



# Daf HaKashrus

CONSUMER  
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## WHAT COULD BE WRONG WITH... ?

### PART I

Rabbi Yaakov Luban, Executive Rabbinic Coordinator, OU Kosher

*Rabbi Luban's classic article "What Could Be Wrong?" was featured in the spring 1995 issue of the OU's Jewish Action Magazine. Please find an updated version of that original article reprinted here with JA's permission.*



**W**hen I was a child, shopping for a kosher candy bar was a simple matter. In those days, a candy bar was only a nickel. We would carefully review the ingredients printed on the back label. If there was no gelatin in the candy, we wisely concluded that the product was unquestionably kosher. No matter that the ingredients listed polysorbates and sodium stearoyl lactylate; we had no idea what they were. They sounded too technical to be non-kosher. We simply believed, "What could be wrong with a candy bar?" Today, our innocence is gone. You can no longer purchase a candy bar for five cents, and most people know that you cannot judge a candy by its wrapper. Nonetheless, while kosher consumers today are generally more knowledgeable than years ago, many myths still prevail. "What could be wrong with..." remains a common refrain among kosher consumers.

#### WHAT COULD BE WRONG WITH FRUIT COCKTAIL?

Some people still believe you can tell if a product is kosher by reading the ingredient declaration on the label. Many will concede that you cannot eat a candy bar without supervision but they will rely on this

method for foods that seem to be straightforward and uncomplicated. In truth, it is generally not possible to gather enough information from the label to judge the kashruth of an item, for a variety of reasons.

First, the product may be made from kosher ingredients but processed on non-kosher equipment. For example, canned vegetables may be cooked in kettles used for pork and beans, tuna fish may be processed in retorts used for canned shrimp, and tomato products (canned tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato puree, tomato juice and ketchup) may share common lines with tomato and meat or cheese sauces.

Second, the USDA does not require the listing of certain processing aids, such as pan liners and oils that serve as release agents. Though not technically classified as ingredients, these items could nonetheless render the product non-kosher.

Finally, many ingredients can be kosher or non-kosher depending on their source of supply, and there is not enough descriptive information on the label to make a clear analysis. Following is a partial list of some food ingredients which are red flags. If any are listed on a label, the product requires a reliable *hechsher*. (I've chosen these very common items, but this is by no means an exhaustive list of all problematic ingredients.)

**WINE, GRAPE JUICE, ALCOHOL AND VINEGAR:** Wine and grape juice are only kosher when produced with full-time rabbinic supervision. Alcohol can be derived from grape juice and therefore requires supervision as well. Vinegar is manufactured from alcohol. Most people are aware that wine vinegar

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# CHOLOV YISROEL

## UNRAVELING THE MYSTERIES - PART II

Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer, RC Dairy

**A**fter all milking is completed and the milk in the farm's holding tank or silo is ready to be shipped to a dairy processing plant, which will homogenize, pasteurize and bottle the milk, or will use the milk to manufacture cholov yisroel cheese, butter, ice cream or the like, the milk is loaded into a bulk tanker truck for transport to the processing dairy. The farm mashgiach will supervise the opening of the holding tank or silo and the piping of the milk into the tanker, and he will affix new kashrus seals onto the ports of the tanker, so that no other milk can be loaded into the tanker between its departure from the farm and its arrival at the dairy processing plant. The mashgiach will also inspect the tanker to assure that it is totally clean of any prior milk residue before the cholov

yisroel is to be loaded. He will verify that the tanker is either in dedicated cholov yisroel service or that it has undergone a kashering from any 24-hour straight cholov stam use.

When the tanker arrives at the dairy processing plant, that plant's mashgiach will inspect the kashrus seals of the farm mashgiach and, assuming all checks out fine, will then authorize the unloading of the milk for cholov yisroel production. In a non-exclusive cholov yisroel dairy processing plant the mashgiach will supervise kashering of the plant's equipment from cholov stam status. He will typically remain present throughout the entire production, making sure that only cholov yisroel milk and cholov yisroel and pareve additives are used, and that cholov yisroel labels are sealed up after production, preventing their use in the absence of a mashgiach.

### DISPLACED ABOMASUM ("DA") COWS

On occasion, a cow's abomasum (*keivah* – fourth stomach section) can fill up with gas and reposition, creating a health hazard for the cow, which requires immediate intervention. This condition, referred to as displaced abomasum or "DA", is caused by grain-based cattle feed.

There are various methods employed to treat DA. Some farmers merely roll the cow over (sometimes in a trough of water!), enabling the abomasum to naturally relocate. In other cases, veterinarians surgically correct DA, using less invasive to very invasive procedures, including puncturing the abomasum flush with a trocar (a sharp, hollow surgical instrument) into the bloated abomasum to relieve gas accumulation and enable the abomasum to return to its proper location.

An animal whose vital organs or limbs have been perforated or torn is rendered a *treifah*, and its milk is non-kosher. The poskim of the major national kashrus agencies have ruled that the regular milk supply is kosher, despite the likely presence of small amounts of milk from DA cows in the milk supply. (This *p'sak* is based on factors of halachic majorities and the specific parameters of *treifos*, which are beyond the scope of this article.) Some poskim, however, argue that milk is acceptable only when free of DA cow sources.

This stricter position is taken with regard to cholov yisroel, and all cholov yisroel farms thus maintain systems to remove DA cows from the milking herd. A significant part of the work of cholov yisroel farm mashgichim is tracking cow health and veterinary procedures, and monitoring the removal and continued segregation of DA cows from the milking herd.

### FRINGE (HALACHIC) BENEFITS OF CHOLOV YISROEL

The OU's position is that cholov stam is acceptable without question. However, there are some little known halachic benefits to cholov

#### MARTIN NACHIMSON

President

#### HARVEY BLITZ

Chairman, Joint Kashrut Commission

#### RABBI MENACHEM GENACK

Rabbinic Administrator/CEO

#### RABBI MOSHE ELEFANT

Executive Rabbinic Coordinator/COO

#### RABBI YOSEF GROSSMAN

Senior Educational Rabbinic Coordinator/  
Editor, *The Daf HaKashrus*

#### RENÉE ROSENFELD

Art Director

Published by the ORTHODOX UNION,  
Eleven Broadway, New York, NY 10004

Please direct your comments to  
RABBI YOSEF GROSSMAN, Editor  
at 212-613-8212  
or GROSSMAN@OU.ORG





yisroel milk and dairy products (including those under OU certification, of course):

- “Soft” cheeses, such as cottage cheese and cream cheese, are formed primarily through the use of acid cultures, which coagulate the milk’s protein and form cheese curd. These soft cheeses are referred to as acid-set cheeses. Almost all national kashrus agencies adhere to the ruling of Rav Yosef Eliyohu Henkin, z”tl (and other poskim) that acid-set cheeses are kosher so long as the ingredients and equipment used for their manufacture are kosher. Thus, these cheeses are normally supervised by *yotzei v’nichnas* kashrus visits. However, there is a significant amount of halachic authorities who hold that acid-set cheeses are subject to the stringencies of *gevinas akum*, meaning that unless the cheese is produced with a full-time on-site mashgiach, it is non-kosher/*gevinas akum*. (V. *Chochmas Odom* 53:38 and *Aruch Ha-Shulchan* YD 115:16.) Cholov yisroel acid-set cheeses are all made with full-time, on-site kosher supervision, thereby fulfilling this stricter approach.
- Modern cheese plants quite often have closed renneting systems, by which the rennet enzyme used to produce “hard” (rennet-set) cheese is dosed by electronic activation into the milk vat through pipes, under the control of a computerized system, rather than being poured into the vat manually by a worker (who stands at the top opening of the vat with a container of liquid rennet solution and decants it downward). Closed renneting systems factor significantly into kosher cheese production, as although the halacha follows the ruling of the Remo that cheese is kosher so long as a mashgiach is present throughout to verify that the rennet being used is kosher, several major rabbinic authorities maintain that the mashgiach must physically pour the rennet into the milk in order for the resultant cheese to be kosher. (V. *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* 115:2, *Shach* *ibid*.

s.k. 20, *Bi’ur Ha-Gro* *ibid*. s.k. 14, *Pischei Teshiva* *ibid*. s.k. 6, *Aruch Ha-Shulchan* YD 115:19.) Closed renneting systems pose a substantial challenge for those who adhere to this stricter position, as it is thereupon necessary that the mashgiach activate the electronic rennet feed for each vat of cheese that is made, in order to fulfill the requirement that a Yisroel administer the rennet for all kosher cheese production. Programming and coordinating this mashgiach-controlled electronic cheese-making system requires extra work and expertise. However, even though cholov yisroel cheese is manufactured at such plants via electronic rennet activation by the mashgiach for each vat of cheese, it is worth noting that in light of the fact that cholov yisroel cheese is made from milk that is owned by a yisroel (i.e. the cholov yisroel companies), and since the halacha is that cheese that is owned by a Yisroel from the start, even if the cheese is made by *nochrim*, is kosher/*gevinas yisroel* (*Shach* *ibid*. s.k. 20.), the cholov yisroel cheeses should be kosher even without the mashgiach activating the electronic renneting system, as the cheeses would anyway be under the ownership of a Yisroel throughout, thereby satisfying the kashrus requirements for cheese. Thus, cholov yisroel cheese should automatically clear the halachic hurdle posed by closed renneting systems and should always qualify as *gevinas yisroel*, as cholov yisroel cheese enjoys the benefits of ownership by a Yisroel throughout manufacture, thereby exempting the cheese from the prohibition of *gevinas akum*. This same logic would also apply to cholov yisroel acid-set cheeses.

It is important to note that even people who drink *cholov stam* and are not *makpid* to only drink cholov yisroel are nonetheless prohibited to eat cheese that is not *gevinas yisroel*. The heter of *cholov stam* does not permit cheese that is not *gevinas yisroel*. (V. *Yoreh Deah* 115:2, *Igros Moshe* YD I:47)

- As explained above, cholov yisroel farms have systems to keep DA cows out of the milking herd, thereby producing milk that meets the requirements of those poskim who take the stricter approach on the matter.

The OU certifies approximately 1200 cholov yisroel products, and the list is growing. Every OU product whose label bears the phrase “cholov yisroel” is manufactured according to the stringent protocols described in this article, thereby fulfilling the OU’s mandate to service the entire spectrum of Klal Yisroel.



requires supervision, but do not realize that any form of vinegar may contain wine-derived alcohol.

**VEGETABLE OIL:** Lard and tallow, which are animal products, are obviously not kosher, but vegetable oil can be problematic as well. This is because many companies manufacture animal and vegetable oil on the same equipment. As a matter of course, companies do not clean the machinery between animal and vegetable oils, because these oils are compatible with each other. It is therefore possible for "pure vegetable oil" to contain a significant percentage of animal oil.

**EMULSIFIERS** (sometimes referred to by other names, such as mono-and diglycerides and polysorbates), **stearates, stabilizers, dough conditioners and glycerine:** These are all made from either animal or vegetable sources and may be either kosher or non-kosher.

**NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS AND FOOD COLORING:** These are made from thousands of ingredients which may be kosher or non-kosher. When fully broken down to subunits, a simple strawberry flavor may contain over a hundred ingredients. The words "flavors and colors" provide very little information about the true composition of these items. Three of the most common problematic ingredients used in flavors and colors are what I often refer to as "The Three C's": carmine, civet and castorium. Carmine is a bright red coloring agent derived from the pulverized shells of a beetle-like insect. Civet is extracted from a cat secretion and castorium is produced from a beaver secretion. Civet and castorium are used as flavor enhancers. Flavors can also

contain ingredients produced by biotechnology (this process may utilize non-kosher nutrients such as blood or animal tissue) as well as derivatives of grape juice and animal oil.

**What could be wrong with fruit cocktail?** Would you believe there may be animal derivatives mixed into the fruit? Until a few years ago, the cherries in fruit cocktail were dyed with an artificial red color. That particular dye was banned because it was suspected to be carcinogenic. Today, all fruit cocktail companies without reliable supervision use carmine to color the cherries. In addition, some fruit cocktails have flavors which may contain other problematic ingredients.

There are some processed foods which do not require any supervision. However, consumers should not make such determinations without the assistance and guidance of a kashruth professional or an informed local rabbi.

In spite of the limitations of the ingredient panel, certain useful information can be gleaned by reading the ingredients. In particular, it is sometimes possible to establish that a product is dairy by reviewing the ingredients. While most kashruth agencies generally require that a D appear on dairy products, instances of missing "D"s abound. All kosher consumers should be familiar with the basic dairy ingredients. In addition to ingredients which are obviously dairy (milk, cream, butter, cheese), there are three common dairy components: **lactose** (milk sugar), **casein or caseinate** (milk protein), **whey** (the liquid residue which remains when milk is curdled).

to be continued

## WHAT COULD BE WRONG WITH...?

Baked goods:	flavors, oil, emulsifiers and dough conditioners
Banana chips:	fried in oil
Candy bars:	flavor, food coloring, emulsifiers and stabilizers
Canned vegetables:	may share equipment with pork and beans, tomato and cheese and meat sauce
Canned capers:	vinegar
Canned grapefruit:	may be product of Israel (This information would appear on the label. Israeli produce requires separation of terumah and ma'aser and may be product of shmittah year)
Canned tuna and sardines:	oil, may share equipment with non-kosher fish products
Cereals:	flavors, food coloring, oil and emulsifiers
Chewing gum:	flavors, food coloring, glycerin, emulsifiers and stearates
Chips (potato, corn, taco etc.):	oil and seasonings
Chocolate:	flavors, emulsifiers and oil. Even if it does not contain these ingredients, may share equipment with non-kosher chocolate
Extracts (almond, vanilla etc.):	alcohol and glycerin
Flavored coffee and tea:	flavors
Fruit cocktail:	flavors, food coloring, grape juice

Garlic and onion powder, garlic and onion salt:	stearates
Hard candy:	flavors and food coloring
Herbal tea:	flavors
Ice cream:	flavors, food coloring, emulsifiers and gelatin
Juice drinks:	grape juice and flavors
Mayonnaise:	vinegar, oil, flavors and eggs
Mustard and ketchup:	vinegar, seasonings and oleoresins
Peanut butter:	emulsifiers and stabilizers
Popcorn:	oil and flavors
Puddings:	flavors and emulsifiers
Roasted nuts:	oil, may share equipment with nuts processed w/ gelatin & seasonings
Salad dressing:	oil, vinegar, flavors and stabilizers
Soda and flavored seltzers:	flavors and food coloring
Syrups, jams, jellies:	sweetener may be grape juice and may share equipment with grape juice
Vegetable oil:	may share equipment with animal oil

NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list of products and concerns. Readers should not make any inferences from omissions.