

A chef in a white uniform is holding a white plate with a colorful salad and a piece of bread. The background is a dark blue gradient.

OLD-TIME IDEALS,

# New-Age Enhancements

**As the food market shifts dramatically,  
the old is renewed and KCL steps up to the plate**

ELISHEVA BRAUN

Facilitating the highest level of *kashrus* for Lakewood's discerning consumers has been KCL's mission for over 30 years.

Today, the *hechsher* brings updates and upgrades to accommodate its rapidly expanding consumer base.

### Tzibbur of kashrus

"The Lakewood *kehillah* is unique in its meticulous attention to detail when it comes to *kashrus*," says KCL administrator Rabbi Avrohom Moshe Weisner.

KCL's phone call volume—a whopping average of 350 calls a week—is proof of a committed *hechsher* with equally devoted consumers.

"How do you know if a *kashrus* is reliable?" asks KCL's head *mashgiach*, Rabbi Shloime Perl. "If there's an address to turn to that cares, that will call you back and investigate your concern, you're in good hands. That's KCL."

Rav Yosef Fund, *rav* of Bais Ahron of Clearstream, *dayan*, *posek*, and KCL *chaver beis din*, agrees. "We're *zocheh* to work with a *tzibbur* of *bnei Torah*, a *tzibbur* that really cares. This creates a conducive environment for high *kashrus* standards.

"And it's going to be even better. We have new *rabbanim* and new *mashgichim* joining who will ensure that people always have someone to talk to so they know they're getting the best *kashrus* in town."

"The more people demand higher standards, the better *kashrus* we can deliver," explains Rabbi Avrohom Shloime Katz, *rav* of the KCL Catering and Events Division and a *baki* in *shechitah*.

As the community demands higher *kashrus* standards, KCL continues to more than meet the challenge.

### Old and improved

Established in 1989, KCL has faithfully facilitated *kashrus* in Lakewood for over three decades. As the Lakewood community evolves, demands change and standards shift. KCL isn't resting on its *kashrus* laurels; the organization is committed to constant improvement and is growing right alongside the hamlet-turned-metropolis.

To keep on top of the rapidly expanding community and its needs, KCL has developed groundbreaking technology that brings transparency, accountability, and efficiency to an all-time high.

Rabbi Shulem Thumim, a *rav*, *dayan*, *posek*, and KCL *chaver beis din*, wanted to incorporate technology that would streamline KCL management. Tech Master PCs is a reputable IT service in Lakewood. Its owner, R' Mechel Thumim, shares, "When my brother asked me to help KCL with software, I felt it would be a *zechus* to help improve Lakewood's *kashrus*. We have customized a software system that tracks KCL *mashgiach* visits. Each store has a unique barcode which automatically identifies which *mashgiach* is there. The *mashgiach*'s device displays a checklist tailored to the establishment he's at. On it, he can check off tasks and take notes on what he's seen and what needs to be addressed.



“On the back end, KCL *rabbanim* can view all the establishments at a glance, making sure all visits are recent. *Rabbanim* can also read notes and see what was checked.”

This easy-to-track system allows *rabbanim* to stay on top of the many establishments under KCL *hashgachah* and to know, in detail, what is going on in each one.

KCL's Vaad Hakashrus, which includes Rav Yaakov Efraim Forchheimer, Rav Osher Chaim Lieberman, Rabbi Yosef Fund, and Rabbi Shulem Thumim guides KCL *kashrus* decisions. Rabbi Avrohom Moshe Weisner is its longtime administrator. In its mission to raise the bar on Lakewood's *kashrus*. The KCL is working closely with a number of *rabbanim* to establish a broader *vaad* that will include the many different *kehillos* here in town. Some of the *rabbanim* they

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have been in touch with include Rav Avraham Yeshaya Frand, Rav Wosner of Chateau Park, Rav Uri Deutsch, and the Belzer Dayan, Rav Wind.

“We're also honored to welcome *kashrus* renowned expert Rabbi Yechezkel Auerbach, whom readers have come to know in these pages, to our exceptional team as administrative coordinator for the *hechsher*,” says Rabbi Thumim.

“I'm a staunch supporter of community-based *kashrus* organizations,” Rabbi Auerbach says. “They generally have the *kehillah's* best interests in mind and are less controlled by financial considerations. It's easier to feel confident that decisions are made with the best for the community in mind. It's for this reason that I chose to join KCL.”

What exactly is an administrative coordinator?

“My role is to make sure all the pieces work together,” says Rabbi Auerbach. “The more things we can forecast and put in their proper place, the fewer emergencies we'll have to deal with. We drew up an administrative architecture and care-

fully parceled out the tasks, delineating who is responsible for which steps. As Moshe Rabbeinu did in the *midbar*, we've created layers to make sure tasks don't go astray.

“For example, with the organizational task list, *mashgichim* can do their jobs correctly and establishment owners can meet their goals. In addition to *mashgichim's* constant visits, the team of *rabbanim* visit establishments each week to ensure, on the ground, compliance with KCL's policies and procedures. The intention is to show our involvement and to stay on top of what's happening.”

One current project is updating KCL's written protocol.

“The written protocol is from a time when Lakewood's food establishments were few and much of KCL policy was orally transmitted. With our client base growing, we saw the need to put more into writing, and with much more detail,” says Rav Fund.

### KCL policies

You won't find anyone checking greens at a KCL restaurant or catering service.

“In food establishment kitchens, *mashgichim* are busy with hundreds of details. They don't have the *menuchas hanefesh* to properly check greens,” says Rabbi Perl. “Our food facilities carry only pre-checked produce, which is on a much higher standard than produce checked on-site.”

“To facilitate carefully checked greens, we have kitchens where dedicated *bedikas tola'im* professionals are constantly engaged in the task,” says Rav Weisner. “It's their only job, and they do it with 100 percent focus. We have an employee who checks produce off the shelves to make sure we're meeting our exacting *bedikas tola'im* standards.”

Another important component in ensuring high-quality *kashrus* is discretion with regard to which establishments are granted the *hechsher*. “We only certify businesses owned by *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos*,” Rabbi Weisner says. “These proprietors have an interest in keeping kosher and won't try to trick the *hechsher*. It's impossible to monitor a business when there is no foundation of *yiras Shamayim* and mutual trust.”

### “Because we care”

From initiation and on, KCL holds establishment owners' hands through each step of *kashrus*.

“When a new establishment joins KCL, we bring in prominent *kashering* specialists. We explain the rules and systems and approve the full-time *ne'eman kashrus*,” Rabbi Perl says. “I teach the *mashgichim* to be helpful to the business owners. I explain that a *hechsher* should serve both the establishment and the consumer. If an establishment can't use one item, we work to help them find another item they can use.”

As he recounts a recent interaction, the pain in Rabbi Perl's voice is evident.

“A while ago, there was a new brand of greenery in Lakewood groceries. We checked the packages; they were crawling with bugs.

“I stopped people with this lettuce in their carts and asked them, ‘Do you know if this product is kosher?’

### KCL by the numbers

**170** establishments certified by KCL, including stores, restaurants, caterers, and home-based businesses

**130** full- and part-time *mashgichim* and KCL-approved *kashrus* supervisors

**6** hours to *kasher* a typical hotel kitchen

**350** average number of phone calls and inquiries KCL receives each week



# A night out

Rabbi Per: "Eating out isn't as simple as it seems."

"I would eat at his house; why is his eatery any different?"

"With restaurants and home-based food establishments popping up all over the place—some that don't have a *hechsher*—I'm asked this question all the time. The key difference between a person's home and their restaurant is that once someone is making money off the meal, he loses his *ne'emanus*. He wants to serve the best food at the cheapest cost to him. What will he do when, say, the \$8,000 chicken order looks questionable?"

## DANGERS

"Here are a few of the many *kashrus* issues that can come up at a restaurant without a *hechsher* monitoring all activities:

- "*Bishul akum*: Even in establishments that rely on pilots (*eish m'eish*) so their workers can light fires, there are dangers. The pilot can go out, and if there's no *mashgiach*, the non-Jew will turn it back on. Now all the food cooked from that pilot is *bishul akum*."
- "There's no more wine, and they need it for the sauce. A worker runs out to buy more—from the closest shop, which is non-Jewish. If there's a missing ingredient, employees might go out and buy it on their own. The super-kosher meat can be cooked in nonkosher wine."
- "Employees can warm up their personal food in restaurant equipment, rendering the utensils *treif*. Similarly, they can use their own equipment on restaurant food if no one catches the mistake."
- "There's a famous distributor that ships on three standards—*mehudar*, average, and nonkosher. We've experienced some hair-raising near-misses with this distributor. Without a full-time *ne'eman kashrus*, subpar or even nonkosher deliveries might be accepted."

## ASSUME NOTHING

"A café recently opened in Lakewood. Although there was no *hechsher* certificate to be found, the place was packed with *frum* patrons. When one of our *mashgichim* visited and asked to speak with a supervisor of *kashrus*, he got the runaround.

"He asked customers, 'Do you know what the *hechsher* is?'"

"They said they didn't, but they'd seen *frum* people eating there and assumed it was kosher."

"Here's another example of unreliable presumptions: buying side dishes in a *milchig* place for a *fleishig* meal or vice versa. Don't

assume they're *pareve*. The mashed potatoes likely have butter in them; the *pareve*-looking vegetable soup may be made with meat stock. Even if there aren't actual *milchig* or *fleishig* ingredients, the foods were made in the same *keilim* as the rest of the restaurant's menu, and they can't be eaten with the opposite meal.

"Realize, also, that workers know what you want to hear. When you ask if a food is *pareve*, they may tell you it is whether or not that's true. In general, when you ask secular workers about *yashan*, *shechitah*, or other *kashrus* information, they know what you want to hear.

"When I was a *mashgiach* at a restaurant, a waiter once asked what *Hamotzi* and *Mezonos* mean. 'When I tell customers that the food is *Mezonos* and not *Hamotzi*, they buy it,' he told me.

"My message to everyone is to assume nothing. The *Yiddishe* way is to verify what we're eating before we put it in our mouths. When it comes to *kashrus*, we can't go *acharei ha'eider*, like sheep following the flock."

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

"When you go to a restaurant, there are two things you can do to ensure that you're eating kosher.

"First, look for the *kashrus* certification. Make sure it's reliable (up to your standards) and current (not expired). Also make sure there's a *mashgiach* or *ne'eman kashrus* who is on-site all the time.

"Eatery owners can feel that they're paying for *kashrus* on behalf of customers who don't care about *kashrus*. 'If you don't renew my certification, no one will notice,' they tell me.

"It's a painful sentiment to hear, one I know is not true. People want to eat kosher, it's just that they assume that in Lakewood, everything is kosher. They feel safe; they think they don't need to be careful.

"When you ask about the *hashgachah* or the *mashgiach*, you show the business owner that his investment is worth it. Klal Yisrael cares."



# Rising to the occasion

Rabbi Avrohom Shloime Katz takes on events



"A new KCL card system is being implemented to inform guests of the *kashrus* of a *simchah*. A KCL *mashgiach* comes in before the *simchah* starts. He gets detailed spreadsheets from the caterer and party planner that list all the foods and utensils. He carefully checks all the orders and approves their contents. He also goes over a thorough checklist with the caterer's *mashgiach*. The *mashgiach* then fills in, signs, and dates a certificate with his name and the names of the hall, the *shechitah*, and the caterer and other relevant information.

"Last-minute orders and down-to-the-wire changes can cause caterers to take jobs without the proper *hashgachah*. Aside from relaying important information to guests, these cards ensure that caterers always operate with a *hashgachah*, as attendees will get used to seeing these certificates placed on tables and at sinks, and they'll ask questions if they aren't there."

"Shabbos *simchos* present their own challenges. Each Shabbos, we have 20–30 *simchos* in Lakewood, Jackson, Toms River, and Manchester. A KCL *mashgiach* visits on Erev Shabbos to look over everything from the food's placement on the *blech* to the wine, which must be non-*mevushal*. During Shabbos, he walks over to help oversee the *simchah*."

# Not everything in the kosher supermarket is kosher

**Rabbi Perl: “Keep your eyes open in the grocery aisles.”**

“While supermarkets do their best to offer only what’s kosher, our eyes must always be open. You check everything at Costco; do the same at kosher places. Look for a *kashrus* symbol before you buy something. If you don’t see it, don’t think we ran out of label paper. The *hechsher* may have been removed, the product may be infested with insects—there’s a reason the symbol isn’t there. Anything that doesn’t have a kosher logo isn’t covered by a *hechsher*.

“Customers know to call us when they see something questionable. They know KCL will investigate. When I find something problematic on the shelf, I make sure it is taken away immediately, whether or not it’s certified by KCL. I care about the customers, and I don’t want them to be *nichshal*.

“Here are some areas of concern on grocery shelves:”

## PRODUCE

“Grocery stores sell corn, Brussel sprouts, blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries—all of which may not be eaten fresh as they can’t be easily checked in the right way.

“We recently removed the *hechsher* from snow peas. We tried many times to clean them, but we keep finding baby thrips, which are very hard to get rid of.”

## SHEMITTAH

“The *issur of shevi’is* was relevant this year. Many Lakewood supermarkets had produce from Eretz Yisrael, which *baruch Hashem* we were able to remove before most stores sold them. Many non-Jewish stores carry Israeli produce, so be on the lookout.”

## PESACH

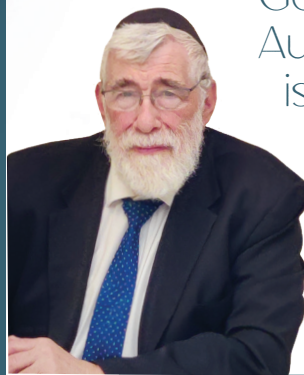
“There are innumerable stories of people who mistakenly bought, and sometimes used, *chametz* instead of *kosher l’Pesach* products. Stores work to keep *chametz* and Pesach products separate—they have *mashgichim* walking around—but we have the responsibility to always check for the *kosher l’Pesach* symbol.”

“The *ir haTorah* deserves and expects the highest standards of *kashrus* from its *kashrus* commission. KCL has set as its goal to meet and exceed this expectation. *B’siyata d’Shmaya*, an ever-improving KCL will continue to earn the community’s admiration and trust.”

—Rav Uri Deutsch, rav of Forest Park and an active adviser of KCL

“I’m grateful that Lakewood has a central *hechsher*, that KCL makes a continuous effort to service and improve, and that I can trust the people behind this *hechsher*.”

—Rav Chaim Meir Roth, rav of Sterling Forest



Good *kashrus*, Rabbi Auerbach often says, is really about good administrative execution—exactly what KCL upgrades aim to accomplish

“Look, there’s a *hechsher*. And it’s being sold in a kosher store,’ the shoppers told me.

“Through a bit of research, I learned that the *hechsher* isn’t an Orthodox one—and this product was being sold by tens of *frum* stores. *Baruch Hashem*, Lakewood supermarkets took it off their shelves when we explained that the lettuce was crawling with live creatures. Sadly, when I spoke to *mashgichim* outside Lakewood about this issue, some told me, ‘The lettuce is not under my name. It’s not my responsibility.’ Their inaction caused people to be *oiver* on a *lo sa’aseh*.”

## Managing it all

How does KCL accommodate the sprawling city that Lakewood has become?

Rabbi Perl says, “Every KCL establishment has a *shomer Shabbos* and *shomer Torah u’mitzvos ne’eman kashrus* who is on premises all the time. We divide the greater Lakewood area into five sections. Each of our *mashgichim* gets a zone, and each spot-checks his establishments at least once a week.”

Rabbi Perl, Rav Fund, Rabbi Thumim, and additional KCL *rabbanim* visit establishments at random times, too, providing an additional layer of supervision.

## The future is here

As Rabbi Auerbach sees it, the future of KCL is already here.

“KCL was originally envisioned as a small advisory and caretaker organization. Lakewood’s first pizza shop wasn’t allowed to have chairs—no one ever envisioned our town becoming home to a huge population of food-service providers, a panoply of gourmet ice creams and meat boards. In its new formulation, KCL is recognizing its responsibility to be engaged with and representative of a larger cross section of the community in a way that more effectively and accommodatingly responds to the Lakewood community.”

Good *kashrus*, Rabbi Auerbach often says, is really about good administrative execution—exactly what KCL upgrades aim to accomplish.

ראשי בית דין

הרב אשר חיים ליברמן שליט"א  
הרב יעקב פארכהיימער שליט"א

חברי הבית דין

הרב יוסף הכהן פונד  
הרב שלום תאומים

הרב אברהם משה וויזנער  
מנהל הועד

## סימנא מילתא

### Fish Heads

Carp heads are not recommended. White Fish Heads may be used without special inspection. Baby Salmon and Salmon heads need special preparation due to Salmon lice.

All Salmon heads from KCL certified establishments are pre-cleaned and may be used without further preparation.

### Black-Eyed Peas (רוביא)

Many have a *minhag* to eat Black-Eyed Peas on Rosh Hashona. KCL *mashgichim* have found Tolaim in these peas. They should be checked before consuming. Any pea with a hole should be discarded.



The insect can be under the shell of the pea and only a faint outline of the hole in the pea will be visible.

### Honeycomb Alert



Lately it has become popular to use fresh honeycomb during the טוב יום season. It is important to know that crushing honeycomb on Shabbos or Yom Tov may be halachically questionable. Please consult your Rav for guidance.

עיינ מ"ב סי' שכ"א ס"ק מ"ח ובביה"ל שם, שע"ת סי' תצ"ה, שבט הלוי ח"א סי' פ"ה ובפסקי תשובות שמביא כמה מקורות בזה.

בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה



“A hechsher should serve both the establishment and the consumer. If an establishment can't use one item, we work to help them find another item they can use”

“The technology we're bringing to bear on *kashrus* will ensure consistency. The administrative structure we're establishing will ensure efficiency as we tackle tasks, preclude problems, and provide an address that's always available to handle every issue,” he says.

### What are you eating?

The key for consumers is to know what they are eating.

“If you see food with a symbol that you don't recognize, don't eat it; you don't know what kind of *hechsher* it is. It may even be a forged *hechsher*—we've been seeing some fake symbols lately,” Rabbi Perl cautions.

“How is it that people are living on a high level of *Yiddishkeit*, yet when it comes to eating out, hat-, frock-, or *bekeshe*-wearing Yidden have the same standards as Modern Orthodox or traditional Jews?” he wonders.

“When people ask if a specific *hechsher* is good, I tell them, ‘That depends on your standards.’ I explain that although you can find a kosher esrog for \$50, people spend \$300–\$400 to get a beautiful one. Why? Because their level in *Yiddishkeit* makes them ask for more. The *hechsheirim* we eat hinge on how many precautions we want to take when it comes to *is-surim* of *kashrus*.”

As the consumer, we hold the power. Our questions, our attention to detail, and our requests have the power to ensure that we eat kosher...and that others do to.

As Rabbi Avrohom Shloime Katz puts it, “Ultimately, KCL is *shlichei tzibbur*; we're messengers of the community. When you demand, we can deliver.” ●

Visit KCL's new website at [kclkashrus.org](http://kclkashrus.org).

## The home chef

### Rav Fund helps home businesses



“People are not sufficiently attuned to the nuances of *kashrus*. The issues that often come up in home businesses—proper *hafrashas challah* and the use of non-*mehudar* ingredients, to name two—drive home the need for *hash-gachah*.”

“KCL works with home-businesses owners who want to keep *kashrus* of their own imperative; they want the *hadrachah*. This creates a very conducive dynamic for *kashrus*, one where both parties want to do what's right.”

## The wild card

### Rabbi Perl on party planners

“An uncertified party planner is an uncontrollable element. They can order things that even the *mashgiach* doesn't know about until the last second. They can get *keilim* from *milchig* rentals for *fleishig* meals, purchase non-*mevushal* alcohol, order food from non-certified vendors, and wreak much unintentional havoc.”

“Only two people can control the *kashrus* at a *simchah*: the *ba'al simchah* and the owner of the hall. Both are serving food to *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos*; both have the responsibility to make sure everything is kosher. When we only use *hechsher*-certified halls and party planners, we are doing the proper *hishtadlus* in *kashrus*.”

