

How may one heat food on Shabbat itself?

As we have seen, even when the food is cooked and the coals in the oven are swept out or covered with ashes, it is prohibited to put the cooked item back on the fire unless it is considered a continuation of its previous time on the fire. Therefore, initial placement of a cooked item on the fire on Shabbat is prohibited.

How then, is it possible to heat food on Shabbat? Since the prohibition to place a cooked item on the fire on Shabbat stems from the problem of “looks like Cooking,” the Sages permitted to heat food on Shabbat in circumstances where it does not look like Cooking.

According to **Rav Ovadia Yosef** (*Hazon Ovadia* 4, pp. 344–348) and others, it is permitted to place dry cooked food **directly onto a Shabbat hotplate**, since it is not *standard practice to cook on it*. According to **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** (*Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 1, note 72), and **Rav Elyashiv** (cited in *Shevut Yitzhak*, Keeping and Returning 8:2), it is prohibited to place food directly

onto the hotplate, and it is appropriate to act in accordance with their opinion (though there are grounds to be lenient).

According to this opinion, in order to heat food on Shabbat one must **place an upside-down vessel** (even a large baking dish) **on the hotplate** and place the food on it. Alternatively, one may place the food on an electric urn or on top of a radiator.

In any case, the various leniencies to heat food on Shabbat apply exclusively to **cooked food**, in other words, dry food that is fully cooked, or a liquid cooked item that did not completely cool (according to the Rema), or did not cool to less than a measure of *yad soledet* (according to the *Shulḥan Arukh*). If the food is not classified as cooked, it may not be heated at all in a place where it can reach the temperature of *yad soledet*. Likewise, the various leniencies to heat food on Shabbat itself apply exclusively to a stove whose coals were swept out or covered with ashes, e.g., a Shabbat hotplate or a stovetop covered with sheet metal (pp. 495–504).

Is it permitted to leave food in the oven before Shabbat in order to eat it during a Shabbat meal?

From the **mishna** (38b) it is clear that one must be stringent with regard to leaving food in an oven more than with regard to leaving food on a stove. The **Rambam** (3:5) explains that the heat of an oven is greater than the heat of a stove; therefore, there is always the concern that one will intensify the fire. Yet, the **Rema** (253:1) writes that our ovens are not that hot and their halakhic status is like a stove, and contemporary authorities write the same with regard to modern ovens. In their opinion, since modern ovens have thermostats and do not become excessively hot, their halakhic status is that of a stove (*Iggerot Moshe, Oraḥ Ḥayim 4:74 Bishul 26*).

On that basis, the *halakha* concerning keeping food in the oven is like the *halakha* concerning keeping food on a stove. It is permitted (according to Ashkenazi authorities and some Sephardi authorities) to keep in an oven food that was cooked to the level of *maakhal ben Derosai* or food that was not cooked at all. If the oven is classified

as one whose coals are swept out or covered with ashes, e.g., if one placed an empty baking dish separating the heating element and the food, it is permitted to keep in the oven even food that was cooked to less than the level of *maakhal ben Derosai*.

If one **immobilizes the dials** in a manner that it is necessary to remove the impediment in order to intensify the fire, and all the more so if one removes the dials completely, the oven is considered as one whose coals were swept out or covered with ashes (for Ashkenazim), and one may keep any food in it regardless of the measure to which the food was cooked.

If the food was cooked to the level of *maakhal ben Derosai*, it is permitted to keep it in the oven even without immobilizing the dials. Nevertheless, it is always preferable to immobilize the dials (pp. 509–512).

Is it permitted to open the oven door on Shabbat?

Another problem relates to opening the oven. In general, there is a **thermostat**; opening the oven door accelerates the oven's ignition. In ovens that have a "Shabbat mode," which activates a timer instead of the thermostat, this problem is solved, although one must ensure that the Shabbat mode button does, in fact, disconnect the thermostat. In ovens that do not have a Shabbat mode, one can set a timer to shut off the oven before removing the food, and remove the food after the oven is off.

If one placed food in an oven without a Shabbat mode and did not set a timer to shut off the oven, they may be lenient and remove the food from the oven while the oven is heating and the thermostat light is on, provided that this does not turn on an oven light, as in that case opening the oven merely perpetuates the existing situation and does not cause the oven to ignite.

If that too is not possible, one may be lenient and open the door in an unusual manner even when the oven is not heating (when the thermostat light is off), as it is not certain that opening the door will cause the oven to ignite, and even if it will certainly cause it, it is merely indirect causation (pp. 512–513).

Summary of the halakha of an oven

It is permitted to keep food in the oven before Shabbat if it was cooked to the level of *maakhal ben Derosai* (according to Ashkenazi authorities and some Sephardi authorities). It is even permitted to keep food that was cooked to less than the level of *maakhal ben Derosai* if the dials are immobilized or removed (for Ashkenazim), or with an empty baking dish separating between the heating element and the food. One must ensure that the oven is in Shabbat mode or that a timer will shut off the oven before removing the food. If one failed to do so, they may remove the food while the oven is heating. If there is no alternative, one may remove the food even when the oven is not heating; in that case, it is preferable to open the door in an unusual manner.

Is it permitted to return food to an oven on Shabbat?

Optimally, it is preferable to return the food to a **Shabbat hotplate** and not into the oven, since that looks like Cooking. If that is not an option, one may return the food into the oven in the following circumstances:

1. The food is fully cooked. If it is a liquid, it must still be somewhat warm, and for Sephardim, it must be *yad soledet* – 160° F (71° C).
2. Abiding by the conditions of returning – the person holds the pot with intent to return it.
3. An empty baking dish separates the heating element from the food, thereby diminishing the heat and rendering it an oven whose coals are swept out or covered with ashes.
4. The oven is in Shabbat mode. If one forgot to move it to Shabbat mode, see above in the *halakhot* of keeping food in the oven (pp. 514–518).

Is it permitted to heat food in an oven on Shabbat itself?

It is prohibited to remove food from the refrigerator and to place it in the oven on Shabbat, even if the food is fully cooked and the

COOKING (*BISHUL*)

oven is in Shabbat mode. In an oven, the heat disperses throughout the space; therefore, there is no distinction whether the pot is placed on the bottom of the oven or whether it is placed on an inverted baking dish; in any case it looks like Cooking, and one may not do so on Shabbat.

Therefore, it is **preferable to have a Shabbat hotplate in the house**, as it is permitted both to return food to it and to place food initially upon it, commensurate with the conditions articulated above (pp. 516–517).