

ספירי

סיעוא לציבור, פסקי הלכה, רכיבים, מארעות ומדע
 Updates for the cRc Kashrus Professional

COMMUNITY
 אומות לאיבור

Milk & Honey

Consumers regularly call the cRc office to ask whether a particular food requires *hashgachah*. As a rule, if the item is listed on the *kashrus* database as being a Group 1, we can tell the consumer that the item is acceptable without any certification. This article is going to discuss two exceptions to that rule – milk and honey.

When sold in bulk on a commercial level, both of these items pose minimal *kashrus* concerns, as they are pure items and the minimal processing done to them is typically done on dedicated equipment.¹ As such, our database, which tracks the status of ingredients used at plants, lists these items as Group 1.

However, the same cannot be said for the retail versions of these items.

Milk is heat-treated (pasteurized) to prevent spoilage, and that same equipment is sometimes used for flavored milk drinks (e.g. strawberry milk) and other beverages that are kosher-sensitive. Therefore, it is best for consumers to purchase milk which is kosher certified, so as to be sure that there would be a *kashering* if the equipment had previously been used for anything non-kosher.

Under normal conditions, honey doesn't spoil but heated before bottling to make it flow easily through the equipment. That same bottling equipment might also be used for other viscous products such as tomato sauces (which will require additional heating to prevent spoilage) which are kosher sensitive due the meat, cheese and other items often added to them. As such, although honey sold commercially is a Group 1, it shouldn't be purchased on a retail level without *hashgachah*.

¹ As relates to transportation, milk is commonly hauled cold in dedicated tankers (and for less than 24 hours). It is however noteworthy that honey is often transported from the 'farm' to the plant in drums that are not necessarily dedicated to that commodity, but that concern is usually ignored as the drums are invariably *aino ben yomo* when the honey is put into them.

פסקי הלכה
 HALACHA

Fish & Meat

There's a well-known prohibition against eating meat and fish together, and in recent years this issue has presented itself in three new ways – Worcestershire sauce, fish oil and marshmallows.

Worcestershire sauce

Worcestershire sauce is a barbeque sauce that is traditionally made through a fermentation of a number of ingredients including anchovies, a type of fish. Using fish as the sauce for meat is a classic case of the prohibition against eating meat and fish together, and is forbidden. For this reason, authentic Worcestershire sauce is labeled "Kosher -Fish".

However, most companies don't have the patience or pride to make Worcestershire sauce in the slow traditional manner. So rather than make the sauce the "right way", they create the fermented-fish taste with an appropriate chemical-flavor, and in deference to traditionalism – and to fool consumers – they put a minimal amount of anchovies into the recipe. In these companies, the fish is typically used in tiny amounts that are merely sufficient to get them listed in the desired order in the ingredient panel.

Should this latter type of Worcestershire sauce be labeled as "Kosher - Fish" and should consumers not use it with meat? The amount of fish in the recipe is usually minute enough as to be *batel b'shishim* (halachically nullified) and the fish contributes no noticeable taste to the sauce. Were the fish to be non-kosher it would be *batel* and, at least *b'dieved*, wouldn't affect the status of the sauce, but there's a *machlokes* as to whether the leniency of *bitul* applies to the restriction of eating fish with meat (see *Pischei Teshuvah* 116:3).

The OU has accepted the lenient opinion on this question, and they therefore allow

such products to be labeled as “Kosher – Pareve” indicating that they hold this type of Worcestershire sauce can be used with meat. Others reject this approach – either on halachic or policy grounds – and do not allow any product that contains anchovies to be labeled “Kosher – Pareve”.

Fish oil

Many believe that it is healthful to consume the Omega-3 fatty acids found in specific fish oils (as well as flax seeds and some other foods), and companies have started enriching all types of foods including bread, orange juice, butter substitutes, dairy products, and breakfast cereal with these fatty acids. As with Worcestershire sauce discussed above, the oil is typically used in tiny amounts and is subject to the *machlokes* as to whether the halachos of *bitul* apply to the prohibition of eating fish and meat together.

However, this question has an added wrinkle in that most consumers are aware that “anchovies” are a type of fish, but many aren’t aware that “Omega-3 fatty acids” comes from fish. As such, some feel that it is acceptable to label Worcestershire sauce as “Kosher – Pareve” because conscientious consumers will notice anchovies on the ingredient panel and make their own decision as to whether they feel it is acceptable to eat it with meat. But many of those same consumers won’t realize that the “Omega-3 fatty acids” in their bread or other food might be fish-based, and will therefore be unable to make an informed decision as to whether they should eat it with meat. As such, even some who accept the lenient opinion cited above will only allow such Omega-3-enriched foods, including bread, to be labeled “Kosher – Pareve” only if the package clearly indicates that the Omega-3 fatty acids are fish-based.

ChaNaN on Gelatin

All opinions agree that the principle of ChaNaN applies to mixtures of milk and meat but there is a *machlokes* whether the same is true of mixtures of non-kosher and kosher, and in specific cases *Rema* 92:4 rules that one may accept the lenient opinion.

Rabbi Landa pointed out that when gelatin made from beef is mixed into milk that is an example of *ChaNaN of basar b’chalav* (at least on a Rabbinic level) where no room for leniency exists. However, most gelatins used in food production are made from pigskins which aren’t subject to the strictness of *basar b’chalav* (*Shulchan Aruch* 87:3), such that the aforementioned leniencies would be applicable.

There is however, a strictness associated with pigskin-based gelatin in that pigskin is halachically considered edible while animal bones and beef hide are only Rabbinically forbidden – see *Rambam, Hil. Ma’acholot Assuros* 4:18 & 20.

Marshmallows

Marshmallows are relatively new to the kosher palate, as their most crucial ingredient – gelatin – comes from pigskins, beef hides or fish skin, which are difficult or impossible to produce as kosher.² Of course nowadays there are quite a few brands of kosher marshmallows that use reliable kosher gelatin to produce their sweet treats. [Consumers should still be alert for products containing “kosher” gelatin which relies on opinions that are not generally accepted and therefore do not carry a reliable *hashgachah*].

Not only has this delighted many kids (and the kid in many of us), but it has also raised some new *shailos* that earlier generations didn’t have to consider. One of them is – can kosher marshmallows be eaten with meat?

Before answering, we must digress so as to focus the question. The first type of truly kosher gelatin was made from fish skin, but in recent years companies have also begun producing kosher gelatin from beef hides.³ One difference between the two of them is that meat-based gelatin isn’t *fleishig* and can therefore, for example, be used in kosher yogurt, but fish-based gelatin is “fishy” and can’t be eaten with meat! [The explanation for the aforementioned difference is beyond the scope of this article]. Thus, marshmallows made with meat-based gelatin are pareve and can be eaten with either meat or milk, and the question we must answer is whether marshmallows made with fish-based gelatin can be eaten with meat.

In most foods, gelatin is used in tiny amounts, such that items made with fish-based gelatin would be subject to the *machlokes* noted above. However, a surprising fact is that in marshmallows,

² There is a well known opinion that gelatin produced from non-kosher beef hides is kosher and there are those who rely on this opinion, but (a) most gelatins are made from pigskins, which have a stricter status than beef hides and (b) mainstream American hashgachos reject the lenient opinion.

³ The text refers to recent kosher gelatin production and is ignoring the one run of kosher gelatin produced approximately 50 years ago for a famous kosher chocolate company. A prime factor in the recent demand for kosher meat gelatin is that the Israeli Rabbinate changed its position to adopt the strict opinion referenced in the previous footnote. This in turn forced the Israeli dairy companies to search for alternate sources for gelatin, and they weren’t able to get the desired “bloom” (a measure of gel-strength) from fish gelatin.

gelatin can comprise as much as 5% of the recipe!⁴ Halachically, that is considered too significant to be ignored, and therefore the marshmallows should have the status of being “fish” and not suitable for eating with meat. For some sophisticated chefs this raises an issue, as it means that they shouldn’t create dishes that call for marshmallows and meat.

To help consumers deal with this concern, some kosher marshmallow companies list “fish gelatin” in their ingredient panel rather than just “gelatin”; if “fish gelatin” isn’t listed, consumers should call the marshmallow’s *Rav HaMachshir* before consuming that product with meat.



INGREDIENTS

Flavorful Extracts

Concretes and absolutes

Concretes are the extracts from plants that still contain certain undesirable components such as wax. [These components cause the concrete to be solid or semi-solid, which is the source of the term “concrete”]. Concretes are typically extracted with the chemical hexane which is subsequently distilled out of the concrete, and present no year-round or *Pesach* concerns (unless, of course, the starting material is *chametz* or *kitnios*).

Alcoholic extraction of a concrete removes the waxes and certain other components to create an absolute which is a liquid. The use of alcohol poses both year-round and *Pesach* issues.

Resins and resinoids

Resins are the saps, gums, balsams and other liquids exuded from trees and other plants, and present no year-round or *Pesach* concerns. A concrete-like extraction of a resin produces a product

known as a resinoid, which presents no year-round or *Pesach* concerns.

Essential oils and oleoresins

Essential oils are produced via steam (followed by distillation to remove the excess water) or cold pressing, and were assumed to not present any year-round or *Pesach* concerns. [However, one should be cautious of companies that are inexact in their wording and might, for example, refer to cherry flavor as “cherry oil”]. Of late, *hashgachos* have become aware that companies use enzymes to assist in this extraction, and therefore they typically demand certification at least for *Pesach*.

Extraction of resin and essential oil from a spice or other food via hexane or alcohol produces an oleoresin (i.e. essential oil with resin). They are often standardized with polysorbates. Since polysorbates and alcohol are kosher sensitive, oleoresins require both year-round and *Pesach* certification.



EXPERIENCE

Insect control

Although there are fewer insects in winter produce than in items grown during warm weather, we must remain vigilant all through the year, especially for those consumers or establishments that store *yoshon* items for many months. Click [here](#) for a link to an article in the recent issue of *Organic Processing*, which explains some useful steps to prevent infestation in stored flour and other foods.⁵



Kiddush Hashem

Hashgachah work brings religious Jews into places and situations where they otherwise would never reach. Click [here](#) for a heartwarming story of how a Mashgiach’s commitment to davening with a minyan led him to an interaction that affected a surprising (and surprised) group of people.⁶



⁴ See http://www.gelatin-gmia.com/html/rawmaterials_app.html which says that gelatin comprises 1.7-2.5% of marshmallows, and on page 14 of the second brochure at http://www.rousselot.com/component/option.com_docman/task.cat_view/gid.15/Itemid.255/ which states that it is 2-5% of such recipes.

If we consider the fact that *bitul* is calculated in volume while companies typically measure items by weight, the gelatin will then be a higher percentage of the mix as powdered gelatin has a specific gravity of approximately 0.72 (see http://www.powderandbulk.com/resources/bulk_density/material_bulk_density_chart_g.htm) which is considerably less dense than marshmallows’ major component, corn syrup, whose specific gravity is approximately 1.3 (see <http://www.cargillfoods.com/pdfs/sweeteners.pdf/ca181.pdf>). An extreme example of what this means, would be if a marshmallow was made of 5% gelatin and 95% corn syrup by weight, it would be approximately 10% gelatin by volume.

⁵ For those reading this in print who can’t “click” on the text, point your internet browser to <http://www.organicprocessing.com/opod07/opod07processing.htm> to read the article.

⁶ For those reading this in print who can’t “click” on the text, point your internet browser to <http://www.tnonline.com/node/223338> to read the article.