

## ***Beer is no longer automatically kosher, rabbis say. Will observant Jews skip the Dos Equis?***

*The decision from three major kosher certifiers upends centuries of tradition.  
Whiskey could be next.*

By [Louis Keene](#) November 20, 2025



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*There's a simple reason Halle Goldblatt likes to tour breweries on vacation: People who keep kosher can sample the product. Unlike wine, which requires certification to be deemed kosher, beer has historically received the benefit of the doubt.*

*"Most people, when they travel, go to wineries," Goldblatt, a self-described beer aficionado, said in a phone interview. "I can't do that, but I can always go to a brewery and have a beer."*

*But multiple kosher certifiers now say the assumption that beer is kosher has gone flat.*

*The heads of OU Kosher, Star-K and OK Kosher — three of the five major certification agencies — announced this month that all beer will soon require certification to be*

*considered kosher, attributing the change to the increased use of flavoring and other additives in craft beers.*

*A list of problematic ingredients rabbinic inspectors recently discovered in breweries included oyster broth, clam juice, wine and milk, according to OK Kosher.*

*“These ingredients are regularly included in craft beers,” OK Kosher wrote in its letter. “As such, the major kashrus agencies have concluded that the time has come to change our old policy of accepting beer as free of kashrus concerns.”*

*The agencies provided [a list of more than 900 beers](#) that are currently hechshered, or certified kosher, which is typically denoted with an agency’s symbol on the packaging. ( @ is OU Kosher’s mark.) The permitted include products from big brands like Coors and Budweiser and medium-sized labels like Hoegaarden and Blue Moon Beers not on the list — among the missing are popular imports like Dos Equis and regional favorites like Sierra Nevada — will no longer be acceptable to serve at OU-certified establishments as of Jan. 1, 2026, OU Kosher said.*

*The decision undercut a credo that was long a saving grace for kosher travelers, casual drinkers and hopheads. One Facebook thread responding to the news received [more than 100 comments](#), with a few seeing the change as a way for the certifiers to drum up business. But the majority of the commenters — Goldblatt among them — appeared to begrudgingly understand the decision. And a few wondered why it had not come sooner.*

*“At first, I was like, ‘Oh, no, this is gonna make my life a lot harder,’” Goldblatt said. “But I think it makes sense for the OU. People rely on them to get honest information about the things that they are consuming,” she added, “so I think it’s good for the kosher consumer.”*

### ***New brews, you lose***

*The acceptability of beer even without rabbinic oversight was rooted in an assumption that it only contained four basic ingredients: grain, water, hops and yeast. Those ingredients are each considered inherently kosher, so using them in combination did not pose any challenges.*

*National regulations helped preserve the four-ingredient standard. Germany’s Reinheitsgebot, a beer purity law dating back several centuries, ensured that breweries there did not use artificial additives, and in the United States, a law mandates that any added flavoring must be noted on the packaging.*



Rabbi Moshe Elefant. Courtesy of Orthodox Union

*“The good, old-fashioned beer everybody would drink was simple,” Rabbi Moshe Elefant, OU Kosher’s chief operating officer, said in a video interview. Now, he said, manufacturers “want to enhance the beer — to give them an edge. So they can add all sorts of flavors.”*

*A major catalyst for the flavor trend is the rise of craft breweries, small and independent manufacturers. They’ve flooded the market with sours, stouts, barrel-aged beers and bocks, and now account for [up to a quarter of U.S. beer sales](#).*

*The use of additives to make exotic flavors put even the “plain” beer into question, Elefant explained, because breweries often use the same vats for different recipes. And while those breweries surely clean their equipment between uses, cleaning is not the same as kashering. Some cleaning processes are primarily chemical while rendering something kosher requires heat.*

*Elefant, who is also OU Kosher’s executive rabbinic coordinator, said the organization’s formal policy change was nearly two years in the making, but even before then, “we’ve been grappling with this issue for a while.”*

*Elefant listed two other beverages that fall into a gray area, but do not currently require certification: Whiskey, which like beer uses basic ingredients, is sometimes aged in barrels that previously held wine; and orange juice, which sometimes shares equipment with grape juice.*

*Orange juice was spared a certification mandate, Elefant said, because the processes used to clean the equipment between uses were considered sufficient. And while he personally believes whiskey merits a similar reversal to beer, he admitted it was not currently the position of his employer.*

*“We walk a delicate tightrope,” he said. “On one hand, we want people who keep kosher to be able to have as much kosher food as possible; we’re not looking to be onerous. But on the other hand, we are responsible that when we tell somebody that they could eat something, that we really are convinced that it’s kosher without question.”*

*And he dismissed comments that the beer policy was financially motivated, saying that certification can cost as little as a few thousand dollars a year. (The price depends on travel costs for supervisors, number of facilities and other variables.)*

### ***The law of the spirit, or the spirit of the law?***

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*\*Louis Keene is a reporter for the Forward. His work has also been published in The New York Times, New York magazine and Vice. He is based in Los Angeles.*



Halle Goldblatt, a passionate home brewer, at Dogfish Head Brewery in Delaware. Courtesy of Halle Goldblatt