

IN THE BEGINNING

Will Jupiter be kosher?

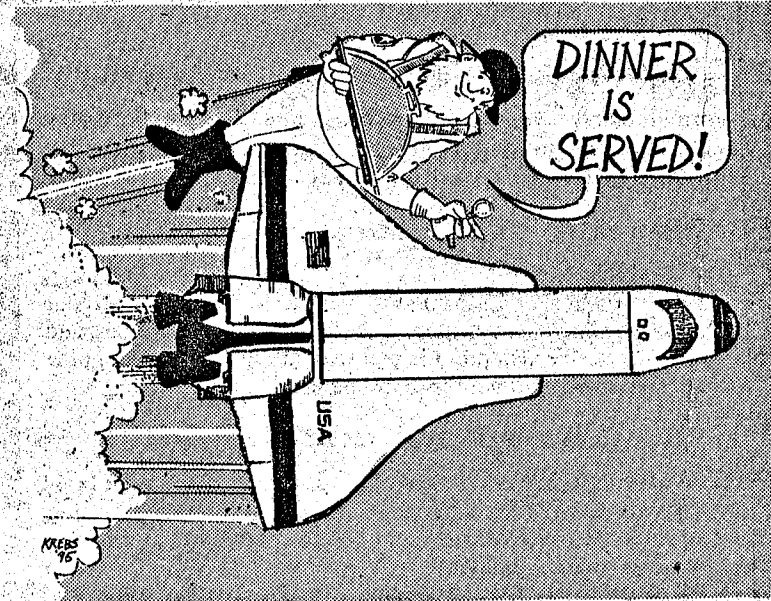
In one of the more interesting developments to hit the kosher industry, a contractor for NASA has bought hundreds of kosher meals to feed astronauts on upcoming space shuttle missions.

NASA purchased the meals from My Own Meals, Inc., a Deerfield-based company that produces kosher, refrigeration-free meals for retail, mail-order and the U.S. military.

But the switch was not made to satisfy Jewish appetites. Rather, the change came after astronaut Norman Thagard grumbled about the poor taste of food in space. After years of researching and evaluating My Own Meals' product, NASA deemed it more nutritious and tasty than other options.

The company's president, Mary Anne Jackson, said the meals are well-suited to space travel because they are low-sodium, require no refrigeration and are light-weight, a plus on the space shuttle. Each meal is packaged in an 8-ounce foil pouch.

While in space, the astronauts heat the pouch between two, specially-made hot plates. The pouch is easily torn and the food can be



eaten with a spoon.

"I thought the spoon would float away, but it doesn't," laughs the company's Jackson.

The meals contain chunks of meat, potatoes and vegetables in stew format. They contain no MSG.

According to the company, NASA chose the Passover meals because they were most interested in the varieties that have no beans or chickpeas.

Meeting specific needs is nothing new to the company, which recently won a four-year effort to create a kosher ration program for the U.S. Army. The army, which has had no kosher meal plan in effect, will begin ordering kosher meals from My Own Meals in 1996.

The company's meals are certified kosher by Rabbi Ahron Soloveitchik and his son, Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik, of Chicago. ♦