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# Enjoy an OU Fiesta! **Direct from Spain**

BY BAYLA SHEVA BRENNER

Rabbi Michael Hoffman's been to Spain so many times, he could make the Guinness Book of World Records. 300 trips in 11 years, and running! But you'll never find Rabino Hoffman flamenco dancing or basking on Spain's spectacular sunsoaked beaches. He's way too busy inspecting food plants – 150 of them.

OU Kosher's RFR in Spain puts in thousands of car miles and 12-hour days. He's dedicated to making sure kosher consumers are able to enjoy the tastes of Madrid, Barcelona, or Seville, without ever having to book a ticket.

Rabbi Hoffman supervises a wide array of manufacturers including those that produce fruit



SPAIN IS THE LARGEST PRODUCER OF OLIVE OIL IN THE WORLD...I COULD DRIVE FOR HOURS AND HOURS AND ALL I SEE ARE OLIVE TREES.

nectars, rice, wine, soy and almond milk, frozen breads and croissants, anchovies, olives, and olive oil – lots of olive oil, and lots of olive factories – Angel Camacho, Acyco, DCOOP, Aceitunas Guadalquivir, Agro sevilla and many more. According to Rabbi Hoffman, hundreds of brand names can be found on these companies' respective schedule B's.

"Spain is the largest producer of olive oil in the world and olives are its main export," he says. "I could drive for hours and hours and all I see are olive trees."



AERIAL VIEW OF ANGEL CAMACHO PLANT AND ABUNDANT OLIVE GROVES.

His extensive itinerary covers the colorful expanse of Spanish terrain, from up north in Basque country, where he visits a plant that produces sparkling fruit juices (a.k.a. nonalcoholic champagne) for Kristian Regale, ShopRite and Sparkling Ridge brands, to plants producing vinegar, and several Wineries in Catalonia, Barcelona, and La Rioja in the middle of the country, and a smoked salmon plant near Gibraltar in the far south, to name just a few.

According to Rabbi Nachum Rabinowitz, OU Kosher's director of supervision of European



countries, the steady increase in companies seeking OU Kosher certification is due, in large part, to the country's struggling economy.

"More and more companies in Spain are looking to export products," he says. "The OU empowers their entry into the American market."

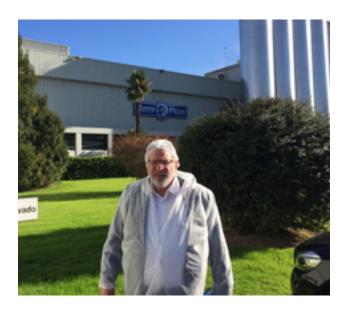
Apparently, into Canadian, Israeli, and European markets as well.

Americans love their snacks and have long enjoyed General Mill's Nature Valley granola bars. In order to service the Israeli, British and other European consumers, the company has its popular snack produced in a "proximity-friendly" Spanish plant and then exports them to these countries. (Arizona teas are, likewise, made in Spain for Israel and Europe.) Another snack-related product, derived from potatoes, corn and wheat, is sent in the form of pellets to factories that create potato chips, corn chips and puffed corn.



**OLIVE HARVEST TIME** 

Rabbi Hoffman also inspects plants that produce non-finished products such as enzymes, extracts, milk powder, concentrated butter and antioxidants to be used by the food industry to create finished products. Fish included. Three anchovy plants along Spain's north coast supplies anchovy paste for the manufacturers who use it to stuff olives, as well as fillets in oil. Either way, these little fish's market-ready destinations include: Roland brand at the Yurrita



RABBI MICHAEL HOFFMAN, OU RFR IN SPAIN, STANDING IN FRONT OF THE RENY PICOT PLANT, WHICH PRODUCES MILK POWDER AND CONCENTRATED BUTTER FOR THE FOOD INDUSTRY.

plant, Company Crespo pack Canadian brands such as Millionaire's Club.

When in Barcelona or Seville, two major cities boasting numerous large plants, Rabbi Hoffman stays for the entire week. He rents a tourist apartment, equipped with a kitchen and two bedrooms. His frequent patronage prompted the hotel management to store a special box for him with his kosher pots and pans. During the nights when he's travelling from one region to the next, he books a room in a hotel and "eats his meals out of his suitcase."

He admits that the extensive road travel can prove tiring and the time away from family gets lonely. In order to keep his mind and spirit stimulated, he listens to classical music and Torah tapes in the



car and welcomes the few times each year when his wife accompanies him to Spain.

"It's nice to come home to a good supper - and, of course, good company," he says.

#### **Kosher Biodiesel?**

The Rabbi's supervisory travels have taken him to destinations you wouldn't imagine an OU Kosher RFR would wind up – like biodiesel plants, for instance.

But biodiesel is used for cars! Why would they want kosher certification?

"One of the byproducts in biodiesel production (made with vegetable oil) is glycerin, which is used for food applications," explains Rabbi Hoffman. "The major kosher-concern is the use of UCO, used cooking oils, which typically come from fast food chains such as McDonald's. This requires constant monitoring of raw material."

Rabbi Hoffman's visits include OU Kosher wineries in Catalonia, Barcelona, and La Rioja. He attests to the high quality of the Spanish-grown grapes used to create delicious cabernet/merot blends. In fact, one of the Spanish wineries attained fame and multiple awards for their products. He credits the OU.

As the story goes, the original wine wasn't quite up to par, prompting a kosher wine distributer to call on the OU to help improve it. Together, they found an expert wine maker who transformed the wine to top-quality status.

"The sales rose fantastically!" says Rabbi Hoffman.

Over the years, the friendly Rabino has forged excellent work relationships with the plants' employees and has become quite adept at *hablando español* (speaking Spanish). After completing an inspection, before he leaves a plant he'll typically say, "Hasta la proxima!" (See you next time!)

So when you're enjoying that hot cup of Nescafe or Taster's Choice coffee, savoring Borges olive oil on your salad, or making a toast on Capcanes award-winning wines – think Spain! And of course, OU Kosher.

Buen apetito!

BAYLA SHEVA BRENNER IS AN AWARD-WINNING FREELANCE WRITER. SHE CAN BE REACHED AT BAYLASHEVABRENNER@OUTLOOK.COM

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# Spread the Word! Not All Butters are Created Equal - or Kosher

BY RABBI AVROHOM GORDIMER

"Do you have any kosher butter?" "What do you mean? Butter is always kosher!"

Not necessarily.

Butter is often kosher, but to use the word "always" is to deny the important concerns and considerations that must be taken into account when certifying butter facilities. The distinctions that come into play with cream sources, as well as the care that must be taken with



cultures and other factors, are neglected or ignored by the mistaken assertion that butter is 100% kosher 100% of the time.

Let's look at the issues and see what's needed to change the above conversation.

#### **Cream - the Mother of Butter**

All butter comes from cream, which is the fatty component of milk. Butter manufacturing involves concentrating the fat within cream into a solid - by churning.

Whenever cream is churned, the natural membranes which surround milkfat globules rupture, thereby allowing the milkfat to clump together. As the milkfat clumps together into solid pieces, excess liquid, called buttermilk, separates out. The solid butter pieces are then kneaded and formed into butter.

This sounds like a very kosher process: cream coming from fresh milk being churned into an end product. What could go wrong? Read on.

The truth is that there are two kinds of cream. The above scenario reflects butter production from sweet cream, which is a pure (and normally kosher) milk product. However, cream has a cousin that hails from another area of the dairy world. That cousin, whey cream, is the fatty component of whey. Whey cream is often not kosher. (see the Summer 2016 issue of BTUS: oukosher.org/btus/2016/08/18/whey/ And since butter is often made from whey cream or from a blend of sweet cream and whey cream, butter can be non-kosher if it is made with non-kosher whey cream.

The OU certifies many sources of kosher whey cream, but as whey cream is a very sensitive commodity, accessing kosher sources of it can pose a bit of a challenge.

When the OU certifies butter facilities, verification of cream sources is the central feature of each OU visit. Every cream source must be reviewed for kosher acceptability and listed on Schedule A, the list of approved ingredients.



What qualifies cream for approval?

In the case of whey cream, it requires regular and thorough kosher visits that determine the following.

The whey from which whey cream is derived was not produced from a high-temperature cheese.

The cheese vat ingredients were all kosher.

The whey cream has no cooker cream content. Cooker cream is the non-kosher fat which collects in pasta filata cheese cookers, as explained in the aforementioned BTUS whey article.

So, in the case of sweet cream, no certification is needed, correct? Wrong.

Some cream-source facilities handle whey cream, some process non-kosher beverages on common lines, and others process yogurt that contains animal-based gelatin on common lines. Thus, even sweet cream sources need kosher verification.

#### The Flavor Factor

The presence of starter distillate is yet another reason why butter cannot be considered automatically kosher. Many butters on the market contain starter distillate, which is a lactic fermentation of milk produced by steam distillation. Starter distillate adds flavor to butter, which would otherwise taste bland. And like anything manufactured via fermentation, starter distillate requires kosher certification.

In the US, most butter is made from plain cream (sweet cream and occasionally whey cream), sometimes with starter distillate and/or salt added. However, in Europe (and increasingly in the US), cultured butter, meaning butter into which cultures were incorporated during production, is quite popular. Cultured butter has a much more potent taste than regular butter; along with



**CLARIFIED BUTTER** 

its enhanced taste comes enhanced kosher concern. The added cultures are very koshersensitive and make kosher verification even more critical.

Clarified butter, otherwise known as anhydrous milkfat, has long been popular overseas and is slowly making its way into the US market. Clarified butter is a highly concentrated form of butterfat in which far more moisture is removed through heat treatment. This extra heat-processing means that the OU has to verify that the heating equipment is indeed kosher, thereby adding a step to the kosher checklist. Butter oil is clarified butter with a slightly lower concentration of butterfat. Ghee is a form of



clarified butter that undergoes a different variation of heat treatment. For kosher purposes, the same concerns as those of regular clarified butter pertain to these two products.

The OU certifies hundreds of butter products; all of them meet the highest kosher standards. We take pride in providing client companies with express cream approval, by way of the OU Ingredient Approval Registry's Master Cream List – a comprehensive compilation of kosher cream sources from around the globe.

Butter may not always be kosher, but if it bears the OUD symbol, it most assuredly is.

RABBI AVROHOM GORDIMER IS AN OU KOSHER RABBINIC COORDINATOR SPECIALIZING IN THE DAIRY INDUSTRY. HE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK BAR. A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO BTUS, HIS "KOSHER WHEY – YES WHEY!" APPEARED IN THE SUMMER 2016 ISSUE.

# WWW.OUKOSHER.ORG

the world's most frequented kosher website, features OU certified companies and their products on its OU Featured Companies section. Close to 1,000 companies are already posted.

In order to be posted at no cost, please submit the following information to safrane@ou.org:

- Name of company or brand to be featured
- jpg image in 75x120 px
- Website link
- 25-75 word description of your products/company

You can apply to be featured at oukosher.org/featured-company-application/



# Covenant Wine: My Unexpected Journey Home

BY JEFF MORGAN

If I told you kosher wine transformed my family's life, you might think I was exaggerating. I'm not. It all started 14 years ago, when I founded Covenant winery with Napa Valley vintner Leslie Rudd. Little did I know that my appreciation of wine would lead me back to my own heritage.

I grew up in New York City, a metropolis boasting one of the world's largest Jewish populations. Yet, I never had a Jewish education and or even attended synagogue. Fast forward to 1992 when



(L-R) JONATHAN HAJDU AND JEFF MORGAN DOING THE WORK THEY LOVE.

I received my first assignment as a wine journalist for the popular Wine Spectator magazine. I was to write about kosher-for-Passover wine. One problem; I didn't know anything about kosher wine...or kosher anything.

Interested in getting my foot in the door, I took the assignment. After some rapid research, with the help of the famous Herzog wine family, I wrote a comprehensive five-page feature. That assignment led to an eight-year tenure at Wine Spectator.

In late 1999, I left Wine Spectator and headed to Napa

Valley, intent on producing wine-but not kosher wine. That all changed in 2002. While Leslie and I attended a winemaker conference in Napa Valley, I tasted a bottle of outstanding kosher Israeli wine. I decided I wanted to create an equally high-quality kosher wine from Napa Valley. Leslie became my business partner.

Just one year later, with the winning combination of top-grade Napa grapes, the winemaking crew at Herzog Wine Cellars in southern California, and OU certification, we produced our first kosher wine-Covenant Cabernet Sauvignon. To our delight, the wine garnered rave reviews from famous critics, including Robert Parker and Wine Spectator!

DiVINE Providence Strikes Again!

While working with the OU Rabbinic Field Representatives at Herzog Wine Cellars, I realized how little I knew about Judaism. It prompted me to teach myself to read Hebrew and purchase an English translation of the Torah, a Jewish prayer book, as well as phylacteries.





**COVENANT WINES OF ISRAEL** 



In 2008, with the help of my longtime friend and winemaking associate Jonathan Hajdu (who is also an OU Kosher RFR), we moved Covenant's wine production from the Herzog winery in Oxnard, California, 350 miles north to a facility in Napa Valley, not far from Leslie's vineyard and winery. The move necessitated a wine tank. When we arrived at the warehouse to pick one up, we

> discovered it had been numbered by the (non-Jewish) warehouse manager as "Covenant Tank 70." The number 70 happens to be the



ENJOYING A LIFE TRANSFORMED BY KOSHER WINE



**COVENANT WINES** OF NAPA VALLEY

In 2012, my daughter Zoe decided to spend her junior year of college abroad in Israel. While she discovered the beauty of the Holy Land, Leslie and I decided to follow suit. We soon found ourselves inspired to begin producing wine in Israel. In 2013, our company introduced Covenant Israel and recently released a second vintage. Zoe, who made aliyah (settled in Israel) two years ago, now works for Covenant Israel. The miracles just keep on coming.

numerical value of the Hebrew letters for yayin, Hebrew for wine!

#### Living The Covenant

After 15 years in the Napa Valley, my wife Jodie and I decided to become part of the Torah-observant Jewish community. We found the closest one to our vineyards in the city of Berkley, across the bay from San Francisco. For the first time in my life, at the age of 60, I joined a synagogue. We made our home kosher and built an urban kosher winery in the middle of the city where we produce 18 different and delicious wines.

I recently learned that my bar mitzvah chapter in the Bible is none other than Noah, the story of the first winemaker, which also includes G-d's famous rainbow covenant with Noah. Last November, I had the great privilege of reading the chapter aloud for the congregation, traditionally done by the bar mitzvah boy on his thirteenth birthday. That should have been back in 1966 for me. Better late than never!

It's fitting that we recite the ritual blessing sanctifying the Sabbath with a cup of wine. In my life it has proved a most inspirational beverage, for the palate - and the soul.

VINTNER JEFF MORGAN IS CO-PROPRIETOR OF COVENANT WINERY IN BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA, AND COVENANT ISRAEL, IN ISRAEL.



## Food Fraud in the News and a Label You Can Count On

BY RABBI ELI GERSTEN

The media's recent coverage of major findings of fraud in the food industry has understandably prompted consumer concern - and mistrust.

Back in 2013, the scandal involving England's food industry made major news; it was discovered that horsemeat was being sold as beef. Today, claims of food fraud are much closer to home. Along with the persistent allegations of adulteration of olive oil, pomegranate juice, and honey, food inspectors have found that much of the seafood industry is unfortunately not what it claims to be. Tests have shown that about one-third of fish sold as red snapper are mislabeled.

Whether one is concerned with food safety, or just doesn't want to get ripped off, knowing that you are getting what it says on the label is a fundamental right.

For the kosher consumer, these indictments have an added dimension. They also raise questions as to the kosher integrity of the products that we buy. While not every type of fraud inherently affects the kosher status of the product, these reports are a wakeup call for more consumer vigilance.

How can I verify that a package of kosher meat was properly slaughtered and salted following all the kosher laws? How do I know that the fish fillet that I am purchasing came from a kosher species of fish that had both fins and scales? OU Kosher, the world's largest certifier of kosher products, deals with such questions on a daily basis.

Though it is impossible to prevent every type of fraud, the kosher inspection process helps to deter such duplicitous behavior and protects the integrity of the products. The certifying process begins at the first step in the supply chain where there may be a question of kosher authenticity.

The following are some examples of procedures that we implement that help us verify that a product is kosher.

#### **Unannounced visits:**

OU Kosher requires that its Rabbinic Field Representatives (RFRs) be allowed access to the plant whenever it is open. An RFR may drop by unannounced at any time and inspect the warehouses and production areas.

## Access to records and record keepers:

OU Kosher mandates that production and sanitation records be made available for





inspection and that plant personnel who are responsible for these tasks be made available to answer questions pertaining to these records.

## Compatibility issues:

In general OU Kosher does not permit compatible kosher and non-kosher ingredients to be stored at the same facility.

#### Kosher sensitive inventory must be kept sealed:

OU demands that kosher meat, fish, cheese or wine/grape juice be kept sealed. Because these products often have less expensive non-kosher equivalents, the need for vigilance over these ingredients is greater. The bills of lading for these items must also be kept on file.

**Kosher sensitive items** such a meat, fish, cheese and wine/grape juice may only be sold in sealed tamper-proof packaging.

While the focus of OU Kosher inspections is on maintaining the highest quality of kosher and not on preventing possible food fraud, the two issues often go hand in hand. An unscrupulous individual with no qualms about defrauding the public would also have no qualms about compromising on kosher.

In the midst of this latest food scandal, consumers can rest assured that when our worldwide network of kosher experts and representatives certify OU products as kosher, they're unquestionably kosher.

RABBI ELI GERSTEN SERVES AS OU RABBINIC COORDINATOR AND RECORDER OF OU POLICY. HE IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO BTUS.





## Kosherfest 2016: Trade Secret Revealed

BY PHYLLIS KOEGEL

In 28 years, I have never missed a Kosherfest. I still get the same feeling of excited anticipation as I walk the aisles in search of the latest kosher products. This year's search led to a discovery of a long-held trade secret. Here's the scoop...but keep it under wraps.

I entered the Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, New Jersey, to find over 6,000 buyers milling about, meeting and greeting existing clients and checking a multitude of new products. This annual event, launched by Menachem Lubinsky, president and CEO of **Lubicom Marketing** Consulting back in 1989, continues to draw many of the kosher food industry's Jewish Who's Who. Celebrated chefs and talk show hosts, as well as a myriad of manufacturers, suppliers, wholesalers, buyers, caterers, retail stores, and media



GUSS' PICKLES' PICKLE MAVEN. STEPHEN LEIBOWITZ

personnel participate every year. They all have their eyes out for the newest product, recipe and, like me, that special story, one that uncovers something never seen or heard before. Unbeknownst to me, I was about to land one.

I stopped to say hello to my old friend Stephen Leibowitz, affectionately known as "Chief Pickle Maven" of the world famous Guss' Pickles. Amid the pungent smell of half-sour pickles, Stephen informed me that he has participated in every Kosherfest since the first, and that Guss' Pickles has been certified by the OU for 55 years. He also filled me in on the behind Guss' Pickles' rise to fame.

Back in 1920, Isidor (Izzy) Guss, an enterprising immigrant from Russia, decided to treat the American public to a steady flow of perfectly pickled pickles. He opened his storefront on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and aptly named it "Guss' Pickles." The business took off quickly, attracting and creating thousands of pickle lovers. Then Stephen let me in on a trade secret.

Stephen's grandfather, Max Leibowitz, who immigrated to the United States from Russia in 1897, owned a pickle manufacturing facility in Milford, Delaware. He was the pickle-supplier behind Guss's popular pickles. Guss insisted on keeping the arrangement top-secret. So much so, he had Max deliver the pickles in the wee hours of the morning – in an unmarked truck.

By the 1960's, Stephen's father, David, sought OU Kosher certification, realizing its significant value to Leibowitz's Pickle Facility.

Stephen and his son Andrew went on to co-own United Pickle Products Company in the Bronx. They made certain to obtain OU certification for their new facility. United Pickle Products is currently the largest and oldest family-owned pickle wholesaler on the East Coast.



Sadly, in 1975, Izzy Guss passed away. His store was sold to Harry and Tim Baker. Leibowitz's facility continued to supply their classic pickles to Guss' Pickles, which moved to the Battery Park area of Manhattan. Unfortunately, after the 9/11 attack, the Baker family suffered serious financial loss. The mounting debt to their pickle suppliers prompted them to agree signing over the "Guss' Pickles Trademark" to the Leibowitz family.

An appropriate ending to the story. After all, unbeknownst to the world of pickle aficionados, it was the Leibowitz's tasty pickles that made "Guss' Pickles" famous in the first place.

Apparently, there will always be a place in the fridge for Guss' kosher pickles. According to Stephen, like fine wine, "the pickle complements every meal."

Truth is, behind every OU Kosher product waits a story to be told. It's all about people working together to bring a dream to life.

PHYLLIS KOEGEL SERVES AS THE MARKETING DIRECTOR OF OU KOSHER BASED IN NEW YORK CITY. PHYLLIS RECEIVED HER MBA FROM PACE UNIVERSITY AND RESIDES IN WOODMERE, NY.

When attending industry conferences or exhibiting at shows, be sure to display signs that say:



# WE ARE PROUD TO BE AN **OU KOSHER-CERTIFIED COMPANY**

Marketers and show organizers should always have the signs in their show kits. They are sure to attract kosher buyers to your booth.

If you need more copies of the sign, we will be glad to supply them. Just email koegel@ou.org.



# The RFR Who Wouldn't Leave: **Onsite Supervision Explained**

BY RABBI CHAIM GOLDBERG

Paul Pendelton of Paul's Perfect Pies finally perfected his Pecan Praline Pudding pie – confident that prosperity would soon follow. He figured it was all systems go. He learned otherwise.

The product would be his first OU Kosher non-dairy item manufactured in an all dairy plant. If Paul planned on producing his pudding pie with an OU, and not OU-D (indicating to consumers that it was dairy-free), he would need onsite rabbinic supervision (referred to as Hashgacha Temidis).

In order to authorize the kosher status of the product, OU's professionals would have to inspect the processing and labeling facilities to establish systems that would maintain its kosher integrity. A label marked OU-D or OU Dairy alerts the consumer that the product was produced on equipment that otherwise handles dairy or the product contains an ingredient, flavor, processing aid, enzyme, pro-biotic or any other element with dairy origins.

This heads-up proves critical for kosher consumers who (per kosher law) cannot consume dairy with meat, as well as for those who suffer from allergies to dairy products. Here is where Paul's parve product poses a concern.

Since his plant handles dairy regularly, OU Kosher could not confirm that the parve product is made on exclusively parve equipment (e.g., pie pans and cooking vessels). We wouldn't be able to determine exactly which pie plates are being used simply by viewing records. In addition, we couldn't verify that the oven would be kosherized prior to parve production. Also, several proprietary parts of Paul's parve product are similar to some of his dairy Pecan Praline items. Thus, the OU couldn't independently substantiate that only the parve ingredients would go into his parve productions without having an onsite supervisor present to confirm the parve systems were being upheld.

In fact, most of instances where onsite supervision is required arise from the same issue; OU Kosher is not comfortable sanctioning that the kosher systems would be maintained without our own representative watching the production, as is the case with any deviation from standard practice, such as parve on an otherwise dairy line or kosher on a non-kosher line.

Other examples of required onsite supervision:

# Fish fillet processing

In many OU plants, the removal of the skin from a fish (which in kosher law can often render it unidentifiable) would require onsite supervision. In order to run a production, the onsite supervisor would first confirm the plant doesn't have any skinless fish prior to the start of production, he would verify that all the fish received are "skin-on," of a kosher species, and



that no other fish are introduced to the production or finished product-holding areas until the end of production. He might apply a signature or seal to the finished product to indicate to the recipient that the product was made with the rabbi present. OU Kosher may also issue lot-specific letters of certification to indicate the day's production, and thus exclude products not made under these conditions.



## **Passover productions**

The OU requires onsite supervision for most products certified as OU-P or OU Kosher for Passover. Sometimes the plant had been previously used for non-Passover products, requiring a kosherization prior to OU-P production, though OU-P production may require



rabbinic supervision just to be sure. Onsite supervision is also essential when there are any small changes (even if they aren't noticeable) in ingredients to suppliers approved for Passover production. The OU instituted the need for an onsite supervisor to act as an additional set of eyes to make sure Passover products are made with the utmost concern for Passover requirements.

Wine/Hard Cheese productions Due to their sensitivity in kosher law, the

formations of certain food products require onsite supervision. Wine production demands onsite supervision from the beginning of the grape harvest through the end of the bottling; this is to ensure that no addition of non-supervised wine is made and that the entire process is done in accordance with OU requirements. In the case of OU Kosher hard cheeses, the onsite supervisor may be asked to kosherize equipment, substitute dedicated-kosher equipment (for the usual pieces of equipment) or add the rennet to the processing. He may also need to apply special OU Holograms to each package to further guarantee his presence to the end-user of this product.

# Compatible ingredients

To meet a kosher order, a plant might need to handle multiple editions of the same ingredient. They also might need to purchase a more expensive kosher version of an item (normally dealt with in-house) that wasn't acceptable for use in OU products. Under those circumstances,





an onsite supervisor may be required to confirm that only the kosher version is being used.

If a kosher glycerin is comparable to the non -kosher form, or the kosher beef gelatin would accomplish the same result as the non-kosher gelatin, the OU may stipulate that a rabbi be present for the production. Occasionally a plant that uses a dairy chocolate may need a parve chocolate for an OU parve production or is handling a kosher flavor that comes with a rabbi's signature of seal. In such cases, onsite supervision would be necessary.



So, it's not that the rabbi can't tear himself away from the plant- although he certainly enjoys his work. It's because he's needed there.

Your OU rabbinic coordinator would be happy to explain why onsite supervision is required and offer viable options that your company may be able to use to avoid the need. Concerning Paul and his Perfect Pies, due to the presence of dairy on the production equipment, the ultimate decision was to revert to OU-D, despite the lack of dairy in the product. We wish him success.

RABBI CHAIM GOLDBERG HAS BEEN MANNING THE FISH DESK AT THE OU FOR 14 YEARS, MANAGING ROUGHLY 400 OU CERTIFIED MANUFACTURING PLANTS AND TRAVELING TO FIVE CONTINENTS TO INSPECT AND ESTABLISH KOSHER PROTOCOLS AT PROCESSING PLANTS OF ALL TYPES. RABBI GOLDBERG'S TACKLE BOX CAN BE FOUND IN HIS FAMILY HOME IN BROOKLYN, NY.





# NOOKU ROURBON CREAM

# NEW TO THE OU Spirit-Lovers' Dream Marriage

# **Old Elk Distillery Introduces Nooku Bourbon Cream**

Curt and Nancy Richardson, the husband and wife founders of OtterBox and Blue Ocean Enterprises, are the masterminds of one of the spirit world's most unique offerings – the first true bourbon cream called Nooku.

When it comes to spirits manufacturing, Old Elk Distilleries, a Coloradobased distiller of premium spirits, prides itself on innovation. And they never disappoint.

A rewarding blend of bourbon whiskey and fresh dairy cream, Nooku features spicy vanilla and toffee aromas, caramel flavor and a hearty burst of bourbon finish. All that plus OU Kosher certification makes this coveted libation the only spirit of its kind.

Nooku is a Native American name for the white snowshoe rabbit, a fast and bold, yet soft and smooth animal, known for its lush coat and lightning speed. The same juxtaposition exists in Nooku – a deliciously harmonious marriage mixing all the strength of bourbon with the delicate qualities of sumptuous cream, without artificial coloring, flavoring or added sugar. That's precisely what makes Nooku a winning, one-of-a-kind spirit.

The Nooku production begins with Old Elk's straight bourbon, a high-malted barley-mash bill matured in fresh white oak barrels. Aged for a minimum of two years, the Old Elk bourbon merges with dairy cream from Creamy Creations, located in Batavia, NY – an FDA-approved facility. All inbound liquid to this facility must be OU-certified.

Headquartered in Fort Collins, Colorado, Blue Ocean was launched by the Richardson couple to support emerging businesses, create jobs, and to make a positive and lasting impact on the community. They look forward to opening a state-of-the-art facility in the River District of Fort Collins in 2017.

"Fort Collins is known for its spirits and we're proud to be using our Colorado barrel-aged bourbon in Nooku," says Chris Silber, manager of distilling at Old Elk Distillery. After crafting several recipes to find the perfect balance of bourbon and cream, the company is delighted to share this unique and satisfying spirit with Coloradans. "We encourage them to enjoy Nooku on ice and in cocktails. Truth is, it's a delicious enhancer to any recipe."

Nooku is categorized as a distilled spirit specialty and available at retail stores, restaurants and bars across Colorado. For more information, visit www.NookuBourbonCream.com.





# BOONDOCKS

# **NEW TO THE OU Boondocks American Whiskey Produces Another Winner**

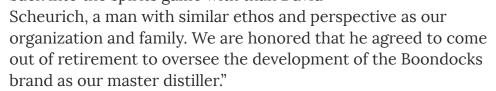
Royal Wine Corporation raises the world's Spirits yet again.

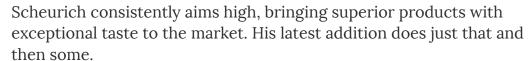
With Boondocks American Whiskey's latest entry, master distiller, Dave Scheurich, winner of the Whisky Advocate Lifetime Achievement Award, continues to create the country's most recognized whiskeys.

Available in both 95 Proof and Cask Strength 127 Proof, the brand's entrance into the rapidly growing spirits category marks a new level for American whiskey. This could very well be Scheurich's crowning achievement.

"Royal Wine Corporation's spirit-producing legacy dates back to the early days of Baron Philip Herzog," says Mordy Herzog, CEO of Royal Wine Corp. "We produced beer, wine, and spirits in the 1800's; now, nine generations later, we could think of no better individual to get

back into the spirits game with than David





"We wanted to deliver a product with an ultra-smooth finishsomething easy to enjoy," he says.

Made from corn, rye and malt and aged for 11 years, Boondocks American Whiskey 95 Proof is light in color but rich, nuanced and complex. Its fruitiness and exotic spices enhance the subtler aromatic

characteristics such as the toasted marshmallow oak-barrel notes.

Boondocks American Whiskey Cask Strength 127 Proof provides the distinctive aromas of creamy caramel and vanilla. A robust and pleasantly aggressive palate is highlighted by fall spices and oak that leaves a long-lasting finish. In fact, this expression received a Gold Medal/91 Points in the Los Angeles International Spirits Competition 2016 and Best of Category in the Ultimate Spirits Challenge 2016.







But Boondocks' commitment to quality doesn't stop at taste and finish. Its commitment to its kosher consumers also demanded aiming for the highest standard of kosher.

Boondocks sought OU Kosher's strict, globally-recognized protocols; a decision that Gabriel Geller, director of Public Relations for Royal Wine Corporation calls "a natural choice."

In fact, Boondocks' new offerings have quickly become the critics' choice. Boondocks American Whiskey 95 Proof has already garnered several accolades including a Gold Medal /90 Points from the Los Angeles International Spirits Competition 2016 and was named a finalist in the Ultimate Spirits Challenge 2016, receiving 92 Points.

A limited-edition expression will be added to the Boondocks' portfolio later this year, followed by further marques in 2017. From Scheurich's perspective, the brand vision is crystal clear, "With each expression of Boondocks, our intention is to share unique, complex and flavorful spirits that will consistently interest and satisfy our consumers."







# NEW TO THE OU The Staff of Life - and Flavor! **Crest Hill Bakery Delivers Both**

Anyone who's ever tasted fresh-baked challah would agree it comes pretty close to a Heavenly experience - one you'll want to repeat. Often.

Crest Hill Bakery, producers of hundreds of handmade breads, is ready, willing and award-winningly able to satisfy the public's craving as often as you like. Including OU-Kosher consumers.



Since 2006, Crest Hill founder David Neville and

business partner Rod Teel have produced par-baked breads, rolls, and pizza dough using hands-on, old-world techniques. A growing list of notable grocery chains from the East Coast to the Midwest and Southwest have caught on to Crest Hill products' rising popularity. OU-Kosher consumers can join the clamor for the Maryland-based company's six-strand braided, sweet and





As with anything worthwhile, it took Neville time to perfect the challah-baking art. "It's not only the braiding, it's also the recipe," he says. "We use the finest whole ingredients and I learned, like a fine wine, the longer the flour, water and eggs blend and bask, the richer it tastes."

A time-intensive process coupled with

an attentive hands-on procedure has become Crest Hill's hallmark for all their breads. Every workday, the bakery bustles with the sounds of the bakery crew mixing, kneading and expertly fashioning the dough into loaves. A sweet aroma permeates the air, as the tall stone ovens ready the loaves for distribution to a waiting and appreciative public.

Crest Hill Bakery also turns out 120 other varieties of breads including robust Harvest Bread, Cranberry Walnut bread (a perennial favorite for holiday season), as well as Pain de Campagne (a generous loaf reminiscent of those enjoyed by Parisians), Pumpernickel and Deli New York Rye. All this, plus proprietary recipes for certain retailers.

And they can't stop innovating.

Replicating the crackling crust and tender crumb of French baguettes, Crest Hill developed a



recipe that could accommodate a grocery store scale production without compromising on

texture or flavor. Enter the Artisan Baguette!

This Crest Hill innovation turned the heads of executives at Whole Foods Market. The Bakery now supplies 30 types of bread sold as the Whole Foods house



label throughout the Mid-Atlantic region in stores spanning Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey and New York.



While selling to Whole Foods, Neville and Teel met Kosher consultant Eli Schlossberg for his expert advice. "He said he wished that there was a kosher bakery like ours," reports Neville, "that products of our quality weren't really available." Crest Hill promptly selected OU Kosher.

"We're proud of our breads and feel passionately that they are the best breads available

anywhere," says Neville. "It's important that we apply the highest standards to everything we do. That's why we chose OU Kosher certification."

Check out Crest Hill Bakery online and ask for them at a grocery store near you.







# NEW TO THE OU OU Certified Soup Kitchen **Dining With Dignity**

BY BAYLA SHEVA BRENNER

When someone falls on tough financial times, more often than not, his self-respect takes a hard hit. If it gets to the point when he's not sure where his next meal is coming from – along with the desperately needed handout, he also has to swallow his pride.

Not at Masbia – a kosher soup kitchen designed to nourish the body and spirit.

In response to an increasing need for food assistance in Brooklyn, New York's communities, Alexander Rapaport, executive director, and his friend Mordechai Mandelbaum, both Brooklyn residents, decided they could no longer live with the knowledge that there were people in their midst who went to sleep hungry every night. They had to do something about it.

Together they launched the Masbia soup kitchen. In April of 2005, Masbia, which means "satiated" in Hebrew, opened its doors to anyone in need of a hot nutritious meal in a dignified atmosphere.

From the outset, they made sure the décor would create the feel of a high-end restaurant, complete with polished wood floors, cloth-covered tables, and colorful wall paintings. A maître d' welcomes each guest and formerly-dressed waiters graciously serve the food on trays.

On its first night, Masbia served five diners. A few days later, seven guests arrived. The following Monday the number had grown to 40, and continues to grow. From 2009 to 2010, the operation expanded to two more locations; one more in Brooklyn, and another in Queens. Masbia currently serves an average of 2,000 hot dinners each week.

"A soup kitchen is like an emergency room," says Rapaport. "Someone coming to a soup kitchen for the first time, who never thought this would ever happen to him; he's the one who needs the most help. Our approach is to make him or her feel comfortable. We don't ask questions; there are no forms; we just give them a satisfying meal."

Ficus trees and elegant curtains surround each table, protecting each customer's anonymity while they enjoy a nutritious salad, beverage, soup, chicken or fish, two side dishes and dessert. The menu is largely dependent on the produce and foodstuffs donated each day. In order to generate fresh and local produce donations, Masbia actively networks with local farmers and CSA programs.

Each site has an OU Kosher RFR supervising all the food products that come in. At the Brooklyn site where all the meals are cooked, packed and delivered to the other Masbia locations, an RFR oversees the entire process.



Masbia also offers emergency food packages that contain enough food products (all OU Kosher) to feed every family member three solid meals for three days. They distribute close to 50,000 pounds of food each week.

Each day, hundreds of dedicated volunteers continue to help peel potatoes, chop vegetables, assist in serving dinner, and perform inventory for the food pantry. What started as a vision shared by two friends has become a nourishing and comforting reality for thousands of grateful men, women and families.

Masbia's masterminds call it "a restaurant without a cash register." Evidently, it runs on the power of the heart.







# The Ultimate Food Enhancer Spice Up Your Life!

BY BAYLA SHEVA BRENNER

Great news for kosher consumers and all of us who value quality cuisine and quality of life! America's leading spice distributor, Harris Spice Company, is pleased to announce that it has recently attained OU Kosher certification.

Spices have long served as the key ingredient that make world-class chefs' recipes so flavorful. They commonly contain very little to zero fat, zero calories, zero sodium and zero sugar. So, they're good for you too.

For 45 years, Harris Spice has been providing first-rate spice and custom-seasoning solutions to both the foodservice and industrial food segments. Harris now seeks to expand the business beyond its traditional western US base. OU Kosher certification offers existing customers as well as new markets an added assurance of the company's commitment to excellence.

"The spices we process, be they for our retail, food service or industrial customers, meet the highest standards established by the industry," says Peter Shah, president of Harris Spice. "We think of spice as more than a commodity, but a commitment to quality and service."

Spice Products is a recently acquired division of Harris Spice, a subsidiary of the global spice and tea group - Harris Freeman & Company, Inc., which produces and supplies private label black, green, decaf, herbal, and specialty teas; and iced tea mixes for retail and wholesale grocers, specialty food stores, drug chains, and mass merchandisers in the United States and internationally.

Working in conjunction with Harris, Spice Products will be able to leverage the multi-national resources of the parent company with respect to worldwide sourcing, commodity trading, and superior quality and production standards.

The company employs over 800 employees with manufacturing and distribution sites in eight US states. Harris Freeman has grown through innovation, customer development, acquisition and investment. We are well diversified in Spice. Tea. Flexible Packaging and FRP Software.

in Spice, Tea, Flexible Packaging and ERP Software development. We are vertically integrated with Spice Processing plants in Vietnam, India and Turkey.

The new state-of-the-art facility in Anaheim, CA, includes all the essentials for manufacturing top-of-the line spices such as:

Modern spice blending and spice processing equipment





- Multiple flexible packaging and spice jar filling capabilities
- Solar electric-generation for plant operations
- On-site micro-testing and quality assurance labs
- Product development lab and test kitchen
- Climate-controlled storage for temperature
- Barcoding and product traceability technology
- Experienced product development, culinary, and technical staff to assist customer needs

Harris Spice considers itself a one-stop shop for all sterilized (Steam and ETO-treated) spice products, with the ability to offer food-safe products palletized in full or mixed containers with a certificate of analysis.

Along with its dedication to quality, the company knows that lasting success requires solid business relationships. To that end, Harris continues to cultivate close ties with spice growers across the globe.

"We wouldn't be successful without the farming communities in origin countries that help grow our tea, herbs, and spices," says Shah. "They provide us with high quality products that have helped us achieve a reputation for excellence."

Standing by those words, the Harris Freeman Foundation is devoted to improving the lives of growers in product-sourcing regions and sustaining the tea and spice supply – with projects in Argentina, Malawi, India and Vietnam.

So, go ahead, spice up your life! Harris Spice promises to make every meal a more flavorful, healthful and OU Kosher experience.

Please visit http://spiceproductsusa.com

# Spices and Production -Key Kosher Issues

BY RABBI RAYMOND MORRISON AND RABBI GAVRIEL PRICE

Spices come with built-in benefits. They have the power to transform a bland dish into a savory one.

And they are nearly always kosher.

Nonetheless, anyone working with spices – in packaging, distribution or simply as an ingredient – should keep a few essential points in mind.

#### **Flow Agents**

Many OU spice merchants use flow agents in their productions to prevent the spices from clumping. Although flow agents are not part of the final product, it is crucial that the flow agent be represented on the Schedule A – the list of ingredients in the certified plant. Because flow agents are a technical aid and come in contact with the spices themselves, they are relevant data for the kosher certifier.

Some flow agents may be kosher-sensitive and, therefore, require kosher certification. Stearates, which can be animal derived, are often used in flow agents and must come from an approved source. Silicon dioxide, however, is always acceptable. To avoid any kosher problems, the key is to report the use of all ingredients, additives and technical aids to your OU Kosher rabbinic coordinator.



#### Israeli Grown

Another kosher issue relevant to companies that work with spices is the status of the spices coming from Israel. Plant personnel who consult the Schedule A may notice an intriguing comment attached to spices. Spices are generally categorized as a "group one" – acceptable from any source, kosher-certified or not. But a very important accompanying statement reads: "Not from Israel, unless with acceptable certification." You might wonder why an ingredient coming from Israel, of all places, would carry a kosher restriction. Understandable question. Special Torah laws, related to tithing, govern spices and other produce grown in the land of Israel.

Another agriculturally-related Biblical injunction is the sabbatical year. The sabbatical is a year of refraining from planting and harvesting the land of Israel and occurs once every seven years. Kosher rules prohibit eating spices, as well as any other produce grown from Israeli soil throughout a sabbatical year. The packaging of all spices, including those from Israel, must be labeled with the manufacturer's name and the origin of the product. If "Israel" is included in the label, this should alert the conscientious kosher personnel that the product needs certification.

#### **Beware of Blends**

Finally, seasonings – blends of spices designed for specific applications – merit special kosher attention. Cheeses, bacon bits and other kosher sensitive ingredients are commonly included in seasonings. Therefore, it is critical that your rabbinic coordinator have access to the formulas for the various blends produced at an OU-certified plant. The OU is careful to guard the confidentiality of such formulas. However, the kosher concerns for seasonings extend beyond the status of the ingredients in a particular blend.

A well-known kosher principle is the separation of dairy and meat. Imagine a seasoning that contains a dairy ingredient blended on the same production line as a non-dairy seasoning that was especially made for chicken. Without proper cleaning, a mixture of the two seasonings would result in a serious kosher problem – a dairy presence in a chicken seasoning. While companies conventionally have their own cleaning procedures, in order to avoid such unwanted mixtures, it is crucial that cleaning procedures adhere to the OU Kosher guidelines. Salt and flour rinses, for example, are especially effective at removing residual seasonings. Whatever procedure your company chooses, it is critical to discuss it with your rabbinic coordinator for approval. In order to confirm that a blend is going into the product intended, the rabbinic coordinator must have access to any code that a company uses to match a particular blend to a particular product.

Rabbi Raymond Morrison is director of the OU Kosher Ingredient Approval Registry.

Rabbi Gavriel Price is an OU Kosher rabbinic coordinator.



## GET YOUR PRODUCTS FEATURED

on OU Kosher's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/oukosher, and Twitter page, www.twitter.com/OUKosher

Email Safrane@ou.org a short blurb of text and an image of the product you wish to feature on our OU Kosher social media accounts.

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RABBI MOSHE ELEFANT

EXECUTIVE RABBINIC COORDINATOR / COO DIRECTOR, NEW COMPANY DEPARTMENT

RABBI YAAKOV LUBAN

RABBI ABRAHAM JURAVEL

EXECUTIVE RABBINIC COORDINATOR INGREDIENT APPROVAL REGISTRY

RABBI MOSHE ZYWICA RABBI HOWARD KATZENSTEIN

EXECUTIVE RABBINIC COORDINATOR, DIRECTOR,

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

RABBI NAHUM RABINOWITZ HARVEY BLITZ

SENIOR RABBINIC COORDINATOR CHAIRMAN, JOINT KASHRUT COMMISSION

RABBI YOSEF GROSSMAN RABBI KENNETH AUMAN

SENIOR EDUCATIONAL RABBINIC COORDINATOR

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