

KASHRUT.COM®

The Premier Kosher Information Source on the Internet

[HOME](#) | [PASSOVER](#) | [CONSUMER](#) | [COMMERCIAL](#) | [TRAVEL](#) | [ZEMANIM](#) | [LINKS](#) | [ARTICLES](#) | [RECIPES](#) | [HUMOR](#) | [E-MAIL LIST](#)



Food News

THIS SECTION IS FOR NEWS AND INTERESTING STORIES RELATED TO FOOD, NUTRITION AND FOOD PROCESSING. THEY ARE NOT NECESSARILY RELATED TO KOSHER BUT MAY BE OF INTEREST TO THE KOSHER CONSUMER, MANUFACTURER OR MASHGIACH.

Kosher Crisis Hits \$19 Billion Market With Rabbis Stuck at Home

September 16, 2020 from the [Bloomberg Businessweek](#)

"In an ordinary year, Rabbi David Moskowitz would have spent the weeks before Rosh Hashanah, the holiday that celebrates the start of the Jewish New Year, working in China. For more than a decade, the native of New York's Rockland County has run Shatz Kosher Services, which verifies that ingredients made in Chinese factories don't contain pork or otherwise violate Jewish dietary laws. Late summer is usually a busy season, with companies gearing up to make products for Passover the following spring."

"Rosh Hashanah starts on Sept. 18, but Moskowitz hasn't been to China in months. The Chinese government closed its borders to most foreigners early in the Covid-19 pandemic, and the 53-year-old is in Ashdod, an Israeli city about 20 miles south of Tel Aviv. From there, he tries to do his job via videoconferences linked to cameras at Chinese factories showing him everything from the office to the factory floor to the warehouse. "It's not the traditional way, but what is traditional in corona?" he asks. "Everything has been thrown out the window. We find ways to do the job."

"There's a lot more to the kosher food industry than Hebrew National hot dogs and Manischewitz wine. Kosher food was a \$19.1 billion industry in 2018, according to Allied Market Research, which projects it will grow to \$25.6 billion by 2026. Many ordinary products in U.S. supermarkets are certified kosher, with everything from Ben & Jerry's ice cream to McCormick spices having kashrut symbols, and those labels can provide assurance not just for observant Jews but also for gentiles who are vegan or have other

Kashrut.com uses cookies. By using kashrut.com, you consent to the practices described in our [Privacy Policy](#). x

That's Fine

"While China doesn't have many Jews, it's nonetheless an important part of the kosher food industry: Chinese factories produce canned fruit and other packaged goods and also play a critical role in the production of artificial flavorings, amino acids, and other ingredients that make their way into the diets of observant Jews. 'Anything you pick up in a supermarket or a drugstore, there are most probably between two and six ingredients from China,' Moskowitz says."

"All of those need to be certified, and usually dozens of mashgihim (kashrut inspectors) working for competing agencies crisscross the Asian nation to do factory visits that can be as short as a few hours or last for several days. Now the pandemic has crushed that business, with inspectors unable to do on-the-ground vetting. That's forcing industry heavyweights such as Baltimore-based Star-K Certification Inc., which inspects more than 500 facilities in China, to deploy seven mashgihim in Israel and the U.S. to conduct remote inspections, with Chinese staffers providing them with video evidence of the production lines. 'They are online with them, going every step of the way,' says Star-K President Avrom Pollak."

"China is not the only country with travel restriction headaches. In July, Star-K sent four rabbis via private jet to a fish-gelatin facility in Uganda, where they quarantined for 14 days to supervise production. Kenover Marketing Corp., the closely held company in Bayonne, N.J., that owns Manischewitz and other major kosher brands, struggled to get inspectors to facilities making instant noodles in Singapore. 'For a few weeks we were really in a nail-biting session,' says Charles Herzog, Kenover's vice president for new products and procurement. 'It was a game of chess, putting it all together.'"

"The pandemic hasn't hurt supply for now, but people in the industry are warning about possible shortages during Passover in late March and early April, when the rules are stricter and virtual inspections often cannot suffice. Most Passover products are certified with full-time rabbinical supervision, according to Rabbi Moshe Elefant, chief operating officer of the New York-based Orthodox Union's kosher division, which has about 600 clients in China. 'For us, Passover is now,' he says. 'We are going to have a real challenge: There's no cutting corners, and we can't get into the facilities.'"

"Companies may need to shift production to the U.S. and other countries with large Jewish populations and plenty of resident mashgihim who don't need to struggle with international travel restrictions. That should help large agencies that conduct inspections in the U.S., such as the Orthodox Union, weather the coronavirus storm. Smaller players like Rabbi Moskowitz's Shatz Kosher Services that are more focused on international markets will have a tougher time. Revenue since the start of the pandemic has dropped 85%, he says, but the company hasn't laid off any of its 10 office workers in the northeastern city of Qingdao. 'I'm trying to keep them on for when things get back to normal,' Moskowitz says."

"While Covid-19 may lead to long-term changes in the way many people work from home, most adjustments in the kosher industry will be temporary, says Rabbi Eli Lando, executive manager at Brooklyn, N.Y.-based OK Kosher Certification, which is conducting virtual inspections for many of its 700 facilities in China. Mashgihim still need to be able to make unannounced visits to factories, he says, something that can't be done as well online."

"If you can't surprise the company to make sure they are not doing something behind

" **BOTTOM LINE** - Chinese plants that make kosher foods, which typically receive in-person inspections to assure they meet Jewish dietary laws, are getting virtual visits during the pandemic. "

The previous item can be cited with the URL: <https://www.kashrut.com/News/?alert=W1093>

The information posted is from secondary sources. We cannot take responsibility for the accuracy of the information.

Phone: (781)784-6890 URL: " <https://www.kashrut.com/> "
E-mail: ajms@kashrut.com

Arlene J. Mathes-Scharf
Food Scientist - Kosher Food Specialist

Scharf Associates
P.O. Box 50
Sharon, MA 02067

Comments to webmaster@kashrut.com
© Copyright 2020 Scharf Associates

Kashrut.com uses cookies. By using kashrut.com, you consent to the practices described in our [Privacy Policy](#). x

That's Fine