



Kosher Processes

In the past, kosher production was relatively simple. People cooked food in their own homes, made their own ingredients, and rarely used complex or processed items. However, since the advent of mass manufacturing, food production has drastically changed — and with it, the nature of kosher supervision.

As discussed previously, in order to provide proper kosher certification for mass-produced food, three core factors must be taken into consideration. These elements define how kosher certification is administered in the modern era:

1. **Ingredient Compatibility** – Whether the ingredients used 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.

This article will focus on the second factor: Production Processes.

THE ROLE OF PRODUCTION PROCESSES IN KOSHER CERTIFICATION

Just like in our home kitchens, there's a key difference between cold and hot processes when it comes to kosher certification. Cold processes are typically simpler and often require minimal supervision.

For example, OU Kosher certifies many companies that produce cake mixes. These facilities generally do not involve heat; rather, they combine dry ingredients in mixers to produce the final product. If none of the ingredients used are kosher-sensitive, the kosher program is relatively straightforward. However, not all cold processes are without concern. Some involve ingredients or methods that may raise kashrut issues. A good example is ethanol (ethyl alcohol), which can be produced naturally by fermenting grains, molasses, citrus fruits, or wine — or synthetically from petroleum. The source of the alcohol can present a kosher concern, particularly when fermentation is involved.

Hot processes, on the other hand, are often a greater kashrut concern. That said, some heating methods used in mass production may not necessarily pose a problem. For instance, blanching — a process used to



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heat vegetables and remove moisture — is typically applied to non-sensitive ingredients and may not always require kosher oversight.

EXAMPLES OF COMMON FOOD PROCESSING METHODS

To better understand how kosher concerns, arise in manufacturing, let's review a few common production processes. Some are more kashrut-sensitive than others:

- **Deodorization:** This process removes undesirable odors and tastes from oil using pressurized steam distillation at high temperatures (464–518°F) for 30 to 60 minutes. The extreme heat and equipment involved can make this a significant kosher concern, especially if the facility also processes non-kosher oils.
- **Encapsulation:** Encapsulation involves coating powder particles with a protective layer to maintain stability or enable gradual (timed) release. Commonly encapsulated items include vitamins, spray-dried flavors, and citric acid. The source of the coating and the equipment used can both be kashrut concerns. This is particularly relevant for vitamins and food supplements. In some cases, halachic authorities may permit leniency if the product is swallowed whole and has no taste. However, each case should be evaluated by a competent halachic authority.
- **Spray Drying:** Spray drying converts a liquid into powder or flakes using a heated machine called a spray dryer.

Because spray dryers are expensive to operate, companies often rent them out for custom drying and blending, including for non-kosher products. As a result, anything that is spray-dried is generally considered kashrut-sensitive. In relation to this process, a common misconception exists, particularly in Israel. Some claim that milk powder that is not Chalav Yisrael (milk not supervised by Jewish authorities) is easier to permit than non-Chalav Yisrael liquid milk. While there is room for halachic debate on this point, there is no question that milk powder is more kashrut-sensitive than liquid milk. This is because it must go through a spray dryer, which — if previously used for non-kosher products like non-kosher cheese — may render even kosher ingredients non-kosher due to absorption of flavor or residue. Liquid milk on the other hand does not go through any similar process rather it is typically pasteurized on site in a machine dedicated only for liquid milk. ■

Kashrut Questions in Israel?

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