

time. The fish are landed in large quantities and it would be difficult to screen out all of the non-kosher species, although, in the future, this may be possible. Thus, it is difficult to produce menhaden fish oil as kosher to the mainstream standard.

Currently, at least one pharmaceutical company -- having self determined that fish oil is "generally recognized as safe" (GRAS) has decided to begin to market a fish oil without waiting for the FDA to act. Their product will probably be obtained from processed herring and sardines. It is not clear whether this oil may contain some percentage of oil from other species, specifically from non-kosher species. Whether it will be possible to provide this product as kosher remains to be seen.

What do Fish Eat?

Although kosher consumers recognize that the kosher laws do not require explanation, various attempts to explain them in reference to modern concepts remains tempting in some circles. One of these explanations is that shellfish are "unclean" and fish are "clean" because of their diet, i.e., "clean" and "unclean" are being given scientific rather than religious meanings. This is not accurate from the scientific point of view. In fact, many kosher fish are bottom feeders, eating various organisms that live in the "mud." Many kosher fish eat the shellfish that are thought to be "unclean." The kosher laws are religious laws; assigning inaccurate scientific information to them should be avoided.

UPDATE ON THE MULTI-FAITH RATION

In the initial phase of this project to provide troops with a multi-faith ration, the US military procured approximately 70,000 packages of the main entree for kosher/halal MREs (Meals-Ready-to-Eat): half were dairy and half were vegan/pareve. Both products and their production were certified by the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council as well as by a kosher supervision agency. The supervision symbols appear on the entree package. Eventually these meals were intended to be included among the meals available to all soldiers.

Following that limited test production, the Surgeon General of the US became concerned because only two meals would be available as kosher/halal, forcing some soldiers in the field to limit their diet to these two meals. Furthermore, although the entree was certified, some of the other components of the total meal packet were not kosher and had no certification markings. The military, therefore, decided to reorganize the project. At present these two meals are available, but not as kosher/halal certified. Instead, the military has authorized a full series of fourteen meals that will be kosher and a separate set of fourteen halal meals. By separating the kosher and halal productions, meat products can be included in the menu rotation. The entire meal will be kosher and will meet all nutritional requirements of the Surgeon General, whose requirements for military meals include more protein and calories than are currently recommended for

civilians.

However, these meals will only be available upon special order by the soldier's chaplain or his/her unit officer. All of the entrees will be kosher under the supervision of Rabbis Aaron and Moshe Soloveichik, *yashon*, *glatt* as appropriate. The remaining components of the meal will all be commercially available items with a *hechsher* acceptable to Rabbi Soloveichik. The contract for these meals has been awarded to **My Own Meals** in Deerfield IL. These meals will contain the flameless ration heater, a device that permits the sealed package to be heated in a plastic bag containing chemicals that will produce enough heat to prepare the product when about an ounce of water is added to the outer package. The meal itself remains sealed during the cooking process. The above retort pouch products with the flameless ration heater and the other kosher components are available from the company for civilian use. These are particularly appropriate for institutions that must have kosher meals available on request such as prisons and hospitals.

"High Above Cayuga's Waters"

The senior author has accepted an invitation by the Institute of Food Technologists (the professional organization for food scientists) to serve as their first Congressional Science Fellow for one year. Joe will take a sabbatical leave from Cornell and spend the next academic year in Washington, DC. After completing an intensive training program provided by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, he will work for a legislator for the year; the choice of legislator will not be made until after the training program. The experience should be very educational and should directly impact the effectiveness of the Cornell Kosher Foods Initiative. We hope to continue our column during this period. However from Sept. 1, 1996 to August 31, 1997, we may be slow in responding to inquiries. Phone calls and e-mail can be addressed to the numbers indicated in the masthead.



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