Kosher symbols: what the marks and letters mean

A kosher symbol, or hechsher, is the mark of the agency that supervised the food. Here are the marks you will see most, described in words, and what the letters next to them mean.

Major certification agencies

Mark	Agency	Based in	What the mark looks like
OU	Orthodox Union	New York	A capital U inside a circle
OK	OK Kosher Certification	Brooklyn, New York	A capital K inside a circle
Star-K	Star-K Kosher Certification	Baltimore, Maryland	A capital K inside a star
Kof-K	Kof-K Kosher Supervision	Teaneck, New Jersey	A K set inside the Hebrew letter kof
cRc	Chicago Rabbinical Council	Chicago, Illinois	The letters cRc inside a triangle
KSA	Kosher Supervision of America	Los Angeles, California	The letters KSA
COR	Kashruth Council of Canada	Toronto, Canada	The letters COR
KLBD	Kashrut Division of the London Beth Din	London, UK	The letters KLBD

OU, OK, Star-K, Kof-K and cRc are often called the big five. Together they certify most of the kosher food sold in the US.

The letters next to the mark

D or Dairy	Contains dairy, or was made on dairy equipment. Not eaten with meat in kosher practice.
DE	Made on dairy equipment, with no dairy ingredients. Not every company uses DE. A plain D can also mean dairy equipment.
M, Meat or Glatt	Contains meat or a meat ingredient, or was made on meat equipment. Glatt names a stricter meat standard. Not eaten with dairy.
Pareve or parve	Neither meat nor dairy. Can be eaten with either. Many agencies print the mark alone, with no letter, on pareve food.
P	Kosher for Passover. P does not mean pareve. A Passover product can still be dairy or meat. Look for other letters.
Fish or F	Contains a fish ingredient. Many communities do not eat fish together with meat.

A plain K is not a registered symbol

A single letter cannot be trademarked, so any company can print a K on its label. Some plain K products are supervised, but the K alone does not tell you who checked it. Ask the maker which agency stands behind it.

How PlatePal reads a mark

PlatePal only calls a product certified kosher when it finds a recognized mark. Without one, the best a kosher verdict can say is Likely OK, needs certification.

Communities differ in which agencies they accept. Ask your rabbi or the authority you follow.

In the store, PlatePal scans the barcode and looks for a recognized kosher mark, and checks your allergens on the same scan.

Scan the code with your phone camera, or visit tryplatepal.com

PlatePal printable. A screening guide, not a religious ruling: certifiers and scholars differ. Always read the label. Free to print and copy for personal and community use.

Two pocket cards for the store. Print at 100% (actual size).

KOSHER LETTERS

D, Dairy	dairy, or dairy equipment
DE	dairy equipment, no dairy ingredients
M, Glatt	meat, or meat equipment
Pareve	neither meat nor dairy
P	Passover. It does not mean pareve
Fish, F	contains a fish ingredient
Plain K	no agency named. Ask the maker

Which agencies you accept is up to you and your rabbi.

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In the store, in four steps

1. Find the mark, usually near the product name or the ingredients.
2. Read the letter or word next to it: D, DE, M, pareve, P or fish.
3. Check that you accept the agency. A plain K names no agency.
4. Allergy at home? Read the allergen statement too. Kosher letters do not cover it.

⚠ Kosher letters are not allergy labels. Pareve food can still carry traces of milk. For an allergy, read the allergen statement every time.

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Marks our household accepts

Write them in once you have asked your rabbi or the authority you follow.

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