



Understanding Kosher Ingredients: Group One and Group Two

As mentioned in previous articles, 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. To help navigate this complexity, the OU has developed a system that categorizes ingredients into six numeric groups, ranging from 1 to 6. The lower the number, the less sensitive the ingredient is from a kosher perspective, giving companies and food-service providers greater flexibility in sourcing.

GROUP ONE: UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTABLE INGREDIENTS

Group One represents the most innocuous ingredients used worldwide. These materials can typically be sourced from any manufacturer, regardless of location, and are universally considered kosher-compatible. Once registered and approved, these ingredients may be used freely in OU-certified facilities.

Group One impacts not only kosher certification processes but also Jewish travelers worldwide. It includes products that can be purchased and consumed even without

formal kosher certification—though this is a sensitive subject that depends on various factors. A future article will explore this topic further, especially regarding kosher consumption in regions where certified products are less available.

Examples of Group One ingredients include:

- Salt
- Sugar
- Pure ground coffee
- Raw nuts
- Group One also includes certain chemical additives such as:
 - Titanium dioxide
 - Sodium bicarbonate
 - Malic Acid

While Group One may seem like a straightforward category, OU Kosher's rabbinical board constantly updates and reviews the status of these ingredients to ensure the assessments remain accurate. Thanks to a global network of hundreds of supervisors, OU Kosher can provide reliable information on the kosher compatibility of these ingredients.

It's important to note that Passover (Pesach)



introduces additional stringencies. Some ingredients that are Group One for year-round use may require thorough research and reevaluation for Passover. A dedicated team at OU Kosher handles Pesach-related ingredient issues in detail each year.

GROUP TWO:

COUNTRY-DEPENDENT INGREDIENTS

Group Two is similar to Group One in terms of flexibility, but with one key distinction: the country of origin. While the ingredient itself may be inherently kosher, the manufacturing practices in certain countries can raise concerns.

The OU operates in over 100 countries and understands the nuances of regional production standards. For example, vinegar (chemically known as acetic acid) can be produced from various sugar sources through a double fermentation process. In many countries, it's made from inexpensive vegetable starches or regular sugar. However, in some regions—particularly in Europe—it may be produced from

wine, which introduces significant kosher concerns.

Thus, vinegar made in one country may be permitted, while the same product from another country may be entirely non-kosher.

This distinction is what separates Group One from Group Two: seemingly simple ingredients may be kosher-compatible when sourced from specific countries but problematic from others due to cross-contamination or ingredient sensitivity.

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE: OLIVE OIL

In Spain, olive oil production is tightly regulated, making virgin and other types of olive oil generally acceptable (and sometimes even suitable for Passover—though one should consult the OU Kosher Hotline for confirmation).

In contrast, countries like China may lack these regulations, and olive oil may be processed or refined in non-kosher facilities.

Therefore, olive oil is a classic Group Two ingredient—kosher status depends heavily on the country of origin. ■



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