

The Newsletter for Bnei Torah

Vol. 1, Issue 3 by The Kosher Consumers Union @ WWW.kosherconsumer.org Pesach, 5759

We visited most all of the factories in Israel that bake the traditional Shmurah Matzos for the Passover holiday, & are sold in the U.S.A. There was one factory we visited in particular that impressed us the most; the 18 minute Shmurah Matzos from "Yad-Binyomin".

The process begins with the cutting of the wheat. (They use a mix of 3 strains of wheat). It is cut when the wheat has moisture of 11%, which is the preferred ratio of ripeness. It is then stored in a dry storage & controlled against vermin.

The Wheat is ground into flour. (the temp we measured with a "ray-gun" at the grinder exit did not exceed 30.5C). It is then sifted in very fine sifters and stored in sealed drums for a minimum of 3 days before use-so the flour is not more than room temp. The water used is well water (containing no chlorine) taken in the evening-just at sunset, and stored in a closed building so the water will remain cold.

The flour is again sifted through extra fine sifters before use. The pre-measured flour is manually dumped into the electric mixer, followed by the manual pouring of the pre-measured & strained water into the mixer. The flour & water are mixed for approximately 2 minutes, till it is combined into a mass only-before it becomes a dough (so as not to cause the dough to become warm) We measured the temperature at the mass, the mixer walls & the blade, none exceeded 21C.

The mass is dumped manually into a hopper, which feeds the mass through sets of rollers that compress the mass into dough. (Temperatures did not exceed 21.5C) At that point the "*Chalah*" is separated & removed from the dough for later burning.

The dough is taken manually to the next sets of rollers that press and flatten the dough to the ultimate thickness of the desired matzos. (Again the temp. did not exceed 21.5C) The dough is then fed through the perforating wheels, and onto a disposable (used only 1 time) clear plastic sheet that feeds the matzos into the oven. The metal belt that carries the matzos through the oven are never at a lower temperature than 275C. The oven temp. is maintained at 325C.

There is an insulating panel at the entrance to the oven so the immediate area preceding the oven entrance ("*pi-hatanur*") does not get warm, & will not make the matzo dough warm. When the matzos exit the oven they are completely baked and crisp.

All of the removable equipment (2-mixers & perforator etc.) is

dismantled every 18 minutes and thoroughly washed with cold water and then dried. The non-removable equipment is cleaned with compressed air & water, which prevent flour dust to become air-borne. The new batch does not begin until such time that the "*Mashgichim*" have checked all of the equipment and are satisfied that it is spotlessly clean. None of the personnel are being rushed to finish cleaning. Their goal is perfection, and they have produced the premium machine matzo.

Note: All hand Matzos from any bakery should be checked before "Yom-Tov" for "Kefulos" etc.

Glatt meat mart: In the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, NY there is a Glatt Meat Mart under the *Hashgocha* of a Maryland based agency. Many consumers did their purchases there assuming that it had a high level of Kashrus. After numerous visits by "*Menakrim*" it was determined that the standards for "*Nikur*" are unacceptable.

It was found that certain "*chelev*" which the "*Ramah*" says should be removed- was not removed. In addition certain *Chelev* that may be a "*Di-oraisa*" was also not removed. The Certifier when confronted said it was "*botul*". It was also found that the non-Jewish workers (who do the actual "*treiboring*") many times did not have the "*Mashgiach*" check their "*nikur*" if it was done properly.

The Owner himself is a "straight" person that is being misled by his kosher certifier. The same certifier misled him and many others previously by the GALIL chickens. The Arbitrator (Rabbi Avrohom Rubin from Israel) determined that the Galil chickens that was being certified as kosher was actually close to 20% percent "*Neveila*". The certifier promised to make the changes, but it is not happening.

A number of the Flatbush Rabonim are aware of the serious concerns but are being respectful of the kosher certifier. Ask your Rav what to do & there are available places before *Yom-tov* to *kasher keilim* if your Rav advises so.

ROMAINE LETTUCE:

It seems that like every year there is kosher certified romaine lettuce available on the market. There are the whole leaves and even whole hearts (the leaves are still attached to the stem). The hearts can not be done in a matter that is acceptable but must be separated and checked leaf by leaf. The whole leaf ones should also be checked leaf

Bnei Torah Newsletter

by leaf. The system of checking for infestation is not acceptable. We have found that the Whole leaves from Israel "Katif" just required a rinsing and it can be used.

If one is not proficient in checking romaine lettuce he should only use the "Katif" brands from Israel.

SHATNEZ TESTING:

Since the demise of Rabbi Rosenberg *Ob''m*, there have been numerous complaints to *Rabonim* that the current system in place in a Brooklyn based Shatnez Lab is not acceptable. Over the years the manufacturing & processes in the garment industry have had many changes & due to the overworked conditions they did not keep up with industry. It is alleged that labels were being put on before a proper check was done. Ask a Rav for guidance.

MAXI-TYPE VITAMINS:

We have written previously that the Maxi-vitamins do not have an acceptable/reliable *Hashgocha*. The O-K labs was removed about a year ago. When the O-K Labs did certify the products they refused to certify all of their products because of *kashrus* issues. The Maxi-vitamins tried to get the O-U to accept their current certifier *carte blanche*, which of course they refused. As things stand today Vitamins are not an easy *Hashgocha*, and the Maxi-vitamins must obtain a reliable certifier in conjunction with their current certifier. Till that time the kosher consumers should avail themselves and use the vitamins with a more reliable certification.

DAGIM (=FISH) PRODUCTS: (2nd article of 5)

We wrote previously about some concerns with the *kashrus* of a certain distributor of fish products. First & foremost we are talking about a *Rav Hamachshir* & owners that are "*Frum & Erliche*" people. We must also understand that *Kashrus* is an industry that is constantly changing & getting more sophisticated. There is more to giving a proper *Hashgocha* than knowing what a quality fish should be. Only one that is constantly in the know of manufacturing, processing etc. is qualified to give a proper *Hashgocha*.

Now some of the concerns; The *Gefilte* fish is being done without a proper *Hashgocha*, nor is there a *Mashgiach* checking every fish for "*simonim*". There are only *Goi-yim* processing the fish. The eggs are not checked etc. It is not being done with a foremost concern for *kashrus*.

The Tuna fish racks have a heavy coat of black fish-oil "*bi-ein*" on it, which is a "*cha-tzitza*". The amount of time that the racks are in the precookers is not sufficient for *kashering* purposes. The same would be with the retorts and the retort baskets. The vegetable broth cooker does require *kashering*, and the *kashering* is not done properly.

There is no system whereby each fish can be checked for

"*sim-onim*", & there aren't enough people to supervise properly the production. They are of the opinion that you do not have to check every fish. Their position is unacceptable as far as *kashrus* is concerned. Rav Moshe Feinstein & Rav Henkin, *Ob''m* among others disagree with that position.

The hundreds of workers go out for a break & lunch and return to work to do a Kosher/Passover production without so much as washing their hands & changing their aprons.

They leave to the production on *Motzei-Shabbos*, and are up straight through Tuesday, when they return to NY. They do not stay for the labeling of the cans, they want to rely on the *Hebrew* letters in the can's code number. The metal *Hebrew* letters are easily available to the Company. I did have cans that had no *Hebrew* letters in the code. The labels are left in the fish processing company's facility with no accurate count nor sealed.

The O-U has instructed them to notify the O-U of every production 10 days in advance, so they can send their own *Mashgichim*. They have not complied with that basic request because of the expense of a proper amount of *masghichim*.

We are also questioning the justification of charging the consumer for high standards of *Kashrus* when they are being deprived of those standards that they rightfully are entitled to have.

AHAVA DISTRIBUTED CHEESES:

Ahava distributes many different cheeses under different names, ie. Golan etc. Approx. 2 years ago we contacted the *Chug Chasam Sofer Hashgocha* in *Bnei Brak* to verify if they certify the *kashrus* of the various cheeses? Their response was "no" they do not. In December of '98 Chug sent a letter which was ultimately published in various newspapers that they do not certify the various hard cheeses distributed by Ahava Dairy. Kosher Consumers "beware".

STEAK SEASONING & POULTRY RUB- O-U DAIRY?

R.L. Schreiber Steak Seasoning & poultry rub is certified by the O-U as *Parve*. There was published a Kosher Alert by the O-U that the product is actually dairy & they forgot the "D". We are wondering if every consumer worldwide knows what the "D" means? Why would a kosher certifier be willing to certify a seasoning that is intended for meat & poultry and has dairy ingredients?

We have also seen an interesting seasoning blend "PORK & VEAL MAGIC" certified by the STAR-K. The STAR-K claims that in most size cans of Pork & Beans the pork is actually *botul-* as the manufacturers put in less than 1.67% of pork. When the seasoning product was to be distributed in Israel the Israeli Rabbinate refused to grant approval.

Bnei Torah Newsletter

RABBIS RUBIN & KOOK LEAVE O-U ISRAEL:

The reason for the separation actually began a few years ago. A Degree holding graduate of RIETS changed his venue to Lakewood, NJ. The individual became a partner in the Kolatin/Elyon gelatin Co. & was marketing a meat based Gelatin Marshmallow. The individual wanted to make the marshmallow in Israel where the *Gedolei Haposkim* (as was written to a member of the *Moetzes* by one of the *poiskim* in Israel) were vehemently against such a product. It is being manufactured against a specific requirement in a printed responsa by Reb Aharon Kotler, O' BM.

Rabbi Rubin who headed the O-U Israeli office refused to have it manufactured in Israel as the *Gedolei Haposkim* are against it. The individual manipulated the O-U to forge ahead & produce the gelatin product with certain assurances that were not up held. That was the beginning of breaking the *Mehadrin* standard established in Israel by Rabbis Kook & Rubin. As time went & they did the Marshmallows again & they got away with it the O-U decided to skirt the whole *Mehadrin* standard in Israel.

The Consumer should be aware that "product of Israel" with the O-U should not be considered a *Mehadrin* product.

PASKESZ CHOCOLATE COINS:

There were *Parve* Paskesz chocolate coins that were found to contain dairy product. It was produced in England under the supervision of a certain England based Dayan. The dairy equipment was not cleaned out from dairy *cholov akum* before making *parve*, The Dayan ran some dark chocolate & then allowed the *parve* product.

There is a filet Salmon lox produced under the *hashgocha* of the England based Dayan. It has only one seal, The non-Jewish Company is in control of the seals and puts on the seals. A *Mashgiach* comes in to the Company only once a month. The Dayan claims that the *Hashgocha* is a forgery, yet he did not publicize that claim in any kashrus alert. There is a letter from his kashrus agency stating that it is under their *Hashgocha* and that the Dayan is of the opinion that the red color is a sufficient *simon*. We all know that the color could be a dye.

The England based Dayan produced a fish based gelatin in a non kosher facility without cleaning or *kashering* certain equipment & called it a "*mehadrin*" product.

The England based Dayan Produced meat based gelatin product in Israel. The Dayan wrote to us that before he did it he consulted with Rav Blau of *B'datz*, *Yerushlaim* and Rav Wosner of *Bnai-Brak*. When they were approached by us to verify the facts they both were at a loss, they said they told the Dayan specifically that they do not agree with the *Heter* of making meat-based gelatin.

ISRAEL CONSUMERS BEWARE:

A number of candy products being sold in Israel and being manufactured by HARIBO Co. of Spain, Baltimore & Bonn with a *Hashgocha*. There are some inconsistencies in the ingredients & the labels seem suspect. The source of the gelatin is also at this time suspect. Consumers beware!

RUBASHKIN (AGRI-MEATS) IOWA:

There are many people who still believe that the fact that the KAJ (*Breuer Kehila*) gives a *hashgocha* in the plant means at least "their" meat is acceptable even though the rest may not be. The main problem at the Rubashkin plant is the Dayan of KAJ (*Breuer kehila*). He has caused the serious kashrus problems in the plant.

We are sure they made a *heter* for the plant to be working on *Shabbos* & *Yom-Tov*. It is also a very convenient set up in a company that there is no control on the kosher labels. Lubavitch claims that even though others may not control their kosher labels, they do have a control on theirs.

We are not aware of any significant changes that would render the meat products from there to be acceptable to the discriminating kosher consumer. Their products under any label still remain as not recommended.

The KAJ *Kashrus* used to be a very reliable *Hashgocha*. Times have changed since the present Dayan took over & got tenure. We pray and hope that the KAJ Kehila will open their eyes and put in the right people that will return the glory to the Kehila. The Kosher consumer is very sensitive to high kashrus standards.

STAR-K & NEW SQUARE HASHGOCHAS:

There are a number of products that have the New Square kosher symbol and the Star-K. Rav Neushloss O"bm the Dayan of New Square instructed the New Square kashrus Org. on at least 2 occasions to refrain from being on the same product as the Star-K. The Kosher consumer should therefore refrain from purchasing any product that has the two Hashgochas on them.

PRE-PESACH SHIURIM in Borough park & Lakewood:

As we have said on previous occasions that a specific pre-pesach shiur that does not allow taping among other concerns etc, remains unreliable.

The sponsors of the shiurim should review the PSAK from the Baltimore Bais-Din (the featured speaker V. the investor partners of Kolatin/Elyon). It is important before deciding if to feature a specific speaker to check on the reliability of the information he is dispensing. Others have read the PSAK and have made their educated decision. They did not accept what they were told the Psak said. What they were told was not what they ultimately read.

Bnei Torah Newsletter

LASHGOCHA STANDARDS?

Some Hashgochas are gaining in popularity. There are many reasons that can be the causes. 1) Their standards are impeccable so the discerning kosher consumer is looking to purchase the products with their certification. 2) The distributors and manufacturers want certain hashgochas because their requirements are minimal so there is a big saving in outlay of dollars. They are convinced that the consumer is gullible and they will not realize the sub-standard kashrus that they are receiving. The Kosher consumer may and should ask certifiers what are their standards. Do they have a full time qualified Mashgiach by every production? Is the hashgocha based on certain assumptions? What are they? etc. We would start with the following: Star-k, Rabbi Yechiel Babad-Tartikov, Udvarie kosher, Manchester, Gemf Hashgochas.

Bnei Torah Newsletter

Bnei Torah Newsletter