

## KGH Resident Launches 'Kosher GPS' App For Religious Travelers

by Shira Frager

With school out and the promise of summer, people are vacationing all over the country, from New York to Wyoming to California. But for religious Jews, getting around has not always been easy, when they didn't know where to find options for dinner, places that guarantee a proper *hashgachah*, as well as a *minyan* that would allow them to make it for *Minchah* in time for *sh'kiah*.

But with a new "Kosher GPS" application, it is now possible for people to travel anywhere and ensure that they will find what they need to cover their bases for food and other essential services.



Yitzi Katz holds a smartphone with his Kosher GPS app

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Kew Gardens Hills' Yitzi Katz came up with the idea of the Kosher GPS smartphone app five years ago, and has been working on it for two years. The application enables users to find local *glatt kosher* restaurants, *minyanim*, and *mikvaos*. Katz, with his co-partner Danny Wunder, has recently made the app available for locations that offer rewards to customers, featuring discount programs and other offers.

"There are some great deals. Every store needs to create the deal that makes sense for them... we just launched the rewards about two weeks ago and we already have a dozen places, maybe more [using this service]," said Katz, who was a general manager at a manufacturing company until his launch and management of the Kosher GPS.

According to Katz, the program keeps a record of spending, and lets customers know when they can redeem awards and offers as a result of their business.

Before launching the Kosher GPS app, Katz had used a regular GPS, but said it was useless because it didn't show him correct information regarding restaurants, and their

*hashgachos* were not reliable. Therefore, he decided to create his own database, consisting of *hashgachah* information, finding coordinates of the locations, and other elements, that would guarantee accurate information.

*The application enables users to find local glatt kosher restaurants, minyanim, and mikvaos*

"Once I did it for myself, I opened it up to allow other people to use it. Once smartphones came about, it was an easy transition," said Katz. He notes that, through working with three different rabbis in the *Kashrus* field, he ensured that about 95% of Orthodox Jews could rely on the *hashgachah* for restaurants that show up on the app.

After launching the iPhone app, Katz was looking for a developer to help him launch the service for the Android system. Wunder had reached out to Katz through the Kosher GPS application, and expressed interest in helping out. Wunder works as the director of Avana, a company that specializes in Micro-

soft technologies, and the two worked on the application that currently serves more than 70,000 people. Although Wunder had had experience as a developer, he had never done so with phone applications.

"Developing for local platforms is different from developing for enterprises and corporations, which is what I use for my job," he said. Nevertheless, after speaking with Katz about the project, Wunder was agreeable to help

him out. The two both happened to be living in Kew Gardens Hills at the time and began working together.

The application is eligible for customers in the US and Canada, but according to Katz, an individual in Israel recently downloaded the application. Katz had received requests from Spain and Mexico, but said that he wants to wait until the service is more developed before expanding it and making it available to other countries.

"This season, we were averaging about 3000 new members every month," said Katz, adding that this number may increase to 5000.

Katz and Wunder said that they received a lot of positive feedback from customers.

"I get e-mails from people who are traveling saying, 'You saved my life,'" Katz proudly states.

Wunder added, "Saving their lives is a dramatic way of putting it, but it's improved their way to take vacations and road trips when they leave their house wondering, 'Where am I going to eat? Where am I going to *daven*?'"

Karen Zimilover is a teacher who lives in Kew Gardens Hills, and said that she is a regular user of the app. "I use it locally to find restaurants all the time. It has all the information, the distances from wherever you are," she said.

Zimilover related that while driving in California with her family a few years ago, she didn't know where they were or whether there were kosher restaurants around. "We knew we were still north of Los Angeles, but we were hungry and we found restaurants and other shops in areas that we wouldn't have even known were [sources of] kosher food," she said.

Satisfied with how the Kosher GPS had served her in the past, Zimilover said, "I'm looking forward to using the app as I travel this summer."

Those interested in using the Kosher GPS application can log onto: [kosherrestaurants-gps.com](http://kosherrestaurants-gps.com), or by searching the App store for "Kosher GPS."