



KOF-K

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Summer Kashrus Reminders

Summer time is travel time. Often we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory. The *kosher* consumer is faced with a number of potentially problematic *kashrus* situations: restaurants, concession stands in amusement parks, ice cream trucks, and rest stop food marts. Keep in mind what to watch for and verify that what you purchase meets the proper standards of *Kashrus*.

Beware! A *kosher* certificate posted in an establishment or on a food cart doesn't automatically mean that everything in that establishment or food cart is certified *kosher*.

Kosher consumers must take the following steps:

1. Check for a *kosher* certificate.

This is usually on the wall or behind the counter. Just because you know people who eat there or because the owner looks "right", does not mean the place has a good *hechsher*.

2. Read the *kosher* certificate carefully.

Check what the certificate is certifying. Sometimes, a store will post a certificate for items that they sell. But that does not mean that the whole store is *kosher*. If the certificate is only for some of the items in the store and not the whole store, you can not assume that everything in that store is *kosher*. It may not be! Only those items that are on the certificate are *kosher*. For example, a pre mix is an item that comes partially prepared, like a soft ice-cream mix or a cake mix. The store owner will put the mix into his own machinery and finish preparing it. The premix might have a proper certification but the equipment used to for the preparation also needs certification. The certificate might state that the premix for a muffin is *kosher* but once the mix is poured into the machinery and baked, the certifying agency does not take responsibility for the *kashrus* of the finished product. The store itself needs *Rabbinic* supervision. If you see a food establishment which claims to use only ingredients certified by reliable *kashrus* agencies and have *kosher* certificates posted attesting to the *kashrus* of the products being



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sold or used in producing the food sold in the store, but does not have supervision on the entire store, beware!!!! It probably does not meet *kosher* standards.

The KOF-K and most other *kashrus* agencies certify companies which have retail stores in multiple locations. The main facility and individual stores that request certification are inspected on a regular basis to insure that all the products meet our *kosher* standards. However, when a store is not under certification but claims to be using "kosher" ingredients, one can not be certain that their products are indeed *kosher*.

3. Be sure that the certifying agency or *Rabbi* is reliable.

Investigate *hechsherim* properly before relying on them. Consult a *Rav* who is familiar with the various agencies and their standards.

4. Once you know that a certificate is only for certain products, make sure which products are actually listed as *kosher*.

It's important to know exactly what is *kosher* in the store. For example, in a bagel store, the certificate might only apply to bagels and not the spreads and salads. Again, it's important to read the certificate! If the certificate only lists some products, those are the only products in that store that are certified. Be sure that the *kosher* certificate lists the specific item you want to buy.

5. If a food that you want to buy is in an open bin and not in a package with a *hechsher* on it, then you can only buy that food if the entire store has good *kashrus* supervision.

If the certificate is only for some of the products in the store and not the entire store, unpackaged food in that store should be assumed to be uncertified. Sometimes, a store will buy a product in bulk and repack it in smaller containers to sell. Bulk repacked items should only be purchased from a store with a reliable *hechsher* supervising the repacking. The *hechsher* verifies that the re-packed product is from a reliable approved source. Sometimes a store prints their own label stating the original certification. It is necessary to have a reliable *hechsher* overseeing what has been packed in the container. Consumers should only purchase loose products from stores which are properly certified by a reliable *kosher* agency. With such certification, the *kosher* status of all products sold can be assured.



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6. Food carts and ice-cream trucks sometimes advertise that they sell a "kosher brand" product. "kosher brand" does not mean that it's *kosher*.

Check the individual label of the products or verify if the truck has a *mashgiach* and a reliable *kosher* certificate. The vendor claiming that a food is *kosher*, or posting a picture of the food you want to buy, is not enough! Remember: A seller's non-*kosher* equipment renders *kosher* items non-*kosher*. That means that *kosher* franks boiled in a non-*kosher* pot are not *kosher* and neither are sandwiches from such a seller, even though they may say *kosher* style like pastrami on rye.

7. Do not try to judge the *kashrus* of a product by reading the list of ingredients.

It's easy to look at the list of ingredients on a candy or a bag of chips, for example and think that you recognize all of the products and know them to be *kosher*. But there are many ingredients that we can't even pronounce such as additives, coloring and flavorings that may not be *kosher*. Even if you do recognize *all* the ingredients, the product could be made on the same equipment that is used for non-*kosher* food, rendering it not *kosher*.

8. Look for the *hechsher* each time you shop.

Sometimes we pick up a product like a candy bar and feel sure that it's *kosher* because we've seen the *kosher* symbol on this product before. But it's important to check each time before you buy! The product could change certifications, the *hechsher* may have expired and the product may no longer be under supervision, or you recognize a similar company and think the product that you have picked up is *kosher*. Not all products made by a company are *kosher*. (For example, a chocolate company can begin making ice-cream. Just because the chocolate has a *hechsher* doesn't mean the ice-cream will too.)

Remember! When you go into a new store, rest stop, or food concession, keep these rules in mind. Check for a certificate, and carefully read it. And when you buy a product in a store, always check for the *kosher* label. Know what you're putting in your mouth!

Have a Wonderful Summer!!!!

Any comments regarding this document should be addressed to Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits – Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K at 1-201-837-0500 ext 127, or at mlebovits@kof-k.org.