

Various leniencies with regard to squeezing

Squeezing lemons

Ostensibly, squeezing a lemon should be prohibited on Shabbat, because this is a fruit which is usually squeezed. Furthermore, squeezing



Squeezing lemons nowadays is a dispute among the authorities.

lemons is a particularly common activity, as lemons are not generally eaten; rather, they are used almost exclusively for squeezing.⁵

Nevertheless, the **Rosh** writes that squeezing lemons should be permitted, as “it is not the typical manner [of squeezing] to squeeze lemons for the sake of drink, but rather for the sake of food” (Responsa 22:2). Similarly, there was a common practice among the Jews of Egypt to squeeze lemons into sugar water, and they would do so even on Shabbat. The

Rosh: It is permitted to squeeze lemons

Beit Yosef writes that one may justify this practice in one of two ways (320, s.v. *veyesh litmoa*):

It may be that there is no prohibition unless one drinks the liquid squeezed out of a fruit without it being mixed into another drink.

First reason for leniency: It is not common to drink lemon juice by itself

In other words, it is prohibited to squeeze juice that would normally be drunk on its own. Juice that one generally drinks only as

5. For this reason, there is room to be stringent in the case of squeezing lemons more than with regard to other types of fruit. As stated, the essence of the prohibited labor of Threshing is the completion of labor on the fruit. Most types of fruit are considered finished and fit for consumption as they are, and in addition, they can be squeezed for their juice. By contrast, lemons are generally not eaten as is, but only after squeezing, and therefore the act of squeezing can be considered the completion of its labor (a similar opinion is stated by **Rabbeinu Tam**, as cited in the *Shulhan Arukh*, with regard to unripe fruit, 320:5). I heard this insight from my daughter, Rivka.

part of another drink, such as lemon juice, may be squeezed out on Shabbat. What is the reason for this distinction? Apparently, juice such as this is not considered a drink but only a **garnish**, because it is not drunk on its own, and therefore its squeezing is not considered the removal of drink from food.

Second reason for leniency: Lemon juice is generally squeezed into other liquids

Alternatively, it is prohibited only when one squeezes the liquid alone and then mixes it, but if the custom is to squeeze its liquid directly into another drink, this is permitted.

In other words, if one ordinarily squeezes the juice into an empty vessel and only then mixes it in with other drink, squeezing it is prohibited. Juice that is typically squeezed directly into another drink does not have the status of a drink, because it never stands on its own.

Practical ramification: Squeezing lemons nowadays

One basic practical difference between these two explanations is **whether one may squeeze lemons even today**. According to the first explanation, squeezing lemons should be permitted, as lemon juice is not drunk on its own nowadays either. According to the second explanation, the Rosh's leniency no longer applies, as in factories worldwide huge quantities of lemons are squeezed into empty bottles.

Magen Avraham: The first reason is the primary reason

The *Shulḥan Arukh* (320:6) rules, without adding any qualifications: "One may squeeze lemons." The *Magen Avraham* (8), the *Taz* (5), and the *Shulḥan Arukh HaRav* (320:10) contend that the ruling of the *Shulḥan Arukh* is based on the **first** explanation, and therefore one may squeeze lemons even nowadays. Rav Ovadia Yosef rules accordingly (*Leviyat Hen*, 57).

Mishna Berura: The main reason is the second one

By contrast, the *Hayei Adam* (14:4), the *Mishna Berura* (320:22; and *Shaar HaTziyun*, 26), and the *Ben Ish Hai* (Year 2, Yitro 5) rule in accordance with the **second** explanation, and consequently squeezing lemons should be prohibited nowadays. The *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* (5:5) is also of this understanding, and the *Tefilla LeMoshe* explains at length that squeezing lemons today is prohibited (Responsa 1:43; and in *Menuḥat Ahava*, 2:2, 6, note 40), and one should take this opinion into account.



It is permitted to place a slice of lemon in a cup of tea (tertiary vessel).

Nevertheless, one may place a slice of lemon into a cup of cold water or hot tea in a tertiary (third) vessel (according to the *Hazon Ish*, even in a secondary vessel; see p. 327), despite knowing that juice will flow out of the lemon into the drink. This is similar to the ruling of *Aḥaronim* that one may put fresh grapes into wine on Shabbat so that the grapes will split open and release their juice (*Mishna Berura* 320:14).

It is permitted to put a slice of lemon in a drink

IN CONCLUSION, the **Rosh** permits squeezing lemons, but his reasoning is not clear, nor is it obvious that this ruling still applies today, when lemons are often squeezed into bottles. According to **Rav Ovadia Yosef**, the leniency still applies, but according to many halakhic authorities, both **Ashkenazi** and **Sephardi**, today one may not squeeze a lemon into an empty vessel or a drink, and this is the ruling one should follow as a matter of practical *halakha*. Nevertheless, it is permitted to squirt a lemon directly onto a salad and similar foods, as explained below.

Summary

THRESHING

