

## **It's Kosher anyWhey!**

### **Mars Bars remain on the Kosher List says Rabbi Jeremy Conway, Director of the LBD Kashrut Division**

Masterfoods, the manufacturers of several leading brands of confectionery, including Mars Bars, Snickers, Galaxy Milky Way and Maltesers, have announced that their products can no longer be considered “Suitable for Vegetarians”, as the whey powder may be manufactured using animal rennet.

The fact that whey, lactose and other dairy proteins are a derivative of the cheese-making process should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with food ingredients.

Hard cheese is produced using rennet, an enzyme which encourages coagulation, ie the separation of the curds and whey. Whilst in the UK the rennet used is commonly of microbial (non-animal) origin, the traditional methods of cheese-making using animal derived rennet are still practised by many cheese makers on the continent.

Often whey, as a by-product of cheese production, is pooled together from many manufacturers for further processing or drying into whey powder which is a common ingredient in many food products. Thus food manufacturers, not wishing to limit their sources of whey powder, would find it hard to identify the type of rennet used in the original process.

It is worth noting that a major source of whey for the food industry is not from cheese at all but rather from casein, milk protein derived using an industrial type process utilising either acid or rennet as the coagulant, but where the rennet is always of microbial origin. Thus the likelihood of the whey used in chocolate coming from animal rennet based cheese is actually quite small.

Regardless of the source of the rennet used in the cheese however, Halacha (Jewish law) allows the whey and its derivatives (such as lactose), as the amount of rennet left in the whey is negligible, probably parts per million.

Indeed even the cheese itself should be allowed according to Torah law for this same reason. However the Sages in Mishnaic times (some 2000 years ago), banned non-supervised cheese, defining the rennet as a *davar hamaamid* - a solidifying agent and thus constantly present and visible in the cheese. As such the Sages ruled that kosher cheese must be made with kosher rennet and under careful supervision to ensure that this was the case. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the great American Halachic authority, states that this rabbinical law does not extend to the whey however, where any residual amount of rennet is quite invisible and thus considered *botel* – nullified.

Thus, notwithstanding the use of whey of unknown origin, Mars Bars, Milky way and all such confectionery items remain 100% kosher (and of course Dairy, suitable for all those who consume regular non supervised milk).