

KOSHER AUSTRALIA PTY LTD**ועד לעניני כשרות דאוסטרליא**

Friday, 15 June 2007, Sivan 29, 5767

IMPORTANT KASHRUS ADVISORY**Lentils, Beans and Peas**

In response to recent enquiries and rumours regarding the Kosher status of LENTILS, BEANS, SPLIT PEAS etc we wish to inform Kosher consumers of the following information.

Various brands of packaged split peas and split lentils have been found to be polished with vegetable-based oil whose kosher status is, however, currently questionable and certainly not certified.

Ward McKenzie (who also supplies many other companies) has confirmed that they apply this oil only to the following varieties: Yellow Split Peas; Red Split Lentils and Green Split Peas. These "split" products should therefore not be used pending further investigation and are certainly not of Mehadrin standard.

According to formal information supplied by Ward McKenzie no other of their packaged pea, bean or lentil products is polished with oil or contains any other suspect ingredient.

Accordingly, all McKenzie brand packaged pea, bean and lentil products, other than Yellow Split Peas, Red Split Lentils and Green Split Peas, can be considered as acceptable and of Mehadrin standard.

Kosher Australia will publicise further details and brand names as soon as reliable information is received and properly confirmed.

Clarification Regarding Kosher Australia Policy on Fruit Juices and Soft Drinks

In recent years, the extraordinary advancement and changes occurring in food technology in general and the current tendency to ensure maximum rationalisation and usage of plant and equipment, have impacted in a major way on the kashrus status of items that in earlier times may have been considered as otherwise acceptable in their own right. Recent experience has taught us that previously accepted, general blanket rulings, even on seemingly innocent products, have time and time again simply proven to be inaccurate and/or too generalised due to the discovery of unforeseen and unexpected changes in ingredient, production aids and/or the shared usage of equipment with non-kosher items.

For this reason, and in keeping with the formal policy of the vast majority of reliable Kosher certification agencies in North America and Israel, Kosher Australia's policy has been to move away from blanket general endorsement of even seemingly simple items such as dairy products, canned fruits, fruit juices and other beverages, and to formally list as acceptable only those products about which we have definite information.

This policy does not necessarily mean that any particular product not listed or removed from listing in the Kosher Australia Food Bulletin may not be acceptable. While this may certainly be the case in some clearly publicised situations, in others it may simply be that in the absence of definite information regarding a particular product or its production details we cannot, and will not, formally approve such items.

The recent announcement issued by Kosher Australia regarding various fruit juices is simply a restatement of a cautious policy regarding fruit juices and beverages in general that was adopted and publicised by Kosher Australia a number of years ago. The restatement of the policy now was prompted by the unfortunate, recent refusal of a major fruit juice company to continue to co-operate in providing formal detailed information or assurances regarding their current ingredients, production methods and equipment usage in an industry that has shown a tendency in recent years to use unacceptable ingredients and shared equipment. Unacceptable ingredients can include not just questionable flavours, (for which post facto ("bedieved") rulings have recently been publicised in some circles) but also include the increasing prevalence of the ad hoc use of uncertified,

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imported Israeli juices and concentrates which, unfortunately, according to clear advice from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, cannot be accepted as Kosher (even "bedieved") due to the problems of Terumah, Maaser, Orlah (and, next year, Shemita) that they say applies to all fruits and juices exported from Israel without specific, reliable certification.

Some other agencies have been reported as informally providing a more lenient and/or post-facto ('bedieved') approach to such situations that, we believe, may be based on the different, less complicated circumstances regarding additives and equipment usage that existed or exists at the time or venue when and where the lenient ruling was formulated. Consumers are of course free to discuss such generalised and lenient rulings with their own Rav or Halachic authority. However, Kosher Australia's current policy of only formally listing and approving individually investigated products is in keeping with the formal, publicised policy of the vast majority of reliable and accepted, international kosher-certifying agencies – including the major community-based agencies such as the Orthodox Union, the Chicago Rabbinical Council, the Vaad HaKashrus of Baltimore, the OK Laboratories and others.

Kosher Australia remains committed to a conscientious and responsible policy of ensuring the integrity of the information it provides by formally publicising and listing as approved or certified only those items about which it has up-to-date, reliable and specific information that allows precise and up-front approval of each item listed.

Please see the relevant categories in the 2007 Kosher Australia Food Bulletin for a full list of the many fully investigated, approved and certified locally produced fruit juices and other beverages that are readily available in local supermarkets and other retail outlets.

Fresh Strawberry Usage

Reports of extraordinary infestation in current strawberry crops in the USA and elsewhere have recently been circulated internationally. Information has now been received concerning strawberries grown in Australia (which is generally less prone to the kinds of infestation regularly found in overseas fruits and vegetables). This information, that has been confirmed by local testing carried out in recent days under our auspices, has not revealed any discernable change in the rate or form of infestation of Australian strawberries.

Consequently Australian grown strawberries may continue to be used until further notice provided the normal checking process is carried out conscientiously.

This includes cutting off the green leafy top (taking the top of the actual strawberry flesh with it) followed by a thorough rinsing and cleaning of the strawberries in running water. This should be followed by visual inspection for any remaining thrips and aphids (which are readily discernable to the naked eye) and further rinsing should be carried out, if required, until the strawberries are clearly infestation free. Any spoiled or rotten part of the strawberry should be cut away and discarded - as should any mouldy or spoiled whole berries. Particular care should be taken to properly inspect and clean any crevasses or folds on the strawberry surface. (Please see the 2007 Kosher Australia Food Bulletin p197).

(Hint: The green, yellow or brown little mounds, (sometimes referred to as the strawberry's "seeds" but technically known as "achenes") that often have a short black hair-like protrusion at the bottom, that are found dotted over the outside strawberry surface, are a natural part of the strawberry itself and should not be mistaken for infestation.)

Fresh Garlic Usage

Reports have been received and confirmed concerning recent infestation in some locally available garlic. This infestation generally does not involve the inside of the garlic cloves but the areas between each individual clove. The bugs concerned are small and black but are readily discernable to the naked eye. As a consequence it is highly recommended that all garlic cloves be broken up and the cloves separated and inspected before removal of the outside skin of the clove(s) to be used. Any infestation found can readily be washed away in cold running water.

Kosher Australia continues to monitor current fruit and vegetable crops and will issue further announcements if and as applicable.



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