

Vaad News & Views




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TALK OF THE TOWN

NEW RESTAURANT IN TOWN

Calling all food connoisseurs and gastronomic experts. Have you been searching for a new place to dine and in which to appeal to your appetite and your friends? Jerusalem Restaurant opened its doors on Tuesday, 7th December 2004 at 4999 Queen Mary. Owned by Jacob Almakias, the restaurant serves shwarmas, burgers, fries, etc. Mr. Almakias is a well known restaurateur originally from Montreal who's now returned from Israel to open Jerusalem Restaurant. They look forward to please you. They are under  supervision/certification.

CHANGE IN STATUS OF ROUGEMONT JUICES

Tossing your family's favorite beverage into the shopping cart without a second glance at the label may be a thing of the past. The popular Lassonde company, which produces and distributes their beverages under a wide spectrum of labels, has recently made the decision to remove the  mark from most of its products.

Only those products bearing the  should be used. Currently, the private label products all bear the  mark. This means each bottle of Allens, Rougemont, Oasis, as well as private label companies and supermarket brand fruit drinks should be checked for an  mark before purchasing.

MARVID CHICKEN STRIKE CONTINUES.

As the saga unfolds, union negotiations are at a standstill which means that no resolution is currently in sight.

Under normal circumstances, residents of the city of Montreal and its suburbs purchase poultry processed exclusively by Marvid. However, at this time the quantity of poultry prepared for the market's consumption is severely diminished due to lack of workers and demand is disproportionately high.

The Jewish Community Council of Montreal has allowed chickens to be brought in from other suppliers provided the Kosher certification is approved by the Vaad Harabbonim of Montreal. Empire from the United States is currently supplying all chickens sold in supermarkets in Marvid packaging, bearing the OU and KAJ certification.

JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF MONTREAL
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לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל

DO NOT DEVIATE ... LEFT OR RIGHT

D'varim 17:11

דברים י"ז י"א

By Rabbi Zushe Yosef Blech

The purported exotic provenance of many familiar foods has been enshrined in our gastronomic mythology. For example, every schoolchild learns that Marco Polo brought spaghetti to Italy, thereby inaugurating the great culinary masterpiece so closely identified with the Apennine peninsula. The truth, however, may be a bit far from the fable – and moored more closely to *Kashrus* issues than first apparent. While noodle-type foods may be found in virtually all cultures, Marco Polo probably did not introduce spaghetti to Italy. The first written reference to noodles as we know them is in the *Talmud Yesrushalmi*, where the *Gemora* discusses the *Halachos* of drying *Itriyos* (noodles) on *Yom Tov* (*Maseches Beiza*) and the rules of *Challah* involved in their preparation (*Maseches Challah*). In all probability, these *Itriyos* traveled with the Saracens in their invasion of Sicily, and thence spread throughout Italy. As we shall see, pasta and noodles raise a number of *Kashrus* issues, both ancient and modern.

Whether called noodles or macaroni, pasta is prepared from dough composed of two basic ingredients – milled grain and water – which is formed into a particular shape. In western countries, pasta is made from a type of high-gluten spring wheat called *durum* that is milled into coarse, granular *semolina*. After being rolled or extruded and cut into a desired shape, the fresh, raw pasta may be boiled and eaten. Such fresh pasta may be made at home, or sold as a refrigerated product. Indeed, this is the type of *Itriyos* that the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Beitza* I:9) states may be made on *Yom Tov*. Fresh pasta, however, has a very limited shelf life, since it tends to ferment and spoil after a short time. Pasta makers quickly learned, however, that their product may be *dried*, in which form it may be kept for years before being boiled and eaten. According to the *Yerushalmi*, one may not produce

this type of pasta on *Yom Tov*, since it involves preparing foods for use after the *Yom Tov*.

Indeed, part of the art of making good pasta is the method by which it is dried. If it dries too quickly, it will crack and too slowly, it may develop mold. Traditionally, pasta was air dried by draping long cut pasta over wood dowels or spreading small cut pasta over mesh trays, a time-consuming process that may still be followed when preparing dried pasta at home. Modern commercial production of pasta involves passing the pasta through hot-air ovens, where the drying process is significantly speeded up. Although such pasta may have the *Halachic* status of being "cooked" or "baked", it poses no concerns of *Bishul Akum* since the dried pasta is not considered an edible product after the drying. It is the *boiling* of the dried pasta that makes it edible. In some situations, however, a factory may produce "pre-cooked" pasta, where the pasta is indeed boiled into an edible product. In such situations, a *Mashgiach* must be involved in the cooking process to ensure the Kosher status of the product.

The modern process of heat-drying pasta may create a *Kashrus* concern, however, in situations where *flavored* noodles are produced. Some factories have been known to produce shrimp-flavored pasta, where non-Kosher shrimp is actually added to the pasta dough. In such cases, the equipment on which such pasta is dried becomes non-Kosher, and the Kosher status of any other pasta produced on the same equipment becomes compromised.

"Instant noodles" combine the drying and cooking process in one step. Instead of drying them with hot air, they are fried in oil to both evaporate the water within them and cook them at the same time. Although instant noodles are often included in "cup of

soup” and “cup of noodle” products that are designed to be mixed with hot water, the noodles themselves are eminently edible without the addition of any water whatsoever, and are often eaten by themselves as a snack. Most authorities have concluded, however, that such noodles are not subject to *Bishul Akum* concerns because snacks are not considered *O’leh as Shulchan M’lachim* – eaten as part of an important meal. These products require a reliable *Hashgacha*, however, to ensure that the oil in which they are fried is Kosher, as well as ensuring the non-Kosher flavors are not used in any products fried in the same oil.

Given the traditional method of preserving pasta through drying, it may be called the first *convenience food*. Dried pasta may be stored and transported for long periods without spoiling, and can be prepared with nothing more than a pot of boiling water. [Bread, on the other hand, was perishable, and its preparation required kneading, letting it rise, and a suitable oven.] This spirit of utility has carried over to our day. Have you ever noticed that cafeteria cuisine and airline meals typically feature pasta as a mainstay? The reason is that cooked pasta is virtually indestructible. It can be kept warm in a serving tray for long periods without spoiling, and can be refrigerated or frozen and then reheated and still be appetizing. Such hardness is not perfect, however, since cooked pasta tends to become sticky – and quickly becomes a less-than-appetizing clump. To avoid this problem, the homemaker may add a small amount of oil or margarine to the water in which the pasta is boiled, thereby making the pasta more slippery and less prone to clumping together. Some industrial pasta is sprayed with mono and diglycerides for the same purpose. Such chemicals may be derived from either animal or vegetable fat, and require a reliable *Hechsher*.

The choice of durum as the grain of choice in western countries is due to the high level of gluten protein it contains. Just as gluten in bread dough gives it the strength and elasticity to be kneaded and to rise properly, pasta is similarly produced from high-gluten flour to provide firmness and strength in the product. This preference is significant from a *Kashrus* perspective in that durum is *spring wheat*, and thus subject to the restrictions of *Chodosh*. People who are concerned with *Chodosh* must therefore ensure that all pasta eaten after

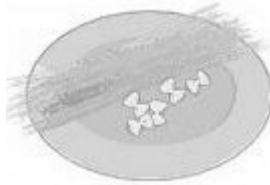
the summer until *Pesach* be produced from the previous year’s harvest.

Although durum is the grain of choice for the production of pasta in western countries, many Asian types of noodles are produced from other types of starches. Rice noodles, known as *mein*, are standard fare in Chinese cooking, as are noodles made from mung bean flour. Other types of starch, such as buckwheat, are also used in some cultures. In general, these products contain nothing more than flour and water, and have traditionally posed little *Kashrus* concern.

This distinction between noodles and macaroni is essentially based upon their shape, with noodles traditionally taking on an elongated, ribbon-like form. In many countries, however, *macaroni* and *noodles* are generally differentiated by the absence or inclusion of eggs. Macaroni will generally contain only semolina and water, with the distinction between products – such as *spaghetti* (little strings) and *vermicelli* (little worms!) – based solely upon their shape. Noodle products – commonly called “egg noodles” – also contain whole eggs, which gives them their bright yellow color as well as a distinctive flavor. Either liquid or powdered eggs may be used, both of which require a reliable *Hashgacha*. “Cholesterol-free” noodles typically contain only egg whites and yellow food color.

Other types of colored pasta rely on various types of vegetables. Green pasta generally contains spinach powder, and the color of red pasta derives from the use of tomato or beet powder. Such colored pasta enhances the appeal of pasta products, but also require a reliable *Hashgacha* to ensure that the vegetable powders comply with Kosher requirements.

One more *Halachic* point should be noted regarding noodles. When making dough products – whether at home or in a Jewish-owned factory – one must generally fulfill the *Mitzvah* of *Challah*. This *Mitzvah* involves separating a small portion of the dough, as a remembrance of the dough that was given to the *Kohanim* (priests) every time a person baked bread. [Since *Kohanim* may not eat *Challah* today, we must burn it.] In general, the requirement of *Challah* applies to “bread” – its application to cakes and other dough prod-



ucts being the subject of much *Halachic* discussion. Indeed, the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Challah* I:4) discusses the *Halachic* status of noodles with regards to *Challah*, since noodles are “cooked” and not “baked” like bread. Most authorities rule that noodles are exempt from the requirement of *Challah*, although *Rabbeinu Tam* contends (based upon the above *Gemorah*) that *Challah* should nevertheless be separated. Given the intricacies of this rule, however, one should consult a *Halachic* authority when preparing homemade noodles.

One of the great *Shoftim* (Judges) that led *B’nei Yisroel* after *Yehoshua* was *Ehud ben Gerah*. The *Pasuk* applies to him the sobriquet “*Iter Yad*” – a term commonly translated as a “lefty”. In truth, however, most commentaries suggest that the word “*Iter*” refers to a limitation of the *right* hand as opposed to the dominance of the left. *Rashi* quotes the *Targum Yonasan*, who translates the word as “*Gamid*” – withered and dried. It may well be that the term for noodles – *Itriyos* – is based upon the drying process that is the hallmark of its preparation. When we deal with noodles, as with all foods, we should remember that their *Kashrus* depends on following the guidance of our *Gedolim*. Perhaps the next time we eat *Itriyos* - with its "left-handed" connotation - we should be reminded of the concept of not deviating from their words either to the left or to the right.

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