



LOOKING IN

A Food Science View of Kashrus

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Military Rations

The military Meals-Ready-To-Eat (MRE) program has modified its approach to providing religiously acceptable meals for both soldiers in the field and for civilians for emergency use. After producing two products with joint kosher/halal certification using a kosher supervision that was not acceptable to all parties, the Surgeon General ruled that having only two meals available was not acceptable. The current situation provides for separate kosher and halal meals. The kosher products are packed in cases of 12 full meals, with all components (which again was not true in the original concept) being kosher and acceptable to the supervising rabbi (Rabbis A. and M. Soloveichik). There are 4 chicken, 2 beef, 4 vegetarian and 2 dairy entrees. These meals then must be ordered by the chaplains. Unlike regular MREs, which have a 3 year shelf-life, these have an 18 months shelf-life at 80F and do cost more than the regular MRE meals. The meals are being produced by My Own Meals of Deerfield, IL and each contains the military meal heater (a pouch containing a chemical heating element). When water is added it provides sufficient heat to bring the "retort pouch entree" to a hot enough temperature to qualify as a "hot meal." A civilian version of these meals is available on order. The military has been surprised at the high demand. So far 3,300 cases of kosher meals have been ordered.

Passover in Quebec

Last year at Passover, the Quebec government banned Passover products which had only English writing and lacked

French on the labels. That certainly presented a hardship for Jews in the province. Apparently the government has partially reneged but is still being difficult, i.e., kosher for Passover products will only be permitted from 40 days before the holiday to 10 days after the holiday. This is still quite limited, but at least permits these products to be available.

We also learned at KasherFest, that supermarkets are putting out Passover foods as much as 6 weeks before the holiday.

Numbers You Need To Know

Integrated Marketing, sponsors of KasherFest, provided a number of interesting "Numbers" that we believe might interest kosher consumers:

- Number of kosher consumers in the U.S. - 7,200,000*
- Number of Jews in the U.S. - 6,000,000*
- Number of year round kosher Jewish consumers - 800,000*
- Number of Jewish kosher consumers - 1,800,000*
- Number of Muslim and members of other religions who purchase kosher - 2,050,000*
- Number of others who purchase kosher - 2,240,000*
- Dollar value of the market - 2,850,000,000*
- Value of goods marked kosher - 35,000,000,000*
- Number of kosher certified products - 36,000*
- Number certified in 1993 - 1,225*
- Number of kosher products in a supermarket - 13,000*
- Number of companies producing kosher products - 8,000*
- Passover as a % of all kosher sales - 40%*
- American Jews who observe Passover - 92%*