

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

May a ceramic-glass stove-top be used for both meat and dairy pots?

The issues:

A) *Basar bechalav*, mixtures of meat and milk

B) *Libun*, purging absorbed flavor through burning

C) Earthenware, glass and ceramics, in regard to absorption

A) *Basar bechalav*

The Torah repeats the prohibition of cooking a kid goat in its mother's milk three times. This is interpreted to forbid cooking, eating and benefiting from such mixtures. The cooking prohibition only applies to using heat to cook the two items together. Mixing them together by soaking or salting is not forbidden. Scripturally, only a mixture caused by cooking them together is forbidden to be eaten. It is Rabbinically forbidden to eat a mixture of any kind. Therefore, if they touch, the surfaces must be cleaned.

If one cooked meat in a sauce containing milk, washing the meat would not permit it. The *taam*, flavors imparted by one to the other forbid the items. *Taam* can be neutralized by *bitul* if it is too small and insignificant to have an effect on the mixture. This is assumed when the larger part of the mixture is sixty times the smaller part. Though the smaller part physically exists, it loses its identity when it loses the ability to impart *taam*.

Non-kosher foods also forbid neutral foods with their *taam*. Some maintain that the *taam* of non-kosher foods is forbidden Rabbinically, but all agree that *basar bechalav taam* is forbidden Scripturally. Thus, if one isolates the *taam*, it may not be mixed with the other type. When cooking a food, the *taam* is absorbed in the walls of the utensils used. This includes the pots, lids and spoons. Using the utensils of meat to cook dairy food, and vice-versa, involves mixing the two foods. The absorbed *taam* is considered as though the food from which it was imparted is present. This is known as *taam ke'ikar*.

Metal and earthenware utensils absorb *taam* up to the volume of their physical content. To permit the food of the other kind that was cooked in them through *bitul*, the food must be sixty times the volume of their walls. In addition, the pot would need to be full enough for this proportion to be present. This is unlikely. Therefore, food cooked using a utensil of the opposite kind is automatically forbidden. *Taam* has some leniencies over the actual food. It can only forbid a mixture if it affects it positively. Bad food cannot forbid a mixture. *Taam* goes bad after a day, while food takes longer. In *basar bechalav*, the *taam* is not inherently forbidden. It only becomes forbidden in the mixture. If both of the *taamim* are mixed, the rules change. Second-hand *taam* in a utensil can be transferred to neutral (*parev*) food. This food is still permissible, but contains third-hand *taam*. If it is then mixed with the opposite type of food than the second-hand *taam* it absorbed, the mixture of these *taamim* is not potent enough to be forbidden. Thus, if hot fish is placed

on a meat utensil in a way that it absorbs *taam* from the utensil, it may be eaten with dairy food. Most poskim permit this to be eaten with hot dairy food, such as a hot sauce of milk content. This is known as *nosain taam bar nosain taam, nat bar nat*, or flavor from flavor. It is not potent enough to forbid the milk or to be forbidden by the milk. The extent of this relaxation is debated, depending on the level of its 'cooking'.

Another area of debate is whether it is forbidden to cook two *taamim* together. Cooking does not have the Rabbinical stringencies that apply to eating. Benefit is the subject of debate. Thus, cooking is Scripturally forbidden when both items are physically present. If one item is present and the other is *taam*, the poskim debate whether the act of cooking is Scripturally forbidden. In old fireplaces, the hot water was in a large kettle. This could get splashed by meat and milk cooking nearby. The water could be deemed forbidden due to this process. However, it would not be forbidden to cook fresh water in this pot, not forbidden to benefit from it for non-food purposes. Similarly, one should be allowed to mix water used to wash, separately, meat and milk dishes, and then benefit from it by watering his animals. Even though it is hot, mixing the flavors is not considered cooking *basar bechalav*. The result is not forbidden to benefit from. Nonetheless, there is a *chumra*, optional adopted stringency that is applied to this and other similar situations. For example, a resident gentile domestic helper might be cooking milk in her pot that had absorbed meat. The Jewish homeowner may not adjust the flame.

Since the mixing must occur through cooking, if the two items have already been cooked together, reheating them cannot accomplish more. Therefore, it does not involve the prohibition of cooking. Therefore, one could cook fresh neutral food or water in the pot, for a gentile who may eat this food. One could use this pot as well. In this case, benefiting from the pot is permitted. The benefit is not being derived from the *taamim*, but from the pot itself. Another issue arises with regard to absorbed flavors mixing. In old ovens, coals and ashes absorbed the splashes and flavors from all food cooked there. The question was whether utensils could be placed on these coals. In terms of flavor, this could cause problems, as shall be discussed. In terms of cooking when heating the coals, or benefiting, the same issues arise as we raised here.

On the floor of an oven, milk can spill. It can be absorbed by the oven floor, and a dry meat utensil placed on it. The milk can be absorbed into the pot. In addition, wet milk can spread right under a meat pot directly. Furthermore, splashes from one of them could reach the other. This poses a problem, depending on where it hits. A small splash is usually neutralized by the volume of the other pot. However, if it cannot be considered evenly distributed through the walls and/or the food, it can render the spot where it hits forbidden. This can, in turn, render the entire pot forbidden (see below). It is advisable not to cook two pots with opposite items at the same time, within splashing distance.

Direct flavor is transferred easily. If hot foods touch each other, there is concern that the *taam* might have been transferred. However, *balua* cannot be transferred without a medium. To move the *balua* from one pot to another, even while the food is inside them, requires water or moisture between them on the outside. Accordingly, if two pots with opposite foods inside touched during the cooking, they do not become forbidden automatically. If it can be ascertained that there was no moisture between them, the utensils and food are all permitted. Therefore, if the floor of an oven absorbs milk *taam*, meat

may not be cooked directly on it. If it is moist or wet, a meat pot may not be placed on it. If it and the dairy pot are both dry, the pot may be placed there. This means that while one should try to avoid it, one may use the same racks for both meat of meat pots on a range-top. They must be kept clean. Some follow the practice of setting aside specific racks for each type, to avoid all problems. If a pot then overflows liquid onto the surface of the range or rack, it does not cause the rack to become forbidden, nor does it cause forbidden flavor to penetrate the pot from the rack. [See Chulin 97-99 108-113, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar YD 87:esp. 6 88 89 91 92: esp 2 5-8 94 95 97:1, commentaries.]

B) Libun

Once a utensil absorbs *balua*, it may be removed by *kashering*, consistent with the way it was absorbed and with its normal use. Food cooked in a liquid medium penetrates the pot with its *taam* this way. It is *kashered* by boiling it in hot water over a flame. If the utensil never absorbed using direct heat, but by having hot food placed into it, it may be *kashered* in the same way. Hot water is poured into it.

A utensil used to cook with no liquid medium absorbs *taam* directly. To purge this with no medium is impossible. Rather, it is placed into a flame or fire for long enough to burn out all *taam*. This is called *libun*, 'whitening'. There are two levels: Utensils used with food and a direct flame require *libun chamur*, strong *libun*, heating the utensil to the point that one could scrape off a layer – red-hot. If the item was used with direct heat, but no direct contact with the food, or if the absorption was of a lower level, *libun kal*, modest *libun*, is enough. It is heated enough to char straw without the help of a flame. For *libun chamur* it is necessary to direct the flame onto the utensil. For *libun kal* it is sufficient to heat it with coals on a major part of it, or to heat the metal in the vicinity of a flame. The heat will spread to where it is needed to burn off the *balua*. In some cases the *libun* can also burn off substantive adhesions, such as matter inside cracks.

The Talmud discusses hot juices falling onto coals that are cooking food. The common example would be where one roasts meat to extract its blood. The forbidden blood is absorbed by the spit and the coals, and sometimes, by the grill. Since there is immediate *libun*, this does not forbid the food cooked over the coals or on the spit at that moment. This is also applied in certain kitchen circumstances. It does not work for true non-kosher *balua*, but is accepted for certain *basar bechalav* situations. [For *chametz*, *kashering* is preferred.] These include splashes on the part of a pot that is immediately over a fire, and on the base of a stove rack or oven floor in the vicinity of the fire. This is due, in part, to the kosher status of each element before they are mixed. Thus, one could use the same stove racks for a meat and milk pot, though they sometimes overflow. It is recommended that one try to dedicate a rack for each, or even separate stoves.

Spaces between racks do not have this advantage. Spills and splashes would render the spots *basar bechalav*. If hot food falls on these spots, one should not eat it. However, it is not hot enough to impart its *balua* through the walls of a hot pot placed on top of it. *Balua* is transferred from hot to cold. If the hot is on top, only a paper thin layer can be transferred, even if there is moisture in-between. However, it is not advisable to place hot pots there is there is moisture present, because the pot might require *kashering* on its bottom before being used again. [See Psachim 30a-b Avoda Zara 75b-76b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 451, YD 76:4 87:5 92:6 8 108 121, commentaries.]

C) Earthenware, glass and ceramics

Certain materials pose specific *kashering* problems, due to fragility or the way they absorb. Earthenware absorbs so thoroughly that the flavor cannot be purged through water-*kashering*. *Libun* could work, but there is a concern that one would not heat it sufficiently, lest the utensil crack or break. The only acceptable way to *kasher* earthenware is to bake it again in the kiln-type used to fire it originally. One going to this extent evidently does not care whether it cracks. The same would apply to baked ceramic, porcelain or plastic utensils or handles.

Glass is debated. Some poskim maintain that glass does not absorb at all. A food type with this characteristic is the meat of the heart. Others claim that it absorbs like metal, and is *kashered* the same way. A third opinion considers it like earthenware. *Sefaradi* communities follow the lenient view. For *Ashkenazic* communities, there is no consensus to follow one opinion. We follow the lenient view with regard to *basar bechalav*. Some follow the middle view with regard to non-kosher food. We follow the stringent view with regard to *chametz*. Thus, one may rinse and use the same glassware for milk and meat. The same should apply to a glass range top. On the other hand, glass is more fragile than ceramics. Tempered or altered glass is resistant to heat. Some maintain that Pyrex has impurities that forbid interchanging their hot usage between meat and dairy. Some maintain that glass is only non-porous at lower heat levels. Glazed ceramics have a film of glass on their surfaces. However, this is commonly chipped or scratched. Even the lenient view on glass does not permit *kashering* glazed porcelain for *Pesach*.

If the range-top is made of combined glass and ceramic, the issue of absorption is complicated somewhat. It is possible that the surface area is made with more glass, specifically to prevent absorption. The obvious issue is whether the immediate surface beneath the pots becomes forbidden, due to spills. Even if it is considered porous, we have mentioned the reliance on instant *libun* for the racks, if they are cleaned between uses. The poskim apply this same reliance on earthen oven floors, and on ceramic-coated racks. Contemporary poskim have assumed the same leniency to apply to glass ranges. [See Psachim 30a-b 77b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 451:1 4 23 26, commentaries. R Eider, Pesach XIII A 4-6 XVI D 4. Ig'M OC I:124 YD I:40 59 II:46. Tzitz'E VIII:20 IX:26.] Note: On Shabbos, this is considered a direct heat source, rather than an in-built 'blech'. It must be covered with something that will not damage it. [See Shabbos 37a, Rashi. Igr'M OC I:93. Tz'E VII:15 17.]

On the Parsha ... *Let not your eyes have concern about your vessels ... [45:20]* The simple meaning is that *Paroh* did not want the family of *Yaakov* to delay because of their vessels. One cause of delay would be to pack them carefully. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for concern here (*tachos*) is exactly the same term used by the Talmud regarding the concern about heating earthen vessels to *kasher* them (*chayis alay*, Psachim 30b). Perhaps *Paroh* knew from *Yosef's* conduct keeping kosher, that his family showed exceptional concern about their vessels. [See also *Daas Zekainim*] *Paroh* told them that they could get new vessels in Egypt. How ironic that going down to Egypt they have concern for vessels; then years later, in preparing for the celebration of the Exodus from Egypt, the same concern shows up!

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