

For Camps, an Offer of a Free Kashrus Inspection



Camps can avail themselves of a free inspection by a central *kashrus* organization to assess their status and identify areas for improvement. The Camp Kashrus Initiative, a project of the Association of Kashrus Organizations (AKO), an umbrella group representing the vast majority of *hashgachos* in North America, sent a letter to kitchen staff and *mashgichim* in camps offering this service, according to Rabbi Sholem Fishbane, AKO's executive director and director of *kashrus* for the Chicago Rabbinical Council (cRc).

"We send someone who understands kitchens," Rabbi Fishbane explained, "to provide guidance on best practices for maintaining kosher standards, including setting up systems for *bishul Yisrael*, *basar b'chalav*, *bishul akum* and *hilchos Shabbos*."

This is the third year of the initiative. Rabbi Fishbane described it as a public service run by the AKO Camp Committee, led by Rabbi Sholom Tendler of Baltimore, MD, and Rabbi Moshe Kaufman of Boston, MA. Camps can request an inspection by emailing camps@akokosher.org.

"A restaurant serves 100 or 200 meals a

day," he noted. "A camp serves two or three thousand meals daily. There's much more at stake. It's all about a little training to ensure *kashrus*."

The most common issue *kashrus* experts encounter is *bishul akum*. That's why the first thing they check are the ovens and cookers. Most convection ovens automatically shut off when done cooking, potentially leading to non-Jewish staff restarting them unnoticed. AKO recommends overriding the system or setting up an alarm to alert staff when it turns off.

The *kashrus* inspectors also verify the separation and color-coding of *milchig* and *feishig* utensils. They highlight that a common mistake camps make is assuming "triple washed" vegetables are bug-free. They also ensure camps maintain records of who takes *challah* each time and whether those individuals are familiar with the relevant *halachos*.

"Another issue we focus on are camp canteens—they used to be a place where you bought a laffy taffy and super snacks. Today, it's a whole smorgasbord, and it's run by a 16-year-old who never opened a *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Dei'ah*."

The *kashrus* inspection is intended as a one-time thing, but with the high turnover rate prevalent in camps, AKO recommends a new training for each kitchen worker.

"The best part is that the program is completely free. We hope that soon all camps will take advantage of this incredible opportunity," Rabbi Fishbane noted.