

Sifting Flour

A Brooklyn Bakery

With Equipment From Israel

What's the best way for a bakery to spend \$30,000*?

Buy a silo for storing flour — it comes with its own sifter — or buy a centrifugal sifter system for handling flour.

*systems start at \$2,500

When I met Asher Koralek at Kosherfest in October, I was instantly struck by his genial personality. Asher, who lives in Israel, is an engineer who, under the name *Koralek-almog Sifting Machines and Production Systems, Ltd.* (Koralek-almog.com; koralek@bezeqint.net), builds systems to handle flour which are tailor-made for small, medium and huge bakeries. These systems are currently in use in Israel, the USA, Belgium, Australia, and Gibraltar.

I was interested in seeing a Koralek system in use nearby, so Asher and I made an appointment at Gross Bakery in Boro Park (54th Street and 16th Avenue).

What is so impressive about a sifter, even a high-tech one? Why is high-tech sifting so impor-



Yitzchok Weiss adding flower to the mixer.

tant? Do all bakeries have such equipment or just a few? Join Asher and myself as we follow along the path the flour takes in the Gross Bakery.

A little-known fact — little-known by the consumer as well as by most *kashrus* agencies — is that sifting of flour is crucial to kosher baking.

We all know that insects are forbidden and that every effort must be made to eliminate them completely from the flour used in baked products. The problem though, is that the insects grow inside the bags of flour. If the bags sit out too long — the bakery has deliveries every month or so — insects will be present. If the baking is being done in the summer, no matter how much the baker tries to keep his products insect-free, there is a time over the summer, usually in August, when insects can and do creep in.

Equipment like Asher Koralek's is not always in use in the smaller or the medium size non-kosher bakeries. Bakers continue to do things the way they always have done them. But, because people like Yitzchok Weiss and Tuvia Gross of Gross's Bakery care enough to want to have total insect-free breads and cakes for their customers across Brooklyn, they have installed a Koralek-Almog system.

Before they met Asher, the workers at Gross would carry 100 pound sacks of flour all about their premises. The flour came in the basement where it is stored. Then it would have to be *shlepped* upstairs and added to the mixer. Tuvia and Yitzchok would have to spot check batches of flour to see that no insects were present.



Mr. Weiss at the sifter. All flour travels by pipes.



The new Con Agra yoshon flour, "KOF-K"-certified.

Now the system is completely different. Workers still lift the bags but they carry them from where they are being stored, cut them open and dump the flour into a storage tank (silo), just a few feet from where the sacks were stored. When the baker wants to send flour upstairs, the system is turned on and the flour travels by pneumatic pressure through the pipe to a sifter. That sifter has a nylon sifting screen of 50 mesh — that is, fifty holes to the linear inch, fine enough to catch all the insects present, as well as plenty of foreign matter that is in our flour. (A square inch will have 2,500 holes.)

After the sifting, the piping moves the flour by air pressure, shoots it upstairs to the hopper above the dough mixer where it is stored — always being kept in a closed circuit — until Jimmy, the baker, needs it for mixing. A few buttons are

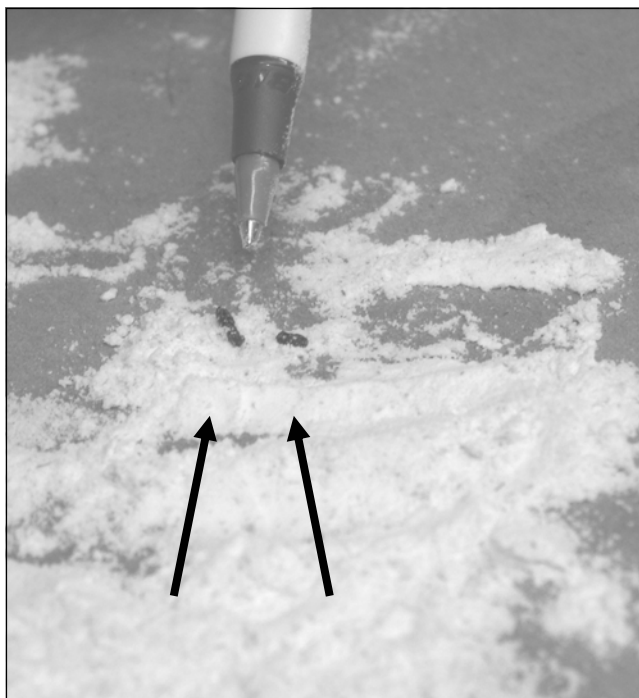
pushed and exactly 200 pounds of flour enter the mixer. After another 200 pounds are added, Jimmy pushes more buttons and the water comes in.

The beauty of such a system is — at least as I see it — that the system controls the flour without ever letting it be exposed to the air outside the closed pneumatic system, from the moment it is sifted until it is mixed with water to make the dough. No outside insect or fly can enter. That is 100% control. It should become the standard, but, unfortunately, as yet, this is still not in place in our smaller and medium sized bakeries.

Two interesting points, although we cannot mention any names.

1. A major non-Jewish player in baking in the U.S. has said, "Sifting equipment is suggested on all bulk and bagged milled products for control of insects and foreign matter." This statement is a must see for everyone in *kashrus* and in baking. But it also should be important for all consumers who seek zero tolerance for insects.
2. While Asher was here, he spoke to different *kashrus* agencies and told them what the standards are for sifting in Israel, what the Badatz of the Eida Hachareidis, Sheris Yisroel and other strict agencies demand and what the Rabbinat demands. "Nu", Asher prodded one U.S. rabbi, "V'atah?" (and you — what will be your commitment to sifting in your establishments and for the products which you use?). The rabbi didn't hesitate, "Asher, first you have to make a meeting and get down all the rabbis. Then, all of us together will be able to demand the same standards. You see, here, in the U.S., one agency can't take it on itself to demand standards which the others will not require."

Does Asher need to demand of U.S. agencies to require sifting in all bakeries or do we?



What We Found

When we visited the Gross Bakery in early November, we decided to spot-check the "oversize material" that the sifter had captured. There we found these two insects.

This means that the machine is effective in finding and removing insects which are present, even when the weather is not warm. And, since the flour is kept in a closed system until the actual baking, nothing else can get in.



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