

Grinding cooked food

The **Rambam**, in a **responsum** (Blau ed., 305, cited by *Beit Yosef*, end of 321), cites a question:

QUESTION: In the case of a pot of porridge that is left on the stove overnight on Shabbat night, and the next morning, when one takes the pot off of the stove, they insert a wooden ladle and stir it a great deal, mixing it up and pressing it with the wooden ladle against the walls of the pot, or in a bowl, until the meat, wheat, and water are blended together and [the mixture] thickens, and it all becomes one mass... Are all of these actions prohibited or permitted?

ANSWER: Certainly, all this is permitted. After all, the Mishna explicitly states (*Eduyot* 2:6): “[With regard to] garlic, half-ripe

It is permitted to complete the grinding of an item that was cooked and became very soft

grapes, or stalks [of wheat] that one crushed while it was still day [i.e. before Shabbat], Rabbi Yishmael says: He may finish after it gets dark.” And it was established (*Shabbat* 19b) that [the Sages] disagree concerning a case where [the foods] require pulverizing, and the practical *halakha* is ruled in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael. All the more so in this case: If it is permitted to finish preparing stalks, which require pulverizing, [one may certainly finish preparing] porridge, which has already been pulverized and fully cooked; all it lacks is mixing, so surely [it should be permitted]... And this porridge does not require pounding, as it has already been thoroughly pounded in a mortar and fully cooked. All it lacks is a bit of pulverizing and mixing... Moshe, son of Rabbi Maimon.

The Rambam was asked about preparing a dish of porridge and meat: After the food has been removed from the fire, may one stir it while mashing the meat and the porridge so that they dissolve and blend together? The Rambam responds that this is permitted, and cites a proof from the Gemara. The **Gemara** (19b) discusses the extraction of liquid from garlic, half-ripe grapes, and stalks of wheat, which require three progressive levels of grinding: Crushing, pounding, and pulverizing. It can be inferred from the conclusion of the Gemara that if the crushing and pounding were performed before Shabbat, **one may complete the process and pulverize them on Shabbat**. In light of this, the **Rambam** claims that there is clearly no prohibition of mashing porridge, as it has already been crushed and pounded, and all it lacks is a small measure of pulverizing.

The **Rambam** rules likewise in the *Mishne Torah* (21:13):

If one crushed garlic, half-ripe grapes, or stalks while it was still day, and they still require pounding, it is prohibited to finish pounding them on Shabbat. But if they lack [only] pulverizing by hand, one may finish pulverizing them on Shabbat. Therefore, one may complete the pulverizing of porridge with a wooden ladle in the pot on Shabbat, after it has been taken off the fire.

The statement of the Rambam implies that the prohibition of Grinding does not apply to an item that has already been cooked and softened.¹⁴

This ruling is cited as the *halakha* by the *Shulḥan Arukh* (321:19), and the *Mishna Berura* (82) adds:

Spreading baked apples on bread is certainly permitted, and the same applies to spreading fat and butter.

In other words, there is no prohibition of Grinding with regard to a baked apple. Likewise, the labor of Smoothing does not apply to the act of spreading it on the bread.

What is the underlying reason for this *halakha*? Why is there no prohibition of Grinding concerning cooked foods? One can understand this ruling in one of three ways:

The reasons for the leniency

A straightforward reading of the Rambam implies that the prohibition of Grinding does not apply here because the vegetable or fruit has been softened to such an extent that it is tantamount to having been ground, and therefore further grinding is permitted. This is similar to the case of grinding after grinding, which is discussed below. The *Tiferet Yisrael* understands the matter in this way this opinion as well (*Kalkalat Shabbat, Lamed-Tet Melakhot, Toḥen*).¹⁵

It was stated above (p. 986) that according to **Rav Moshe Feinstein** the prohibition of Grinding does not apply when the food is left as one mass after grinding and is not separated into small pieces. If so, perhaps the prohibition of Grinding does not apply to cooked foods, as generally the crushing of these vegetables creates a sort of doughy consistency, rather than pieces. The *Tehilla LeDavid*

14. The **Rambam** implies that the prohibition of **Kneading** does not apply to cooked foods either. This matter will be discussed below, pp. 1090–1097.

15. “It is prohibited to mash cooked potatoes . . . due to Grinding, but if they have already been somewhat mashed, one may complete their mashing.” This implies that because the potatoes have already been pulped somewhat, they are considered ground, and therefore it is permitted to continue their grinding.

seems to explain in this manner as well (Omissions (*Hashmatot*), 252): “When one mashes a baked apple or cooked potatoes, there is apparently no issue of Grinding or Kneading, as it was previously one entity and it remains one entity.¹⁶”

It is possible that by definition the prohibition of Grinding does not apply to a cooked food. This conclusion is implied by a statement of the *Hazon Ish* (58:9, s.v. *siman*): “Its cooking removes it from the category of the labor of Grinding, as its grinding is so effortless that it is not classified as a labor.” According to this explanation, the prohibition of Grinding applies only to normal grinding as was performed in the Tabernacle, whereas Grinding is not applicable to an item that does not require an ordinary act of grinding. It can also be suggested that the Grinding is prohibited only if the action is performed as part of the preparation for cooking or baking, but after an item has been baked or cooked the labor of Grinding no longer applies to it.¹⁷

16. The *Hazon Ish* (57, s.v. *le'inyan hiyuv tohen*) explicitly rejects this claim (as explained above with regard to mashing a banana). He maintains that the abovementioned statement of the **Rambam** implies the exact opposite, that he permits one to grind cooked foods only because they require merely a small amount of pulverizing. This implies that “the prohibition of Grinding is not lessened because they adhere as one mass.” Therefore, even if the reasoning stated here provides a valid explanation for the ruling of his *halakha*, it is likely not the opinion of the Rambam himself.

17. According to this interpretation, the *halakha* is due to an essential feature of the labor: The act of cooking eliminates the grinding at the basic level. Consequently, even if a raw fruit has the same consistency as a cooked fruit, Grinding would still apply to the raw fruit, since the produce must specifically have been cooked (see next note). It is difficult to understand the opinion of the Rambam in this manner, as he derives his ruling from the cases of garlic, half-ripe grapes, and stalks of wheat, none of which have been cooked. In fact, one can interpret the statement of the *Hazon Ish* differently. Perhaps he is not saying that the very act of cooking removes the prohibition of Grinding, but that cooking brings the item to the state “where its grinding is so effortless that it is not classified as a labor.” In other words, it can be ground so easily that its grinding is not a significant act, as explained above with regard to the opinion of the Rambam.

There is a practical ramification of these different explanations. Is it permitted to crush **any cooked fruit or vegetable**, or must it be **very soft or even squashed**? This matter is subject to a dispute among the *Aharonim*.

Does this leniency apply specifically to items that have softened through cooking?

The *Hazon Ish* (58:9, s.v. *siman*), as already noted, writes: “Its cooking removes it from the category of the labor of Grinding, as its grinding is so effortless that it is not classified as a labor.” This implies that the very fact that the item has been cooked and is now easy to mash removes the prohibition of Grinding from consideration, even if it has not been pulped at all.

The *Tiferet Yisrael* (*Kalkalat Shabbat, Lamed-Tet Melakhot, Tohen*) writes: “It is prohibited to mash cooked potatoes . . . due to Grinding, but if they have been already **somewhat mashed**, one may complete their mashing.” According to this opinion, it does not suffice that the item has been cooked; it is permitted to mash it only if the cooking has **mashed the food somewhat**.

By contrast, the *Iggerot Moshe* (*Orah Hayim* 4:74, *Tohen* 5) writes that “they must be **exceedingly mashed**, so that all they require is a bit of pulverizing.” This is also the opinion of **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** (cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 6, note 21).

This dispute can be explained in light of the different explanations of this *halakha*. According to the third explanation cited above, it stands to reason that one may mash all cooked fruit and vegetables, as by definition cooked items are excluded from the prohibition of Grinding. By contrast, according to the first explanation, it is only when the fruit or vegetable has already been softened that it can be considered already ground to the extent that a further act of grinding is permitted. If the food is stable and whole, it is not permitted to mash it. Finally, according to the second explanation, the *halakha* will depend on the particular situation: One may crush the fruit or vegetable only if the act will create a kind of doughy mass.

Yet, there is a different way to explain this matter. Perhaps all authorities accept the reasoning of the Rambam that the leniency is due to the fact that the item is considered as ground already, and one merely needs to add the finishing touches to its grinding. Rather,

the dispute concerns the application of this reasoning: For the food to be considered already ground, is it enough for it to be cooked and very soft, or must it have actually begun to break apart? To put it another way, is it sufficient that the food is easy to grind, or is it permitted only if the grinding **has already begun**?¹⁸

Practical *halakha*

IN PRACTICE, it is appropriate to mash only fruit or vegetables **that have been thoroughly cooked**, so that they are **very soft and easily crushed**. Furthermore, it is preferable that they already be **pulped**. But if it is **just before the meal**, one may be lenient and mash cooked, soft fruit or vegetables that can be very easily mashed, despite the fact that they have not been pulped (especially if they will remain a single mass), since one may take into account the opinions that even actual grinding is permitted for immediate use. If the fruit or vegetables are still hard, they may not be mashed, even immediately before the meal. (But they may be mashed in an unusual manner, as explained below.) Similarly, it is permitted to mash together several types of cooked, soft vegetables even though they will become one mass, as explained in the chapters about the labor of Kneading (pp. 1073–1117). One may also spread fruit preserves or jam on bread, even if the preserves contain bits of fruit that have not been entirely crushed (based on the ruling of the *Mishna Berura* cited above).

Uncooked Soft
Foods

18. Does the leniency also apply to soft foods that have not been cooked? According to the *Iggerot Moshe* (*Orah Hayim* 4:74, *Tohen* 5), this *halakha* applies specifically to cooked foods, as the cooking process causes the item to swell and softens it to a significant degree, which cannot be achieved without cooking. This conclusion is also implied by the aforementioned statement of the *Hazon Ish*. By contrast, **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** (cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 6:7, note 18) maintains that if a food is so soft that it is falling apart, to the extent that if one holds one end the other end is not lifted with it, then the food is considered already ground, and it is permitted to spread it on bread.

VARIOUS LENIENCIES CONCERNING GRINDING

