



# Introduction to Kosher Ingredients

Many times, both Jewish and non-Jewish individuals inquire about how kosher certification functions. Although this is a broad topic, it can generally be broken down into three main components:

1. Ingredient Compatibility – whether ingredients are kosher-sensitive or not
2. Production Process – how the food is produced (e.g., cooking methods, mixing dairy and meat, etc.)
3. Supervision – the level and frequency of involvement required from a kosher representative

Kosher ingredients are the cornerstone of kosher certification. Since ingredients are sourced globally, extracted in various ways, and processed differently, extensive knowledge is required to determine whether a given ingredient is kosher-compatible. Beyond the impracticality of having a full-time kosher supervisor at every production site worldwide, it's essential to understand the fundamentals of kosher ingredients to grasp how the OU manages its certification system, which covers over 1.3 million products globally.

## **GROUP ONE**

A small but vital unit within the OU's

Kashrut Division is the Ingredients Department. Every OU-certified company is contractually required to register all its ingredients with the OU. This department is responsible for evaluating whether each ingredient is acceptable under kosher standards.

In many cases, the evaluation is straightforward. It involves checking which certification agency supervises the ingredient's production and whether that agency's standards align with those of the OU. In other cases, the question is not whether an ingredient is certified, but whether it requires certification at all.

Take potatoes, for example. Raw, unprocessed potatoes are entirely innocuous from a kosher perspective. An OU-certified company that makes French fries, for instance, is not limited in where it can source its potatoes. Such an ingredient is classified by the OU as Group One. It is essential that the OU has such a classification to enable OU certified companies to function with a reasonable degree of latitude in the food ingredients supply chain, while still maintaining strong standards of kashrut.

However, sometimes Group One status comes with a caveat. That is, while the ingredient is generally acceptable, sourcing may not be completely unrestricted. A good example is agricultural products that are also grown in Israel. For instance, a product may be listed as "Any Source" but with the added note: "not from Israel



without certification of tithed status.” This is because, in Israel, agricultural produce must be tithed according to Jewish law. To keep things concise, only this requirement is listed, even though other laws apply.

### **NON-GROUP ONE**

There are, of course, cases where an ingredient might appear to qualify as Group One, but its production process prevents the OU from granting it that status. For example, an OU-certified company recently applied to use pea protein isolate from a supplier that was not kosher certified. They asked whether the ingredient required certification.

This inquiry was expected, as pea protein isolate is a rapidly growing product in the plant-based food market, often used as an alternative to meat and dairy proteins. Fortunately, the OU has a broad knowledge base it can draw upon when assessing the kosher sensitivity of manufacturing processes—particularly from its existing certifications. In this case, the OU already certifies one of the largest ingredient manufacturers, ADM, and was familiar with the process.

Here's how it works at ADM: yellow peas are delivered to the processing facility, where the hulls are physically separated. According to Mike Odland, Operations Manager at ADM's Edible Beans site, the remaining material—consisting of starch, fiber, and protein—undergoes a series of physical and chemical steps to separate

the components. Pea starch is dried and handled separately.

The complexity from a kosher perspective lies in the next step: isolating the pea protein from sugars and fibers. This involves a cooking step, typically spray-drying. However, spray-drying is often outsourced to a third-party facility known as a toll-drier, because the equipment and expertise required are highly specialized and costly. Most companies do not operate their own spray-drying equipment.

Here's the concern: toll-drying facilities rent their equipment out to multiple clients, which means non-kosher products may have been processed on the same machinery. Residue and absorption present a significant issue under kosher law.

Because of this, pea protein isolate cannot be considered a Group One ingredient. Any processor wishing to use it must ensure the spray-drying facility has appropriate kosher certification. ■

## **Kashrut Questions in Israel?**

Call or Whatsapp Rabbi Friedman at  
050-200-4432



### **Tzitzit tying with Ruti**

**Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin**

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*no experience needed*