



# Kosher Ingredients and Transportation Standards

Kosher ingredients form the cornerstone of kosher certification. Because ingredients are sourced globally, extracted in various ways, and processed differently, determining whether a particular ingredient is kosher-compatible requires extensive expertise.

To navigate this complexity, OU Kosher has developed a classification system that divides ingredients into six numerical groups, ranging from Group 1 (least sensitive) to Group 6 (most sensitive). The lower the number, the less kosher-sensitive the ingredient, allowing companies and food-service providers greater flexibility in sourcing.

## GROUP 5: TRANSPORT OF KOSHER LIQUIDS

Group 5 covers situations involving the transfer of kosher liquids in tankers that have previously carried non-kosher products, even when those tankers are clean. This classification is based on the halachic principle *kavush kemevushal* (“soaking is like cooking”).

According to *Shulchan Aruch* (YD105:1) if a kosher food remains in contact with a non-kosher liquid for 24 hours, flavor transfer occurs as if they were cooked together. In the case of sharp substances—such as pure lemon juice—this transfer can happen within minutes.

## OU OVERSIGHT AND MAINTENANCE WASHES

In recent years, the OU has made significant

progress in ensuring that kosher products are transported exclusively in kosher-approved tanker trucks. To this end, the OU now certifies fleets of dedicated kosher tankers and operates a network of kosher truck wash stations across the country.

*Mashgichim* (kosher supervisors) audit truck depots to verify that:

- Dedicated trucks carry only kosher commodities, including on their return routes (backhauls).
- Tankers receive a kosher maintenance wash after each delivery.

A kosher maintenance wash preserves the kosher status of an already certified truck but does not constitute kashering. The process excludes the use of non-kosher recycled water. It is the responsibility of the on-site *Mashgiach* to confirm that each dedicated kosher tanker receives a proper maintenance wash.

*Mashgichim* at production plants only need to verify that the arriving tanker is kosher-certified; they are not required to confirm that a wash was performed.

## KOSHER UPGRADE WASHES

If a tanker is not part of a certified fleet, it may still be permitted to transport kosher commodities if it undergoes a kosher upgrade wash.

A kosher upgrade wash involves an



extended cleaning with *Rotchim* (boiling water), performed in the presence of a *Mashgiach*, and deemed sufficient for kashering. The *Mashgiach* must obtain a kosher upgrade wash ticket before loading any product.

Group 5, therefore, includes tankers that are not certified fleets but have documentation from a *Mashgiach* confirming that a kosherization was properly performed.

### SEA TRANSPORT AND KASHRUT CONCERNS

Maritime transport presents additional kashrut challenges, particularly with liquid products. This issue first gained attention among Israeli certification agencies over 15 years ago concerning Passover-approved ingredients (However North American kosher certification were dealing with the issue over half a century ago).

For example, palm oil—a key ingredient in Israel during Passover—often congeals, requiring continuous heating during transport. Because heating can cause flavor transfer, tankers used for such shipments must be certified to ensure they have not carried any non-Passover-compatible materials.

The OU Kosher division maintains close relationships with numerous international shipping companies to guarantee the kosher integrity of storage tanks on vessels. To prevent complications that might render a product Group 5, the OU recommends using brand-new, smaller plastic tankers for maritime transport whenever possible.

### GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN CHALLENGES

Global crises can significantly impact kosher

certification and logistics. During the COVID-19 pandemic and more recently amid Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, the kosher industry faced disruptions in global shipping routes.

Stolt Shipping, one of the largest owners of ISO (International Organization for Standardization) tankers used to transport bulk liquids worldwide, warned customers that instability in the Red Sea and Suez Canal region could delay shipments and disrupt supply chains.

Such disruptions affect global kosher operations—particularly in Europe, the U.S., and Israel—as many kosher-certified liquids are transported in these tankers. Potential shortages may force companies to switch suppliers or adjust their operations.

To address these issues, OU Kosher established a special rabbinic task force dedicated to monitoring and managing the Suez Canal situation to ensure the continued integrity of kosher supply lines.

### CONCLUSION

Esuring the kosher status of ingredients extends far beyond sourcing and production—it also encompasses every stage of transport. Through rigorous supervision, detailed protocols, and global collaboration, the OU continues to uphold the highest standards of kosher compliance in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. ■

## Kashrut Questions in Israel?

Call or Whatsapp Rabbi Friedman at  
050-200-4432