

Various Leniencies Concerning Grinding

Is it permitted to chop up salad just before a meal?

May one use a manual vegetable chopper?

Is it permitted to mash a banana or an avocado?

Is it permitted to pulp cooked vegetables?

Is it permitted to crumble bread or a cookie?

Under what conditions may one grind in an unusual manner?

Grinding for immediate use

In the chapter discussing Selecting, we learned that it is permitted to select **for immediate use**, i.e., just before eating or the beginning of a meal. Does this principle apply to other labors? In his **Responsa** (4:75), the **Rashba** writes that this leniency also applies to Grinding:

Rashba: Grinding for immediate use is permitted

This [*halakha* that] chopping beets [renders one liable for Grinding] applies only when one chops food into very small pieces in order to eat it the next day, or even on that day but at a later time ... But [if one does so] to eat it immediately, it is permitted, because it is not prohibited for a person to eat, whether in large pieces or small ones. Just as the Sages said with regard to Selecting ... “One may select and eat for immediate use; one may select for immediate use” ... this means that [one may prepare]

anything that is eaten immediately, in the way that people are accustomed to eat, even though that very act would render one liable to bring a sin-offering were it performed in order to set the food aside for a later stage.

According to this opinion, just as Selecting for immediate use is permitted, Grinding for immediate consumption is also permitted, as the Torah would not demand that one eat only large pieces of food on Shabbat.¹

The *Shiltei HaGiborim* questions this leniency

This leniency is also cited by the **Ran** (32a Rif, s.v. amar Rav Pappa). By contrast, the *Shiltei HaGiborim* (ad loc., 3) is uncertain about this matter:

I am puzzled by his opinion: Since the prohibition is due to Grinding, what difference does it make whether it is grinding for later that day, for immediate use, or for tomorrow? Are all the labors permitted if one requires [the product of] that labor for immediate use? And do not respond to me by [citing the example of] Selecting, that one may select to eat immediately... the Sages themselves explicitly stated [the leniency for immediate use] for Selecting, but here they explained that chopping vegetables into very small pieces is Grinding and they did not make this distinction. What basis do we have [then] to make such a distinction based on our own logic, by employing a comparison that [the Sages] never considered?

The basis of the dispute

Perhaps this dispute results from different answers to a question: **Why is Selecting for immediate use permitted?** It was stated above (pp. 776–780) that one can explain this in one of two ways:

1. The **Rashba** derives his opinion from a **mishna** (156b) that permits one to cut pumpkins to place before an animal on Shabbat, and to cut an animal carcass to place before dogs, as well as from the statement of the **Gemara** that one may crush foods and prepare them for consumption provided that this does not involve great effort, in which case it is prohibited by rabbinic law: “With regard to exerting oneself with food on Shabbat, one may exert himself; but with regard to rendering food edible, one may not render it so.” The **Rambam** explains these sources differently, as explained above (note 3).

1. Selecting for immediate use is not considered a typical manner of Selecting, as one who selects wheat kernels does so in order to store them for the long term.
2. Selecting for immediate use is permitted because it is **part of the process of eating**, and the Torah does not prohibit eating on Shabbat in the normal manner.

According to the first interpretation, it is reasonable that this leniency applies specifically to Selecting but not to other labors, whereas according to the second explanation it is a leniency that can apply to any action that is part of the process of eating. Consequently, other labors can be permitted if they are performed just before the meal.²

The *Beit Yosef* (321) cites the opinion of the **Rashba**, and declares that it is accepted by all. He writes that nevertheless one should be stringent and cut up food into somewhat large pieces.

The *Shulhan Arukh* omits the leniency of preparing for immediate use, while the **Rema** does cite it as the *halakha* (321:12):

This entire discussion deals only with one who is cutting up food to set it aside, but if [one does so] in order to eat the food immediately, it is all permitted, just as it is permitted to select in order to eat immediately, as [stated] above.

The *Magen Avraham* (15) notes that the *Shiltei HaGiborim* questions this leniency, and he also mentions the recommendation of the *Beit Yosef* that one should cut up the food into somewhat large pieces. Yet, he adds that in his locale it was common practice to chop radishes into small pieces, and there is a basis for this custom. He adds that one should do so only after leaving the synagogue, just before the meal. The *Mishna Berura* (321: 45) shares this opinion:

Beit Yosef: It is appropriate to cut into slightly larger pieces
The Rema: It is permitted to cut for immediate consumption

The *Mishna Berura*: One should not protest those who are lenient and cut up food in the normal manner

2. By contrast, the *Hazon Ish* (61:1, s.v. *uma shekatav haTaz*) implies that the leniency of “part of the process of eating” applies only to the labors of Selecting and Grinding, as these are actions that one typically performs while eating (see chapter on Kneading, pp. 1073–1075).

There are those who question this leniency, and the *Beit Yosef* has also written that even one who intends to eat immediately should still be careful to cut [the food into] somewhat large pieces. For this reason, many *Aḥaronim* also write that it is appropriate to act in accordance with the statement of the *Beit Yosef*. In any case, one should not object to those who chop up onions and radishes into very small pieces, as they have on whom to rely. In any case it is prohibited to do so until one leaves the synagogue, because it must be [performed] just before the meal, as stated in chapter 319 with regard to Selecting.

The *Hazon Ish* is uncertain about this leniency and places limits upon it

In contrast to the above opinions, the *Hazon Ish* (57) is uncertain about the *halakha* of grinding for immediate use, and places several limitations on this practice:

It seems that the Rashba permits only **chopping** into very small pieces. Since the essence of [the leniency] to cut up food is that it is “part of the process of eating,” there is no difference between chopping into small and large pieces, as it is all called “part of the process of eating.” By contrast, crushing or pounding is an actual act of grinding; and this is not “part of the process of eating,” but a way of preparing the food in a different manner. [Therefore,] eating it immediately does not [mitigate the prohibition]...

With regard to the ruling of the Rashba, it appears that the Rashbam, the *Semag*, the Mordekhai, and the *Re'em*, as cited by the *Hagahot Maimoniyot*, do not differentiate between that which is just before the meal and that which is not... Logically, there is a difference between Selecting and Grinding: [In the case of Grinding,] one makes a greater change to the original form, and it is not “part of the process of eating”...

Furthermore, the concluding statement of the Rema, that it is permitted [to grind] in order to eat for immediate use refers [specifically] to bread and vegetables; it does not apply to the [cutting of] dried figs or carobs for the elderly... This demonstrates that we do not rely on the opinion of the Rashba to permit this unless we can also apply the ruling of the authorities who maintain that

there is no [prohibition of] Grinding with regard to other foods, or the opinion of the Rosh that there is no Grinding with regard to foods. And if [one does so] just before the meal, their claim, that this is not called Grinding, is more convincing. All this applies when it is possible to eat it [even without grinding], but when one cannot eat the food without crumbling it, it is classified as Grinding even [if one acts] in order to eat it immediately.

According to the *Hazon Ish*, many *Rishonim* disagree with the opinion of the *Rashba* and maintain that Grinding is not permitted for immediate use. That leniency applies only to Selecting, as in that case there is no change in the item itself, and the idea of “part of the process of eating” is more relevant there as well. The *Hazon Ish* adds that the *Rashba* and the *Rema* rule leniently only when one specifically chops into small pieces. Such chopping prior to a meal is considered “part of the process of eating,” because while eating it is normal to cut the food into smaller pieces. **Actual grinding**, which changes the form of the food, is not classified as “part of the process of eating.” It is therefore prohibited even for immediate use, and one who grinds is liable to bring a sin-offering.³ The *Hazon Ish*

3. The *Hazon Ish* derives this from the *Tosefta* in *Beitza* (1:13), which states that “one may not crush pressed or dried figs for the elderly on Shabbat.” He maintains that this is referring to elderly people who are sitting at the table (see next note). Nevertheless, the plain meaning of the statement of the *Rema* is that even actual grinding for immediate use is permitted, provided that it is not performed with a utensil designated for grinding. This can also be inferred from the **Responsa of the Rivash** (184) and from the statement of **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** (cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 6, note 20): “The *Rashba* would have permitted even grinding with a mill for immediate use, were it not for the fact that this is a utensil [especially designated for grinding, which is prohibited even for immediate use, as explained below]. The *Mishna Berura*, as well, writes several times as a matter of course that according to the *Rashba* one may chop into very small pieces just before eating even items that grow from the ground. It is evident that he does not understand the statement of the *Magen Avraham* in accordance with the opinion of the *Hazon Ish*, who maintains that the *Magen Avraham* prohibits this.

further claims that the Rema is lenient with regard to chopping into very small pieces for immediate use only if one does so for someone who is able to eat the food without that preparation. By contrast, chopping up food for the elderly or children is considered a more significant activity, and consequently one may not do so even for immediate use.⁴

The opinion of
contemporary
authorities

In contrast to the above claim, **Rav Moshe Feinstein** (*Iggerot Moshe, Oraḥ Ḥayim* 4:74, *Toḥen* 2) writes that the ruling of the *Ḥazon Ish* is considered that of a solitary opinion:

In any case, the Rema and all the halakhic authorities after him rule in accordance with the Rashba and the Ran that [if one does so] in order to eat for immediate use, [then chopping into small pieces] is permitted, and they write that this is their custom... It turns out that [the ruling of] the *Ḥazon Ish*... is opposed to the Rema, the *Magen Avraham*, the *Peri Megadim*, as well as the Vilna Gaon, the *Shulḥan Arukh HaRav*, the *Mishna Berura*, and the *Arukh HaShulḥan*. It is also opposed to the lenient custom attested to by the *Magen Avraham*. Thus, the ruling of the *Ḥazon Ish* is a solitary opinion and also against the [accepted] custom, and [consequently] one should not prohibit this. Perhaps a punctilious person should be stringent and not chop food into very small pieces, as stated by the *Mishna Berura* and the *Shulḥan*

4. As stated above, the **Rema** rules that it is prohibited to cut dried figs and carobs **for the elderly**. The *Ḥazon Ish* explains that “for the elderly” means for those elderly people who are sitting down to eat, and one cuts on their behalf. He concludes from this that one should not cut even for immediate use on behalf of someone who is unable to eat the food without it being cut up. According to this opinion, when the Rema permits cutting for immediate use, this means for someone who could eat the food even without it being cut up. By contrast, the *Peri Megadim* (*Eshel Avraham* 321:14) maintains that the Rema permits grinding for immediate use in every case, and the phrase “for the elderly” means that one may cut the food on behalf of elderly people who will eat the pieces even **at a later point in time**. This is the opinion of the majority of the *Aḥaronim*, as the *Iggerot Moshe* notes in the following paragraph.

Arukh HaRav, but in a case of great necessity, there is no need to be stringent.

According to the basic *halakha*, then, it is permitted to chop food into very small pieces for immediate use, as this is the opinion of the majority of the halakhic authorities. It might be appropriate for a fastidious person to be stringent and to chop the food into somewhat large pieces, as stated by the *Aḥaronim*. When there is a significant need even a fastidious person need not be stringent, as this is fundamentally permitted. Furthermore, in this regard there is no difference for whom one is chopping up the food.

Rav Ovadia Yosef (**Responsa Yehaveh Daat** 5:27; see also *Leviyat Hen* 62) also writes that one may chop food into very small pieces for immediate use and that there is no distinction between chopping and actual grinding, or between the elderly and children on the one hand and everyone else on the other hand. He explains that grinding for immediate use is entirely permitted. Similarly, one may take into account the opinions of the *Rishonim* who maintain that there is no prohibition of Grinding once a substance has become food, or that the prohibition does not apply to produce that can be eaten without being cooked or that one currently has no intention of cooking. According to him, the *Beit Yosef* accepts the leniency of the **Rashba**, and his suggestion that one should cut the food into somewhat larger pieces is only an added preference, which is not fundamentally required:

It is permitted to mash bananas or cooked vegetables with the tines of a fork, e.g., for a baby, in order to feed a child immediately. It is also permitted to prepare a salad on Shabbat and to chop vegetables into very small pieces in order to eat them immediately. Some, as an act of piety, have the custom to chop up the vegetables of the salad into somewhat large pieces. Although this is not fundamentally necessary, one who is stringent is praiseworthy.

By contrast, the *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* (6:6) rules in accordance with the opinion of the *Beit Yosef* that one may not chop

food into very small pieces even just before the meal; rather, one may chop it only into somewhat large pieces. One may rely on the lenient opinions and chop the food into very small pieces specifically for someone who has difficulty chewing, and only on condition that this is done just before the meal.

Summary IN CONCLUSION, the halakhic authorities disagree whether the leniency of “for immediate use” applies to Grinding. According to **the majority of the *Aharonim***, this leniency does apply to Grinding, although the *Hazon Ish* limits this leniency. **Rav Feinstein** writes that according to the basic *halakha*, if it is just before the meal one may cut food into very small pieces, but when there is no pressing need, it is better to have larger pieces suffice.

The *halakha* in practice IN PRACTICE, one who chops vegetables into very small pieces for a salad has upon whom to rely, but they must prepare the salad just before the meal. It is preferable to chop up the vegetables into pieces that are not very small, so that one can easily differentiate between, e.g., a tomato and a red pepper. Finally, one should prepare this salad just prior to the meal.

