

Prepare for the Unexpected

On the way is a cornucopia of new kosher products



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THE JEWISH KITCHEN

Kosher is suddenly better." That's the word from American consumers. And that's not just in the Jewish communities. More than 3.5 million Muslims and those representing other religions eat kosher. Others associate health and safety with kosher food.

To satisfy the demand and to find out what's new in the kosher food world, 6,000 buyers recently converged on Koshertfest, the largest and most comprehensive trade show of its kind in the world. The 22nd annual Koshertfest was held at the Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, N.J., and attracted 350 exhibitors from China to Chicago (yes, a *meshgiach* does fly to China to oversee production).

Menachem Lubinsky, president of Lubicom Marketing and founder of Koshertfest, noted that the growth of kosher is apparent in every aspect of the industry: "With 60 percent of the market believed to be under the age of 40, the kosher-food industry is producing gourmet and enhanced food products. At the same time, it is producing an unprecedented number of gluten-free, spelt, organic and natural foods — a reflection of a growing health consciousness by all consumers."

The number of food items with a kosher symbol has reached 125,000; that doesn't include some 2.5 million ingredient items. Family supermarkets and club stores have been expanding their kosher selections, many having separate food areas labeled as such within the megastores.

From the more than several hundred new and exceptional kosher items, here are my top picks. Most will be in stores in the next few months.

• **Mountain Bread Wraps:** A healthy, gourmet, thin bread that won "Best in Show." It has a soft texture, not doughy like other flatbreads. The Mountain Bread Company, a family business with factories in Australia, specialize in the production of eight different varieties, including gluten-free and dairy-free. Sealed in a plastic bag, this bread wrap may be frozen.

• **The Manischewitz Company:**

A household name for kosher products since 1888. Living up to their reputation, the company has introduced 25 new items. For Passover, look for two new pie shells: macaroon and chocolate. No baking is needed — just place in your favorite filling, such as a chocolate mousse or key-lime custard, then chill and serve.

For kids, there's the Magic Mix Cupcake Kit, containing a six-cupcake tray, designed cupcake papers, vanilla cake mix and chocolate frosting mix. And what's sure to become a Passover favorite — chocolate-covered egg matzos with a dark-chocolate mint drizzle.

Beyond the holidays, vacuum-packed roasted and peeled chestnuts can be used in stuffings or puréed for a creamy chestnut mousse. Packaged Tam Tams with no trans-fat offer 20 percent more for the same price. And the line of ready-to-serve canned soups now includes Matzo Ball and Chicken Soup, Reduced Sodium.

• **Casablanca Ready Meal Kits:** These are ready to cook in three minutes by just adding boiling water. Each kit contains a can of seven grilled vegetables, and a package of couscous or a can of grilled vegetables and olives with a package of couscous. No artificial colors or flavors, a good source of fiber, and these dishes are all-natural, and fat- and cholesterol-free. They make quick dinners — just add cooked diced chicken, or for dairy meal, diced cheeses — and the kits have a 24-month shelf life.

• **La Brioche, frozen bread dough:** A frozen-dough manufacturer located in China is under the supervision of Rabbi Machpud and Star K. The shaped challah dough comes in three sizes: small, medium and large. The dough bakes into beautiful, golden-crust challohs — light textured and delicate, with just a hint of sweetness. The small is the perfect size

for empty-nesters. Also try ready-to-bake raisin danish, croissants, kiwi danish and mini-baguettes.

• **Matzel Toff:** This is irresistible and addictive. Phillip Guttman grew up enjoying his grandmother's toffee-chocolate matzahs. Abigail (Abby) Levy tasted it and was hooked. Bent on success, they teamed up with Streits matzos to create Matzel Toff, a winning combination of crisp matzos bathed in sweet, crunchy toffee and rich chocolate. For Abby and Phillip (just friends, they assured me), their goal was to create an artisanal product targeted to younger audiences. Four varieties are available: milk chocolate, dark chocolate with sea salt, and kosher-for-Passover pareve chocolate and kosher-for-Passover milk chocolate.

• **Golden Fluff:** Winner of the "Best Packaging/Design Award" for their "Popcorn in a Box." The corn kernels pop right in the box. Zap two to four minutes in the microwave, and it's ready. No need to transfer from pot or package to bowl. It tastes good, and it's better and cheaper than the movie-house variety.

• **Wafu Japanese Vinaigrettes:** A line of Japanese-inspired dressings produced in Canada. Original Japanese vinaigrettes are smooth and creamy, with delicate toasted sesame-oil flavors. A light version has 43 percent less fat, but with the same sesame aroma and flavor. The ginger-carrot vinaigrette is tangy and refreshingly infused with pickled ginger.

All are kosher pareve, with no artificial colorings or flavors, and serve as a good source of omega-3's.

• **Katz Gluten-Free Baked Goods:**

This New York-state company seems to have covered everything from challohs to kishkas — all gluten-free. The taste and texture are excellent, and if you didn't see the package, it would be almost impossible to distinguish the difference between regular and gluten-free products. They make challah breads and rolls, chocolate and cinnamon rugelach, honey muffins, hamantashen, fruit tarts and chocolate-chip

cookies (www.KatzGlutenFree.com).

• **Belgian Crepes:** These are really produced from a traditional recipe in Brussels, Belgium. Zap for a few seconds in the microwave, or heat in a 350-degree oven for two to three minutes. They are soft, silky and vanilla-scented. Spread with preserves, chocolate spread, or just roll up and sprinkle with powdered sugar. They come eight to a package, and may be refrigerated or frozen.

• **Laguna Smoked Salmon and Tuna:** Produced by Starkist Food D'or, Israel, the tuna and salmon are flavor-infused with olive, lemon and canola oils, with a "bit of a bite" chili pepper. The result is sensational, moist and smoothly meaty. Sold in 160 gram (about 6 oz.) cans, including a three pack great for gift-giving.

• **Levana's Spelt Desserts:** Levana, owner/chef of Levana's New York kosher restaurant, has spent years developing her line of natural spelt desserts. Spelt is an ancient form of wheat which contains high protein, low gluten and high fiber. Levana's award-winning spelt desserts include sesame-anise biscotti, carrot cake and pecan brownies. Delicious taste, with a nutty texture and easy digestibility (www.levanadeserts.com).

• **Heering Coffee Liqueur:** We've had kosher-certified Cherry Heering, and now there's Coffee Heering. The company has been in business since 1818. The coffee liqueur is creamy and smooth. Besides sipping straight or over ice, make a latte by mixing two-parts warm milk with one-part Coffee Heering.

• **Single-Malt Scotch Whisky:** Who would think that whisky produced in the wilds of Scotland would have a kosher certification, but Glenmorangie and Ardbeg both have the O.U. label. These award-winning single malts — the superstars of Scotch whiskies — are sensational.

• **Moses Vodka:** This kosher-for-Passover vodka was awarded Silver and Gold medals at the World's Spirits Competitions in San Francisco and in San Diego. For connoisseurs, it's a sheer winner. ♦

