

Kosher Certification for Goods From India, for Buyers and Exporters

Yash Khatri

Founder, SourcingFrom

Published 17 Oct 2026 8 min read

Kosher certification is a private agency's letter that named products from a named plant meet Jewish dietary law under its supervision. No government issues it, in India or anywhere. This guide shows importers how to read a letter of certification line by line and check it at source, and walks an Indian plant through application, ingredient approval, inspection and the letter.

The Short Version

- Kosher is a private certificate. Your customer decides which agency they accept, so ask them first.
- The letter of certification lists exact products, brands, the plant address and a valid-through date. Anything not on the list is not certified.
- Read the conditions column. "Label must state" lines and Passover notes like "kitniyot" change what you can sell.
- Open the letter on the agency's own site, never only the PDF the supplier sends.
- For an Indian plant, the slow part is getting kosher letters for every raw material on the approved list.

The kosher certificate for one guar gum maker in Ahmedabad's Vatva industrial estate runs to three pages, and two of them say something the first one doesn't. Page one, under the STAR-K symbol, lists six gum powders as pareve. Pages two and three, under STAR-S, the same agency's Sephardic certification, list the same products with one more line each: "Product is kitniyot and is Kosher for Passover for Sephardim only." Every product carries the same condition too: "Label must state Altrafine Gums of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India." The letter was issued on 22 December 2025 and is valid through 31 January 2027 (STAR-K letter, account TIY62TV3).



If you buy that gum for a US bakery ingredient blend, the first page is what you need. If you sell into a Passover range, the Passover line decides who can use it. And if your private label drops the maker's name, the condition column says the certification doesn't carry over. That is kosher certification in one document, and it's why this guide spends most of the importer half on reading the letter. The exporter's steps follow. The other certificate guides are on [certifications](#).

1. What a Kosher Certificate Is

A kosher certificate, usually called a letter of certification (LOC), is a private agency saying that named products, made at a named plant, are kosher under its supervision. No government issues it, in India or in the markets you sell to. The big agencies are US-based (OU, OK, STAR-K, Kof-K among others), and there are many smaller ones, some with rabbis based in India.

The letter tells you each product's status – pareve (neither meat nor dairy), dairy, or meat – and any conditions. It lets the company put the agency's symbol on labels for listed products.

What it doesn't prove is food safety, pesticide residues or label compliance with your country's law. A kosher plant can still ship a lot that fails a residue test. Keep food import testing in the plan.

2. Who Asks for It and Why

No border requires kosher certification. The requirement comes from your customer, and in India's export mix it shows up in places people don't expect.

- **Ingredients.** Guar gum, psyllium, castor oil derivatives, spices, essential oils, sesame, cashews and food chemicals go into products that carry a kosher symbol abroad, so the ingredient needs one too. A US or UK manufacturer can only use inputs that appear on its own agency's approved list.
- **Finished food.** Snacks, rice, tea and condiments sold into kosher aisles or to kosher food service.
- **Non-food.** Some chemical and packaging buyers ask because their customers do.

The question to ask your customer is "which agencies do you accept?" Agencies don't all accept each other, and a big US manufacturer's kosher list is often stricter than its legal team's food safety list.

3. How to Read the Letter

Take any letter and go column by column.

Company and address. The plant address must match the manufacturer on your invoice or the label. A trader's name on the letter is fine only if the letter says who manufactures.

Issue date and valid-through date. Letters are dated and usually renewed yearly. The Ahmedabad letter is issued in December and valid to the end of the following January, which leaves a short overlap for renewal. An expired letter is the most common problem buyers find.

Product name and brand. Only the products and brands listed are certified. A different grade, mesh size or brand name from the same plant is not covered until it's added.

Status. Pareve, dairy (often marked D) or meat. Your formulation team needs this, because a dairy ingredient changes the status of your whole product.

Conditions. This is where the surprises live. "Label must state" lines mean the product is certified only when sold under that name. Passover notes like "kitniyot" or "not for Passover" limit use in Passover products. "Bulk only" or "when bearing the symbol" lines limit how it can ship.

Item codes. Some agencies give each product a code (the STAR-K letter has a UKD number per product). Your customer's kosher department will ask for it.

4. What an Importer Should Check

Step 1 – Ask your customer which agencies they accept. Get it in writing.

Step 2 – Get the current letter from the supplier, then check it at source. Most big agencies publish letters on their own servers or let you search certified companies on their site. The STAR-K letter above opens from STAR-K's own address. Compare the PDF you were sent with the one the agency serves. They should be identical.

Step 3 – Match the product line by line. Your exact product, brand and grade must be on it.

Step 4 – Check the conditions against how you'll sell. Private label, repacking, blending and Passover use are the four that trip people up.

Step 5 – Diary the valid-through date. Ask for the renewed letter a month before it lapses.

Red flags – a letter with no valid-through date, a certificate that names a product "range" instead of products, a symbol on a bag that isn't on the letter, and a supplier who can only send a scanned image with no agency link. If you're unsure, email the agency with the account number. They answer that kind of query because their symbol is their business.

5. What to Ask the Supplier For and When

- **At RFQ:** the agency, the current letter and whether your exact product is on it. If it isn't, ask how long it would take to add.
- **At sample stage:** samples from a certified run, labelled the way the letter says.
- **At PO:** write the agency, the product status and any labelling condition into the PO. If you'll private label, ask whether the agency needs a private label agreement (OU does, between the manufacturer and the distributor).
- **Each shipment:** bags or labels showing the symbol and the maker's name as the letter requires, and the lot on the commercial invoice.

If you want someone in India to check that a factory's kosher symbols and letters match what actually runs on the line, [SourcingSync](#) does that on the ground.

6. Who Certifies in India

India has no government kosher body. Indian plants are certified by the same international agencies that certify plants in the US and Europe, through rabbis who visit from abroad or are based in India. Agency letters for Indian plants are easy to find once you look. Gum and psyllium makers in Gujarat and Rajasthan, for example, publish STAR-K letters, and you can open them on the agency's own servers. Which agency a plant chose usually tells you which buyers it was built to serve.



7. How an Indian Exporter Gets One

These steps follow OU's published process, which is close to how the other large agencies work ([OU Kosher, 2022](#)).

Step 1 – Ask your buyers which agency. If your top three customers all list one agency, apply there. Getting a second agency later is common but

costs a second set of visits.

Step 2 – Prepare the application. You'll need the products you want certified, every raw material with its supplier and any existing kosher letter for it, a process description, and the labels. This takes a week or two if your raw material files are tidy and much longer if they aren't.

Step 3 – The agency assigns a coordinator. At OU it's a Rabbinic Coordinator who manages the file. You'll get an invoice for the first inspection. Check the current fee with the agency.

Step 4 – The plant inspection. A rabbinic field representative tours the plant and files a report. They look at raw material storage, shared equipment, cleaning, heat processes (which matter for kosher status) and how ingredients reach the line.

Step 5 – Ingredient approval (Schedule A). The agency builds an approved ingredient list. Raw materials usually need their own kosher letters, and not every agency accepts every other agency's letter. This is the slow step for Indian plants, because local suppliers of solvents, carriers, flavours and processing aids often have no kosher letter at all. Expect to replace a few suppliers or ask them to get certified.

Step 6 – Product list (Schedule B) and labels. The agency lists the certified products and approves labels that carry its symbol.

Step 7 – Contract. You sign a contract with Schedule A, Schedule B, the production procedures and the yearly fee. Private label customers need their own agreement.

Step 8 – The letter. After signing and payment, the agency issues the letter of certification, and you can use the symbol on listed products. OU says the whole process takes about three months on average (OU Kosher).

Step 9 – Ongoing supervision. A local or visiting rabbi inspects on a schedule set by the agency for as long as you stay certified. You must buy each ingredient from the exact supplier listed on Schedule A. OU's own guidance is that the ingredient name and supplier on the incoming container must match the Schedule A entry exactly (OU Kosher).

Step 10 – Renew and add products. Letters are reissued on the agency's cycle, usually yearly. New products, grades or brands are added by request before you ship them as kosher.

Common reasons a plant gets stuck are raw materials without acceptable kosher letters, shared equipment with non-kosher or dairy product and no agreed cleaning procedure, and a buying team that switches suppliers without telling the agency. That last one is how certified plants lose a product from the letter mid-year.

What to send the buyer – the current letter (or the link on the agency's site), the item codes for their products, and any private label agreement they need.

8. A Worked Example With Psyllium for a UK Snack Maker

This example is an illustration built from the rules above, not a real firm.

A UK snack maker wants psyllium husk powder from Gujarat for a kosher-certified high-fibre bar. Their agency accepts STAR-K.

You ask the supplier for its letter, open it from the agency's server and find psyllium husk powder listed as pareve under the maker's own brand. The condition says the label must state the maker's name and city. The UK maker buys in bulk bags and the bar's label names only the UK brand, which is fine, because the condition applies to the ingredient's own bags, and those

keep the Indian maker's name. The snack maker's kosher department then adds the item code to its own Schedule A.

The Passover line also matters. The bar isn't sold for Passover, so the kitniyot note doesn't change anything. If the same buyer later launches a Passover range, this psyllium works only for Sephardi-certified products, and that's a sourcing question for next year, not a surprise at launch.

FAQ

Is there a government kosher certificate in India? ^

No. All kosher certification is private, by kosher agencies.

Do all agencies accept each other? v

How long is a letter valid? v

What does pareve mean on the letter? v

Does kosher mean halal? v

9. Next Steps

- For the other religious certification buyers ask about, read [halal certification](#).
- For food safety schemes the same buyers ask for, see [food safety certifications](#).
- For US entry, see [FDA food facility registration](#).
- For the US border's own record on Indian food, read [FDA import alerts](#).

- For every certificate guide, go to [certifications](#).