



# Transportation of Kosher Ingredients

OU Kosher has been refining its process for approving ingredients for many years. The system currently in use is known as the Group Ingredient System, which categorizes ingredients into six groups, numbered 1 through 6. The lower the number, the less sensitive the ingredient is in terms of kosher certification. This system is not only vital for kosher certifying agencies but also plays an important role for consumers. In certain situations, consumers may need to use products that do not bear kosher certification yet are, in fact, completely kosher—based, of course, on the guidance of competent rabbis who understand ingredient composition and sourcing.

Ingredients in Group 1 are considered innocuous; their source is generally irrelevant, and they can be used globally without

concern. Group 2 ingredients are similar to those in Group 1 but are somewhat more dependent on the product's source. This is because production methods may vary between countries or manufacturers, and these differences can affect whether an ingredient is kosher sensitive.

## FLAVOR AND GROUP 3 INGREDIENTS

In previous articles, we have discussed Group 3, which includes the most classic certified kosher ingredients. These ingredients require kosher supervision and certification. While they often originate from kosher sources, two primary concerns must be addressed:

- Non-kosher additives: The possibility that an ingredient is mixed with non-kosher components.
- Equipment usage: The potential that the equipment used in production may have also processed non-kosher ingredients.

The second issue relates to a fundamental concept in kosher law known as flavor transfer, or in Hebrew, *Ta'am*. According to halacha, flavor can transfer through various means, including heat, salting, or even cold contact. For example, an oil might be produced from a kosher source, yet if it is refined or heated in equipment that was previously used for non-kosher materials, the

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non-kosher flavor (*Ta'am Issur*) can transfer to the oil, rendering it non-kosher.

#### GROUP 4: THE ISSUE OF FLAVOR TRANSFER DURING TRANSPORT

The principle of flavor transfer also defines Group 4. OU Kosher focuses not only on the source of an ingredient but also on its entire production and transportation process. Around the world, liquids are transported in large tankers—some used for food, others for chemicals or industrial materials. While this might seem inconsequential, the method of transfer can significantly impact a product's kosher status. For instance, kosher orange juice concentrate may be shipped from one facility to another hundreds of miles away. If the tanker has been used exclusively for kosher products, the juice remains kosher. However, if the same tanker is also approved to transport grape juice, the orange juice may become disqualified from kosher use. This is due to the halachic principle known as *kavush kemevushal* ("soaking is like cooking"). According to Jewish law (Shulchan Aruch YD 105:1), if a kosher food remains in contact with a non-kosher liquid for 24 hours, the flavor transfers as if they were cooked together. In the case of sharp substances, such as pure lemon juice, this transfer can occur within minutes. To address this concern, OU Kosher uses Group 4 to designate ingredients transported in tankers that have been verified as kosher compatible, ensuring that the ingredients remain kosher throughout their journey. ■

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