



Mashgiach Spotlight

RABBI MOSHE KATZ

A cRc *Yotzei v'Nichnas*, the supervisor who makes unannounced visits to food service establishments, has a multi-faceted job. One of his primary responsibilities is to teach the *mashgichim* working in the foodservice establishments how to monitor all ingredients and products brought in to each establishment and to ensure that the *hechsherim* (certifications) on these products meet cRc standards. He must also set up a system for *bishul Yisroel* (cooking by a Jewish person), which includes securing that the pilot lights never go out and programming the ovens to meet *bishul yisroel* standards; train *mashgichim* to check produce for bugs; and recheck their vegetables to verify that the *mashgichim* are meeting cRc requirements. Our *Yotzei v'Nichnas*, Rabbi Moshe Katz, goes above and beyond in performing the tasks necessary to this crucial position. "Rabbi Katz is absolutely a pleasure to work with. He's extremely thorough and professional, and if an issue comes up he works to correct it," said Howard Lichtenstein of Emma's Bagels. "He responds immediately any time I have a question regarding *kashrus* or cRc-related *kashrus*."

Born and raised in New York, Rabbi Katz moved to Chicago in 1966 to learn at the Telshe Yeshiva. In 1973, he married Leah Romanovski, a Chicagoan, and the Katzes decided to make their new home in the city. In 1976, Rabbi Katz became the general manager at Telshe Yeshiva. His involvement with the *yeshiva* community enabled him to also work as an independent *mashgiach* for *yeshiva* banquets and other private events for the *yeshiva* population. In those days most functions were not glatt kosher, and a high standard was set for *mashgichim* who supervised strictly glatt kosher functions. Rabbi Katz developed a relationship with Rabbi Chaim Goldzweig, a long-time member of the cRc Kashruth Commission, who was responsible for most of Rabbi Katz's training in *kashrus*.

In 1981 Rabbi Katz officially started working as a *mashgiach* for the Chicago Rabbinical Council, under the tutelage of Rabbi Shandalov. In 2008, with the passing of Rabbi Naftali Trop, the cRc's official *Yotzei Vinichnas*,

Rabbi Katz assumed this critical position for the cRc. Working closely with Rabbi Yaakov M. Eisenbach, cRc Kashrus Coordinator for all Food Service accounts, in this new role he supervises all of the Chicago Rabbinical Council food service locations, regularly spot-checking each restaurant and establishment to ensure that the *mashgiachim* are doing their jobs and that all *kashrus* standards are followed accordingly. "Working hand in hand with Rabbi Katz," notes Rabbi Eisenbach, "I have seen over and over that he has tremendous ability in any matter that may arise in the *kashrus* field and beyond. The cRc is truly blessed to have him."

Rabbi Katz also designs systems to properly separate fish from meat and/or dairy, answering such questions as to whether oil from a meat deep fryer can be reused for French fries served with fish. As Rabbi Sholem Fishbane, cRc Kashruth Administrator explains, "Rabbi Katz works with the establishments to have everything set up. Unlike an auditor whose job is to find problems, Rabbi Katz works to make sure the food service establishments are set up in a way with the least likelihood of problems arising. I have seen him help design kitchens and discuss where to place machinery to make sure that the kosher kitchen is set up in a user friendly kosher way."

Rabbi Katz's extreme watchfulness and scrutiny has averted a crisis in many establishments. For example, on a routine inspection with Rabbi Fishbane, Rabbi Katz



Rabbi Katz and Rabbi Yaakov M. Eisenbach

inspected a box which was labeled as containing “kosher fish fillets with the skin attached”. He, nevertheless, checked each piece of fish and explained that even with such a label, many times he has found that the skin had been removed, and he has had to reject that product.

On another occasion a restaurant ordered a large delivery of French fries which includes many boxes, all from the same company, with the same product name, and even the same item code. Instead of merely assuming that because the first few boxes had a *hechsher*, they all must be kosher-certified, Rabbi Katz took the extra step to check each box and found several boxes without a *hechsher*! He immediately called Manny Feferman, a buyer for Sysco Food Company, who in turn called the factory, and found out that although the French fries appeared to be similar products, some of the boxes (without a *hechsher*) were produced in a non-kosher factory out of the country. Rabbi Katz’s knowledge of *halacha* and attention to detail saved the day.

In addition to carrying out essential duties, Rabbi Katz develops a special rapport with business owners and their employees. He is also the liaison between food service establishment management and their *mashgichim*, creating a team atmosphere which facilitates the adherence to *kashrus* observance. He warmly interacts with owners, managers, and staff at every level, including those who are less familiar with *kashrus*. As a result, Rabbi Katz is widely admired, and his approachable manner makes the process of learning proper protocol easier to understand and follow.

Rabbi Sidney Glenner, the owner of Glencrest Healthcare and Rehabilitation Centre, the first proprietary nursing home to be under the cRc, has worked very closely with Rabbi Katz to set up a center that meets the *kashrus* needs of its wide variety of residents. “This nursing home, with approximately 300 patients, is like a community of its own. The entire community of patients and their loved ones benefit from us meeting the high kosher standards of the cRc. Although the nursing home was kosher before, it was a big adjustment to meet cRc standards. Working together with Rabbi Katz was a pleasure and he helped us tremendously to facilitate this change over.”

Admirably, Rabbi Katz manages to treat each of his several business relationships in such a personal way that the clients he works with each feel like they’re on



(L-R) Rabbi Daniel Glenner, Rabbi Moshe Katz, Rabbi Sidney Glenner at Glencrest Healthcare and Rehabilitation Centre

the top of his list of priorities. His quick response and availability means a great deal to them, and he’s always willing to take a call or make a visit to troubleshoot any issues that arise. “Rabbi Katz goes out of his way to help us find solutions for issues, and he’s especially helped us with this when it comes to our *Pesach* production,” said Daniel Neiman of Zelda’s Kosher Gourmet. “He’ll help us figure out the best way to *kasher* and use our equipment, or if we’re looking to purchase new equipment he’ll talk us through the proper way to use it. He’s also extremely hands-on and gives our staff experiences of issues he’s dealt with in the past, and they appreciate hearing those concrete examples.”

Kimberly Cohen of Highland Pop recalled fondly the early stages of her business and her decision to make it kosher and become part of the cRc. She described Rabbi Katz as integral to making her feel supported and proud of her decision. It’s a big risk to open any business, she explained, and when everything was new to her, Rabbi Katz, along with everyone else at the cRc was 100 percent supportive and thrilled about another kosher business. “All of my interactions with Rabbi Katz are absolutely exemplary,” Cohen said. “He’s one of the finest human beings and he has so much life experience, which just goes in hand with being a good person. He’s a pleasure to work with but knows every rule and is a wealth of unlimited resources. If I don’t know something he’s always my first call.”

We, at the cRc and in the Chicagoland community, are grateful to Rabbi Katz for everything he does. We wish him lasting strength, vitality, patience, and good humor, so that he can continue to do the amazing work he does for us for many years to come! ▲