIHONG ORGANIC CHEMICAL CHINA
INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

QUIZHOU TIANSHENG PLANT EXTRACT
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HERBAL EXTRACTS

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FRANCE
FOOD CULTURES

STE LHDN SARL LES HUILERIES NARJIS
MOROCCO
OLIVE OILS, OLIVES, DETERGENTS & CLEANSERS

STEVIANA BIOSCIENCE
CHINA
SWEETENERS

VENUS LABORATORIES
EARTH FRIENDLY PRODUCTS, ECOS

WACHSEN INDUSTRY
CHINA
SOY PRODUCTS

WESTCO CHEMICAL, INC.
Modesto, CA
DETERGENTS & CLEANSERS

ZAOZHUANG KERUI CHEMICALS
CHINA
INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

ZHEJIANG JUSHENG TEA DEVELOPMENT
CHINA
HERBAL EXTRACTS, TEAS

ESTABLISHMENTS

CAFÉ K-CONY ISLAND
Brooklyn, NY
RESTAURANT (DAIRY)

NEW UNDER STAR-D
(only when bearing Star-D symbol)

The Star-D is a kashrus symbol of the National Council of Young Israel (NCYI). The Star-K, in its relationship with the NCYI, administers the hebrew of the Star-D. All Star-D products are dairy-free/dairystein (mehadrin Yemen).

ALLEGRA COFFEE
Thornton, CO
COFFEE

ASSOCIATED WHOLESALE GROCERS
KANSAS CITY, KS
DAIRY PRODUCTS

BANTAM BAGELS
Brooklyn, NY
BAGELS

CHOCOLATE DEL CARIBE SA
HONDURAS
CHOCOLATE PRODUCTS

LUND FOOD HOLDINGS
Edina, MN
DAIRY PRODUCTS

MARVA MAID DAIRY, LLC
Newport News, VA
DAIRY PRODUCTS, BEVERAGES & DRINK MIXES, ICE CREAM MIXES

METRO BRANDS
CARIBEA
ICE CREAM CONES

WANDERING BEAR
New York, NY
COFFEE
SUMMER KASHRUS
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