



# Group One Ingredients for Pesach

OU Kosher has been refining its ingredient approval process 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 from a kosher certification perspective.

This system is vital not only for kosher certifying agencies but also 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 typically be used globally without concern. Group 2 ingredients are similar but somewhat more dependent on their source, since production methods may vary between countries or manufacturers. These differences can affect whether an ingredient is considered kosher-sensitive.

### COMPLEX EVALUATION

As mentioned previously, Group 1 approval is usually straightforward. The evaluation

process often involves verifying the ingredient's production and determining whether it aligns with OU kosher standards. When it comes to Pesach, however, the evaluation becomes significantly more complex. Ingredients approved for Pesach require in-depth review and, in most cases, heightened oversight. This is due to the severe prohibition against chametz, including concerns about its presence anywhere in the production environment. Additionally, for Ashkenazim, there is the added restriction of kitniyot.

This raises an important question: Is there such a thing as a Group 1 ingredient for Pesach? Can an ingredient be approved across the board, year-round, including for Pesach?

The answer is yes. The OU firmly maintains that certain ingredients can be certified for Pesach year-round, both for industrial and retail use. However, achieving this status requires more extensive research and, in many cases, additional supervision to confirm compliance with Pesach standards.

### FLUIDITY IN PESACH APPROVAL

Pesach approval for Group 1 ingredients may be more fluid than approval for other products. Because of the additional Pesach restrictions, even a minor change in production can disqualify an ingredient from being approved as Group 1 for Pesach.

A good example of this is transportation. As discussed in previous articles, OU Kosher closely monitors overseas transport of ingredients to ensure kosher integrity. There are designated classifications—such as Groups Four and Five—specifically addressing

The OU Israel Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education was created to raise awareness and educate the public in all areas of kashrut. Rabbi Ezra Friedman, Deputy Rabbinic Administrator for OU Kosher Israel is the Center's director.



transportation concerns.

It is not uncommon for simple synthetic ingredients to be fully approvable as Group 1 for Pesach from a production standpoint. However, if these liquid chemicals are transported long distances by sea, the OU must verify that the tankers carrying them have never transported chametz. When such verification is difficult or impossible, the ingredient—even if entirely synthetic—may not be approved for Pesach.

Making these determinations can be challenging. Even seemingly insignificant changes can have major implications for Pesach supervision. Therefore, OU Kosher authorities may decline to grant Pesach approval due to potential risk factors. While this approach may appear stringent, the OU is committed to verifying every detail before granting certification, regardless of the product or its intended market.

#### THE STRINGENT APPROACH

Particularly in Israel, consumers may notice that some certifications label even simple, innocuous ingredients as “Not Certified for Pesach.” This disclaimer may appear on basic raw materials such as salt, virgin olive oil, or even water.

Consumers should not be alarmed by this wording. Some kosher certifying agencies require additional supervision—or even conduct reviews that go beyond mainstream halachic requirements—before approving any product for Pesach.

As noted above, Pesach involves numerous stringencies, and some certifiers choose



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to apply standards that exceed the baseline halachic requirements. OU Kosher, however, maintains a broad list of products approved for year-round use, including Pesach where applicable.

Consumers who have questions about specific products should consult both OU Kosher and their local rabbinic authority before purchasing items for Pesach. ■

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