

A salt shaker with rice

Some people place **grains of rice** into a salt shaker to absorb moisture from the salt. **Is it permitted to use a salt shaker of this kind on Shabbat?**

Rav Moshe Feinstein and others: It is prohibited to use a salt shaker with rice due to Selecting

Ostensibly, this constitutes Selecting, as the salt shaker is effectively a filter through which the salt passes, with the rice remaining;

10. Likewise, when there are large pieces of vegetables and the like in a small amount of liquid, the pieces are not considered mixed with the liquid and their separation is not classified as Selecting, as stated above (p. 870).

this is selecting with a utensil. Admittedly, the objective of the salt shaker is not to filter the salt but merely to pour it; however, as explained above, it is prohibited by **rabbinic law** to select with a utensil **that facilitates the selecting process**, even if it not designated for selecting (see pp. 875–877). Indeed, **Rav Moshe Feinstein** is cited as prohibiting using a salt shaker of that kind on Shabbat (*Sefer Hilkhos Shabbat, Meraked* 103). *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* (3:60) cites the opinion of **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** that one should be stringent in this regard:

It is permitted to place grains of rice in an open salt utensil so they would absorb the moisture in the salt. This should be done before Shabbat, due to the prohibition of *muktze*. With regard to a closed salt shaker, it is preferable to refrain from removing salt through the cover, even if a large amount of salt would remain mixed with the rice.



It is permitted to use a salt shaker with rice.

In contrast to the above, there are several reasons to follow the lenient ruling and use a salt shaker of this kind:

First, since a salt shaker generally contains a large amount of salt and a small amount of rice, the holes in the shaker are not needed to enable removal of the salt without the rice; therefore, the vessel does not facilitate the selecting. Even when there is only a small amount of salt in the shaker, there is room for leniency, as one could say that since there is nothing preventing the person from opening the shaker and removing the salt itself, the utensil does not significantly facilitate the act of selecting.

Secondly, there is room for leniency here based on the reasoning of **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** that a utensil that is always used for selecting for immediate consumption is not classified as a utensil for these purposes. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach himself so ruled on the basis of this reasoning (*Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 3, note 159, according to *Tikunim UMiluim* ad loc.), contrary to his ruling cited above:

There are reasons for leniency in using a salt shaker with rice

I heard from the Gaon Rav Auerbach . . . that a utensil that is used exclusively for selecting for immediate use might not be included in the prohibition of Selecting with a utensil . . . and the same is true that according to this, using a salt shaker with rice should be permitted.

Moreover, this person does not at all intend to select, and although that is an inevitable consequence of his action, some rule leniently in the case of an inevitable consequence involving a rabbinic prohibition. Even those who are stringent in that case might concede that here it is permitted, since there are additional reasons for leniency. Another relevant factor is that this is part of the eating process and is not the typical manner of selecting (see *Tefilla LeMoshe* 38).

Some of these points, among others, are raised in *Az Nidberu* (4:23):

And there my opinion was to permit using a salt shaker, and it is not similar to a tray, which is prohibited by rabbinic law because the intent is to select; but if one does not at all intend to select, and it is not an act of selecting, we do not find that the Sages prohibit this . . . Moreover, since one typically does so while actually eating, and it is part of the eating process, it is considered as though there were no alternative to performing it in this fashion . . . It appears that there is another reason that Selecting is not relevant here, as this is not a mixture, since the rice is [there] mainly to improve the salt; therefore, it is not considered equivalent to selecting one kind from another, or food from waste.

Practical *halakha*:
There is room for
leniency

Other authorities concur that it is **permitted to use a salt shaker with rice** on Shabbat (Rav Elyashiv and Rav Nissim Karelitz, cited in *Ayil Meshulash* 7, note 110; *Tefilla LeMoshe* 38), and it would appear that this is the *halakha*.