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Responding to New Fears: How to Reassure Safety in the COVID-19 Era



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NEW NORMAL, NEW FEARS. AND HOW TO HELP.

As new information and ideas circulate faster than ever during the coronavirus pandemic, what becomes increasingly evident in the public consciousness is the presence of fear. Behind all the political debates, self-care tips, and dubious projections for the future lies the very real threat of, G-d forbid, losing our health, our loved ones and our very lives – the very real threat of going under. The concern is more than understandable, it's contagious. And as always, the state of the consumer affects the state of business – at all levels. For companies, then, and their ability to thrive, the question which needs to be asked is, “How can we help?” And then, “How can we leverage the problem to point to our products as the solution?”

The truth is, certain industries and services are finding their customer bases expanding and their existing requests swelling. We've been hearing exactly this from some of the world's largest food and beverage manufacturers, in a rush to expand their kosher programs into new facilities to meet an overwhelming demand for production. Consumers have been stockpiling food, personal goods and cleaning products, and seeking comfort-related items; constituting a partial cause of this spike in sales. But once the panic-buying started tapering off, public concern, and thus buying choices, took a turn back to basics.

For consumers, even the essentials of everyday living have come into question – How are we going to obtain food? Where is it coming from? Was it handled in a hygienic manner? Is it *safe* to bring into my home? Herein lies the opportunity. First and foremost, you'll need to ensure your company's health and safety standards are up-to-par. And then you'll need to ensure that your regulatory auditors are trustworthy and will be *respectful of and adherent to the highest level of safety*. Only then can you honestly present your company's offerings as **the answer to consumers' concerns; the solution that may allay their fears.**

OK Kosher can help position your company into the thoughts and hearts of your customers at this moment in history. These pages were written as a how-to guide for harnessing the power of Kosher Certification towards presenting your brand as the people's source of comfort, trust and safety.

SOME ANCIENT VALUES

Kosher Certification is not a new-fangled service jumping onto a trend bandwagon. If you have several certifications to boast, kosher will be one which stands out, which differentiates your brand's image. Why do consumers feel more compelled to grab the kosher-certified product from the store shelf [five times as often](#) than the comparable, brand-name alternative right next to it? Because kosher represents a trusted set of eyes on the back-end. Knowing that someone expert in both food production and a set of *purity-based* laws has vetted the product gives off a good feeling. They see the bold letter [K in the circle](#) – that reliable and familiar kosher symbol – and are assured that what's on the ingredients list is truly representative of what's in the product.

AND A MODERN SYSTEM

But it's not about a warm and fuzzy feeling from picturing a friendly clergyman "blessing" their food. In fact, that's not what kosher means at all! Kosher is a complex set of religious laws based on a few simple, Biblical principles, which are upheld by observant Jewish individuals. It was only out of the need for an increased availability of kosher food for this growing community that official kosher *certification* ever emerged. And OK Kosher is *the original* organization to develop the science-based application of these laws on a manufacturing-level scale. For this purpose, the age-old kosher standards of the home were expertly reformatted into systems that accounted for all the technicalities of modern food and beverage production. It involved ensuring the absence of ingredients and manufacturing methods which would preclude the kosher status of a product. Consumers quickly realized the *necessity* of a professional approach to kosher verification. Now *that* was a blessing. And the rest is kosher history (for more, see the [Timeline of Kosher](#)).

PROVIDE REAL ASSURANCE.

Today, the seal of kosher means the world to those who rely on it. And our representatives cover the world to make sure it happens. To keep up with the pace of modern society, the conveniences of readily available foods became a need for Jewish individuals and families. However, the body of kosher consumers has mushroomed far beyond the Jewish population. As the understanding of kosher as a quality and purity stamp became ever-widespread, **more people of all walks began preferring and actively seeking kosher-certified products above non-certified ones.** OK Kosher is the agency which has the [e-technology](#), manpower and scholarship to have expanded to meet this growing need, as complex and multifaceted as it has become.

Today's global terror known as COVID-19 is yet another example of when we've shown up to care for consumers' needs through supporting the continued, expanded and newly created kosher programs we've been called upon to create for companies, so that they can serve their customers. Here is how we've risen to the occasion:

OK KOSHER'S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Customer Check-Ins



While clear and frequent communication is a central value in all of our dealings, the global COVID-19 crisis brought this need to the fore. The caliber of communication we maintain with our customers is a testament to our partnership with them. As soon as the coronavirus hit, the first thing we made sure to do was check in with our partners in food production. First and foremost, we wanted to know how our contacts and their families were doing, and then how their businesses were faring. With new restrictions and precautions making a big impact on production and operations, we wanted to get the conversation going as soon as possible. The goal was to support them to keep producing with no compromise to their health and safety, or to their regulatory profile. The effort did not go unnoticed, as many had been wondering whether it would be possible to continue with certain

certifications in light of the crisis. We came prepared with specific, suggested changes to their programs in order to accommodate for the sudden changes. With carefully applied assistance, we were able to ensure the continuation of kosher programs throughout our customer base. OK Kosher has been there on each step of this journey and still works around the clock to keep things moving.

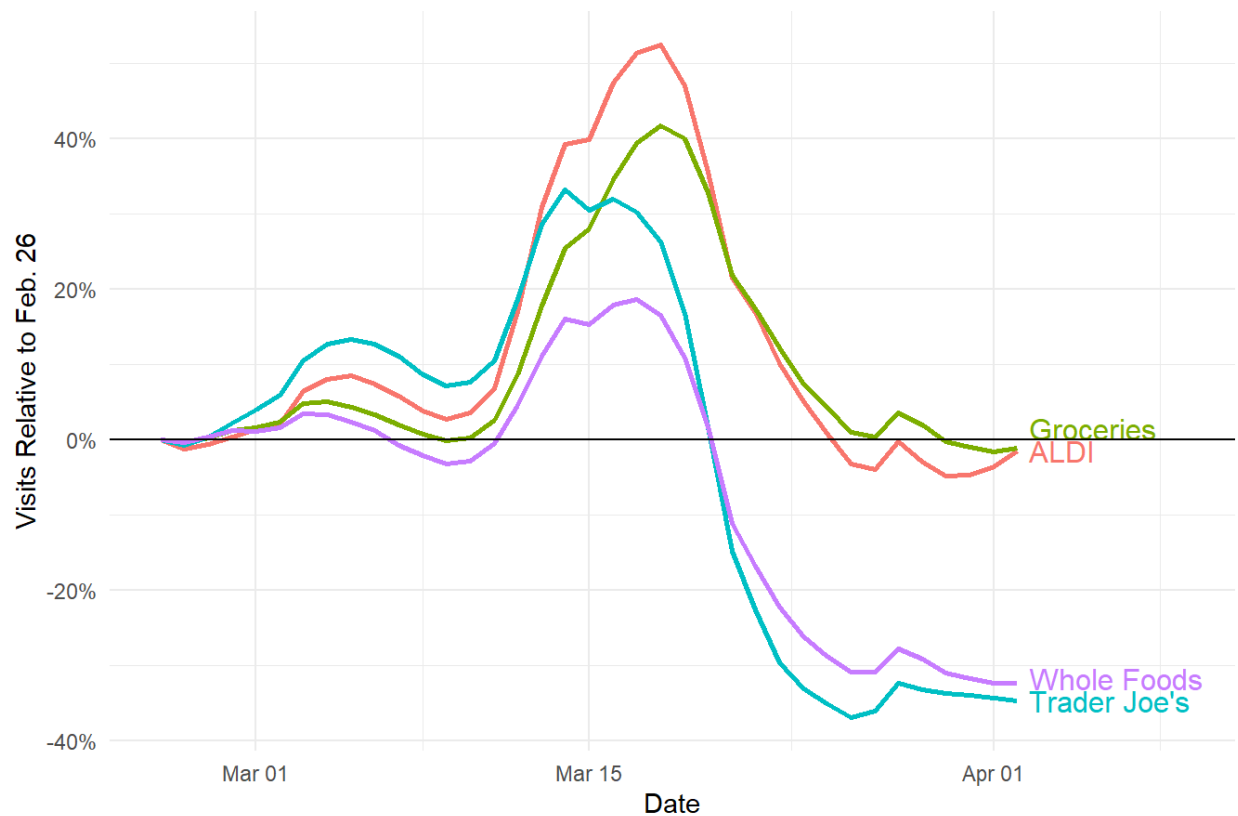
Pioneering of COVID-19 Global Kosher Protocols



If you haven't already gathered, OK Kosher is dedicated to betterment across the board, not just for our own organization and customers. [The Association of Kosher Organizations \(AKO\)](#), called a meeting to address the pandemic and its effects on kosher certification, globally. Unlike other regulatory certifiers, we don't exactly operate as competitors. We share the collective goal of making more, high quality and reliably certified kosher food

available to those who need it. The authorities and management of these kosher organizations congregate regularly to discuss how to support each other in enforcing and administering kosher best practices. This year, as you can imagine, there was a long agenda to discuss, and all remotely. At this important COVID-19 response teleconference, OK Kosher's leadership was called upon for its expertise to spearhead new protocols. We devised a comprehensive, effective and safe system for continuing to administer kosher supervision to all clients, as well as a method to establish top-standard kosher programs for new customers, with full adherence to social distancing and up-to-the-minute hygiene standards. We did all of this with an abundance of caution in mind. With some top food and beverage companies needing to enlist the help of their office staff to jump onto the manufacturing floor, our customers were relieved and comforted to have OK Kosher on their side, fully equipped to continue and expand with relative ease. And they're still running strong.

GROCERY FOOT TRAFFIC TRENDS AMID COVID-19



7-day Rolling Average.
Feb. 26 start date based on first publicized USA COVID-19 case.

Source: SafeGraph.com

Above: In mid-March 2020; a steep rise and subsequent plummet in foot traffic at a sampling of grocery chains in the US.

Panic-buying among consumers caused a sharp spike in sales for many stores, especially of pantry basics and shelf-stable items. As state and local governments called for varying levels of lockdown, the in-person shopper turnout then dropped to unprecedented lows. Grocery chains needed to re-group on ways to maintain customer engagement through online shopping, and offering delivery service, where this capability was not already built in. To support the shift in the distribution of demand across types of products, manufacturers producing kosher items were forced to massively increase production. Facilities were operating at capacity as corporations struggled against manpower and time limitations to open up new factories. OK Kosher's Rabbinic Coordinators and New Facilities Specialists worked around the clock to set up new kosher regulatory programs in these new sites in time to meet demand. Entire departments were drastically reduced, while others needed to multiply themselves over the course of a few days. New systems needed immediate creation and implementation. Online merchants which were already 100% e-commerce run and delivery- or shipment-based faced the need for major expansion overnight.



ASSURING & PUBLICIZING SAFETY AND PURITY

With new and revised kosher programs in place, and with all due support, we're now duly focusing on how our customers can forge ahead. Our dedicated Account Representatives and marketing experts have assisted these companies in pushing their message forward: That their products are made safely, and supervised by the most reliable kosher experts in the world. Our [Guide for the Proper Use of the OK Kosher Symbol](#) is one example of how we support them, as well as one-on-one review of graphics on labels and marketing materials. For the consumer, the assurance that their goods have been watched by a reliable and accountable set of eyes means more now than it ever has. The assurance of safety places your company's products in the position you want: available to your customers when they need them most, and in a way which dispels their fear. With this value in your portfolio, you have their trust, and their business, in your hands, now and in the long term.

Key Takeaways & Actionables:

- **Consumers are newly living with fear and instability.** They're buying products they feel can get them through this challenging time, and that help them feel safe.
- **Safety is communicated through reliability and standards.** Your company's standards are high, so ensure all outside organizations you work with are upholding this value, especially now.
- **[Do your research](#)** on which certifications will communicate to your customers what you want them to know. **OK Kosher is known to represent purity, quality, professionalism and safety.**
- **[Let the symbol speak for you.](#)** Label design and certification symbol placement are small decisions which have a big impact. Once certified, prominently display your OK Kosher status to your customers. They're making choices based on seeing familiar, reliable beacons of standards.
- **Continue watching the ever-changing market.** We've all learned that steep changes can happen at any time. Keep predicting your customers' needs, and keep your eyes open to the new market sectors which can open up to you in the future.
- **[Contact OK Kosher today](#)** to find out how kosher certification might be an important piece of your marketing picture, assuring safety, both in uncertain times, as well as ongoing. ▀