

Passover and Spices
by
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For fifty-one weeks of the year whole and pure ground spices (not including seasonings and blends) would be determined as being kosher by using the same guidelines as those used for all vegetables. For the week of "Pesach" it is imperative that spice preparation is properly supervised by a well trained Mashgiach. Some spices, such as mustard seeds, are considered to be "kitnios" and are not used by those people who do not use "kitnios" on Pesach. Other pure spices, on their own, are not necessarily "chometz". Problems can arise either through deliberate human introduction or as a natural non-deliberate occurrence.

Farmers may deliberately introduce "chometz" into spices with chemicals or oils they use in growing, harvesting, or processing of these spices. Conveyors could be oiled to help release the spices from them. Free-flow agents or anti-dusting agents are also often used. Unscrupulous farmers, in favorable markets, may even add small percentages of other edibles including grains to help stretch the weight of the lot sold thus increasing his profits. Even within the specifications of the FDA a certain percent of extraneous matter is permitted.

For an acceptable Passover product, a zero tolerance must be maintained. When a dishonest supplier wants, it is almost impossible for an untrained person to discover the adulteration.

Grains can also naturally appear within spices by five simple ways.

1) Poor sanitation.

- a) The animals feed spills or a worker eating while working with the product.
- b) Bags emptied from grains are reused to ship the spices.
- c) Cross contamination of equipment. Machines and equipment are used on both grains and spices.

2) Crop rotations.

- a) So as not to deplete all the nutrients from one plot of land a farmer will vary the crops grown on that piece of land. Residual grains from a former crop could be gathered up within the harvest of the new spice crop.

3) Animals and wind.

- a) Birds , rodents, or other animals could carry grains from one place to another.
- b) Winds can blow grains between fields which may be planted near each other.

4) Weeds.

- a) Some grains, such as wild oats, grow as weeds in nature.

5) Misshipments.

- a) One or more bags of grain are accidentally mistyped and mixed with the bags of spice. This can happen at source or even within transit (i.e. Trans shipments or on the piers. Even well trained laborers may not recognize different products packed in similar packaging).

To try and enumerate which spices are permissible and which are not could not legitimately be done. **Rabbi Yerachmiel Morrison** from the OU sights an interesting chazal in his article "The World Of Spices" (Kashruth Magazine). "Chazal stress the similarity of the words "Tevel" (world) and "Tavlin" (spice) to be warning us that anything can be added to a spice. Where there are no barriers or boundaries, the possibility of "Tevel" "abomination" becomes only too real". Therefore, in an industry of raw agricultural products, where there is the potential for problems to arise each lot must be examined and judged on it's own. Keep in mind, for Pesach it is usually better to side for stringency.