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cRc MATZAH המצה המהודרת



In recent years, the cRc has certified a brand of *matzah* which is handmade in Sderot, Israel. As we will see, it is for obvious reasons that the brand name is “*Matzah Mehuderet*”. [In this context, the word *Mehuderet* implies something that reaches the highest *halachic* standards.]

The bakery involved purchases flour which is *sh'murah* from the time of *kitzirah*, and all employees who work with the *matzah* are *shomer Shabbos*. Furthermore, there is a wonderful advantage in that the bakery owns duplicates of each piece of equipment used in producing these particular *matzos*. Every 18 minutes, every bowl, table-top, roller, etc. used to knead and prepare the *matzah* is taken out of the work area and thoroughly cleaned, washed, and dried. While that is going on, the second set of equipment is brought into the work room, and *matzah* is made for the next 18 minutes. Thus, the bakery can produce *matzah* all day long but also has plenty of time to clean each set of equipment while the other set is being used. [As is typical in hand *matzah* bakeries, the employees replace their disposable aprons every 18 minutes. Similarly, the dough is put into the oven on sticks which are covered with paper that is only used once before being discarded.]

Another feature of this bakery is that the entire process, from when the flour and water are mixed until the dough enters the oven, takes only about 2 minutes. Everything moves calmly and quickly, and the dough never “sits” in any place for more than a few seconds.

Part of this efficiency is due to the innovative ways that they knead and bake the *matzah*. Specifically, there are three areas where this bakery uses a non-electric, mechanized device which allows a handful of people to process more *matzah* in the shortest time possible.

To understand where these devices are used, it is worthwhile

to divide the process of baking hand *matzah* into 10 steps:

- [1] mix flour and water,
- [2] first kneading (in bowl),
- [3] second kneading,
- [4] dividing dough into pieces,
- [5] first rolling,
- [6] second rolling,
- [7] *reddling* (perforating the dough by rolling a specialized device over it),
- [8] placing the dough onto sticks, to...
- [9] ...place dough into oven, and
- [10] remove *matzah* from oven.

The first device is at Step #3. In most hand *matzah* bakeries, this process is accomplished by placing the dough on a table and kneading it with a large metal pole which is attached, with a hinge, to the wall. But at the cRc-certified bakery, the dough is placed between metal plates, and an employee



Foot-powered kneading plates

presses those plates together using the power of his feet. Not only are feet stronger than hands, but the placement of dough between the plates means that every “press” affects all of the dough, and not just the one part which is impacted by the pole.

The second device replaces Steps #5-7. Instead of employees using plain rollers, the dough is passed between two rollers which are hand-cranked by the employee. After passing through just a few sets of rollers (each cranked by a different



Hand-cranked rollers

they do not view this as being rolled by “hand”. But in fact, the rollers only turn when the employee rotates the handle, and there is a clear and direct connection between the cranking and the rolling of the dough. Thus, it is generally accepted that this “device” is suitable for use in the creation of hand-made *matzah sh’murah*.

The last device is an electrical belt inside the oven, which effectively replaces Step #10. Dough is placed onto the belt (Step #9) by hand and then it is carried through (and out of) the oven by this belt.



Matzah baking oven

Some have questioned the use of this belt, since it appears that an electric motor causes the dough to reach the flames and bake, which would not be appropriate for hand-made *matzah sh’murah*. But, in fact, one view of the oven and a simple test are enough to allay this concern. This is because at the entrance to the oven there are three large banks of flames which are so powerful that a piece of dough which remained there for a few seconds would bake thoroughly. [This was actually tested and found to be true.]



Rabbi Sholem Fishbane separating “challah”

person), the dough is thin, flat, and perforated, so that it is ready to go into the oven. Some Rabbis object to the use of these rollers, because there is a set of non-electric gears which separates the Jew’s action from the dough, such that

they do not view this as being rolled by “hand”. But in fact, the rollers only turn when the employee rotates the handle, and there is a clear and direct connection between the cranking and the rolling of the dough. Thus, it is generally accepted that this “device” is suitable for use in the creation of hand-made *matzah sh’murah*.

Thus, it is the Jew’s action of putting the dough into the oven which causes it to bake, and the belt just pulls the *matzah* out of the hottest part of the oven (into a somewhat less-hot area), so that it does not burn.

How does a Chicago-based *hashgachah* supervise *matzah* in Israel? We have a three-pronged approach. On a daily basis, *hashgachah* at the bakery is overseen by Rav Mordechai Gross who employs a full time *Mashgiach* on site, who, in turn, also reports to cRc office. In addition, a cRc representative is at the bakery when they bake *matzah* exported to America. Lastly, the cRc accesses live video feed from the bakery all during the baking season. These give us strong oversight and control ensuring that the *matzah* is made according to the expected standards.

All of the above was reviewed by the cRc *Av Beis Din*, Rav Yona Reiss שליט”א, who was perfectly satisfied that these are considered “handmade” *matzah* which can be used to fulfill the *mitzvos* of the *Seder*. Although some disagree and prefer *matzos* made exactly how they were in previous generations, the truth is that the efficiencies used in this bakery result in a *matzah* which is truly *Mehuderet* – from the way the dough never sits idle for more than a few seconds, to the (duplicate) equipment being cleaned thoroughly every 18 minutes, and in the way that the *matzah* is in the oven within a few minutes after the flour and water are mixed together. We at the cRc are proud to associate our name with such *mehudar* hand *matzah*. ▲

With appreciation
and best wishes to the
cRc for its exemplary
service to the
Jewish community

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