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IS YOUR OVEN KOSHER? - PART III

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What Every Kosher Cook Must Know

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Modifications have been made in the present version to clarify some issues.



MICROWAVE OVENS

Our discussion up to this point has focused on gas and electric ovens. A microwave oven follows the same general principals, but the application of these rules is different because of the manner in which a microwave oven operates. A microwave oven heats the water molecules (every food has some moisture), and the heat of the water is then transferred to the rest of the food. The water is heated to a high temperature very quickly, and as a result the level of *zeiah* can be significantly greater in a microwave than in a conventional oven where the moisture escapes slowly. Thus, even dry foods may produce enough *zeiah* to be problematic. If

operated for a short period of time, the microwave oven surface will remain cool, in which case no transfer of *ta'am* can occur. However, after some time the microwave walls are heated by the steam, though the rate at which this occurs varies greatly from food to food. In truth, a variety of factors impact on the level of *zeiah* in a microwave oven, such as the moisture content of the food, the microwave setting, the duration of the cooking time, the size of the oven and the size and location of the vent. To be on the safe side, one should cover all dairy foods cooked in a microwave designated for meat, or vice versa. (The cover will also obviate concerns about *reicha*, in the event the oven is not clean.) However, this solution is not always adequate. Because the stream of steam in a microwave is so significant, containers used in a microwave must be vented in order to prevent an explosion. The steam will eventually escape through the vent, and may fill the oven chamber. Halachically, if there is steam on either side of the container the *ta'am* may pass through the walls of the container and affect the inner contents. As such, Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, zt"l, recommends the use of a double wrap in a microwave to minimize the rate at which steam passes into the oven. The food can be covered by a paper towel, paper bag or plastic wrap. (Note: *Plastic wrap may be carcinogenic when used in a microwave.*) In addition, the food should be placed on a hard surface that will not leak through to the oven floor. This approach is adequate to solve the *zeiah* problem in all situations.

How is a microwave oven kashered to change the dairy or meat status, or to kasher from non-kosher use? A microwave can be kashered by placing a bowl of water in the oven. The oven is filled with steam by operating the microwave at the highest setting for approximately ten minutes. The bowl is refilled and moved to another location, and the above procedure is repeated in order to kasher the area where the bowl previously

continued on page 4

RECENT OU KOSHER HALACHA YOMIS ON SHMITAH



Rosh Hashanah 2016 - תשע"ז will mark the beginning of the second year of the shmitah cycle. This means that **all new fruit coming to market in Israel at this point no longer have kedushas shevi'is**. Although theoretically, there is still the possibility of small amounts of old inventory being carried over from cold storage, the overwhelming majority will be from the new crop. There can be a lag time of approximately 4 weeks from when the new crop is harvested until it reaches the U.S. market. The beginning harvest dates for several varieties of Israeli fruits are listed below. For the US, one should add approximately 4 weeks to those dates before assuming that the fruit are no longer shevi'is. Unless the fruit come with an acceptable certification, Terumos and Ma'aseros must be separated.

FRUIT	BEGINNING DATE for new Israeli harvest (for U.S add approx. 4 weeks)
Avocados	July 22, 2016
Dates	September 9, 2016
Grapefruits	August 21, 2016
Grapes	March 16, 2016
Olive Oil	September 19, 2016
Oranges	August 21, 2016
Pomegranates	July 15, 2016
Tangerines/Clementines	August 21, 2016

These OU Kosher Halacha Yomis Q & A's were publicized earlier this year when Shmitah produce was still reaching the US. **One who knows that he still has Shmitah produce should follow these guidelines.**

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MAY I PURCHASE AND CONSUME ISRAELI FRUIT, SUCH AS CLEMENTINES, WITHOUT SEPARATING TERUMAH AND MAASER?

In theory, fruit which grew or blossomed during a *shmitah* year is exempt from *Terumah* and *Maaser* because *shmitah* fruit is *hefker* (ownerless). Most Israeli fruit currently available in the market (Spring – Summer 2016) blossomed during the *shmitah* year, and separating *Terumah* and *Maaser* should be unnecessary. However, in practice, *Terumah* and *Maaser* must be separated, if the fruit is not properly certified, for the following reason.

The Chief Rabbinate of Israel sells the farms in Israel to non-Jews to remove the *shmitah* status. This is known as the *Heter Mechira*. For over 150 years, a strong debate has been waged among poskim about the propriety and efficacy of selling farmland to non-Jews.

If the *Mechira* is valid, then the fruit does not have a *shmitah* status, and *Terumah* and *Maaser* must be separated. If the *Mechira* is invalid, separating *Terumah* and *Maaser* is not required. Nonetheless, in practice, Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach (*Minchas Shlomo* 1:44) recommends that everyone should separate *Terumah* and *Maaser*. This is because even those who do not rely on the *Mechira* nevertheless treat it as an uncertainty. Since the *Mechira* may be effective, *Terumah* and *Maaser* must be separated *mi'safek* (as a possible obligation).

For the procedure to separate *Terumah* and *Maaser*, see oukasher.org/blog/consumer-kosher/separating-terumah-and-maaser/.

MAY I PURCHASE ISRAELI CLEMENTINES THAT ARE SOLD AT COSTCO (SPRING 2016)?

If one relies on the *Heter Mechira*, the clementines do not have a *shmitah* status and they can be eaten after separation of *Terumah* and *Maaser*.

If one does not rely on the *Heter Mechira*, there are possible concerns associated with buying fruit with *shmitah* status. If one did purchase the clementines, one must separate *Terumah* and *Maaser*, as noted in the previous *Halacha Yomis*. In addition, the fruit has *kedushas shevi'is* (the sanctity of *shmitah*). Fruit that has *kedushas shevi'is* may not be purchased with cash, but may be purchased by credit card. The fruit may not be wasted, and any leftovers,

including the peel, must be collected and placed in a safe place until it rots. The fruit must be eaten in the normal manner (for example, since it is normal to eat clementines raw, they may not be cooked.) There is also a requirement of *biyur* that will take place if any clementines remain in one's possession on or after May 23 (the fifteenth of Iyar). The mitzvah of *biyur* will be discussed further in the next *Halacha Yomis*.

WHAT IS THE MITZVAH OF BIYUR SHEVI'IS?

One of the special requirements for fruits that have *Kedushas Shevi'is* (i.e., fruit that grew in Israel during the *shmitah* year) is the mitzvah of *biyur*. This mitzvah is accomplished at the end of the harvest season for each variety of fruit, by physically removing any remaining fruit of that variety from your possession and publicly declaring it ownerless in front of three people. Afterwards, one may reacquire the fruit. If *biyur* was not done on the appropriate date, the fruit becomes forbidden to eat. Therefore, it is important to know the date for *biyur*. For example, the date of *biyur* for clementines is May 23 (the fifteenth of Iyar) and for lemons and oranges is July 6 (the first of Tamuz). Please note that Israeli clementines, for those who do not rely on *Heter Mechira*, should not be bought after this date. In all cases, one who purchases produce from Israel without certification should separate *terumah* and *ma'aser*.

MAY I PRESENTLY BUY CARROTS FROM ISRAEL

Israeli carrots currently being sold in the U.S. (May 2016) at this point can be assumed to no longer be *peiros*



shevi'is and may be purchased *lichatchila*. In fact, purchasing Israeli products is commendable as it benefits the Israeli economy. However, if the carrots do not have a kosher certification, one must separate the relevant tithes (*Terumos* and *Ma'aseros*). This year is the first year of the *shemita* cycle. This means that *ma'aser sheini* must be separated. The *ma'aser sheini* portion can be redeemed by transferring its *kedusha* (elevated status) to a coin. Any coin a nickel or larger, may be used, provided the *ma'aser sheini* portion (approximately 9% of the package of carrots) is worth more than a *peruta*, approximately 3 or 4 cents.

I WOULD PREFER NOT TO RELY ON THE HETER MECHIRA, WITH RESPECT TO SHMITAH PRODUCE GROWN IN ERETZ YISROEL. IF I BUY OU CERTIFIED WINE PRODUCED IN ISRAEL, IS THERE A POSSIBILITY THAT THE SUPERVISION IS BASED ON THE HETER MECHIRA?



OU Policy is not to certify any products that rely on the *heter mechira*. Therefore, with the exception of a few wines that were *yevul nachri* (i.e. grown in vineyards that are owned by non-Jews and are not dependent on the *heter mechira*), the OU did not certify any Israeli wine productions from the *shmitah* year.

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OVEN

continued from page 1

rested. If there is a glass plate on the oven floor, it is preferable to cover or change the plate since it is questionable how the *halachah* views glass. If the oven surface is plastic there are different opinions whether kashering is effective, but in case of necessity many poskim follow the lenient view. Kashering must be preceded by a thorough cleanup and a 24-hour downtime (see *Mishna Berura* 452:20). As is true of a conventional oven, kashering can be bypassed (even for a non-kosher microwave) by double wrapping the food.

By now, the reader has surely noticed that there are numerous differences of opinion among the poskim about many of the issues discussed

in this article. I have tried to share with you the mainstream views of rabbinic authorities, but I encourage you to review specific questions with your local rabbi. It should also be obvious that from a halachic perspective, it is advantageous to design a kosher kitchen with two separate ovens for dairy and meat use. Nonetheless, this option is not always practical for financial or logistical reasons, and therefore the issues raised in this article must be addressed.

Initially, changing our oven procedures may require a bit of care and concentration. In time, however, using the proper kashruth safeguards will become second nature, as are the rest of our kosher kitchen habits. The effort is well worth it.

IN BRIEF

A. To use an oven for dairy and meat:

1. Designate the oven for dairy or meat.
2. A designated item can be cooked in any manner.
3. A non-designated item can be baked without a cover if it is dry, and there is no edible residue of the designated category on the oven surface. It is preferable to change the rack or cover the surface under the pan with aluminum foil.
4. A non-designated item which is moist can be cooked in the oven if it is covered. It is preferable to change the rack or cover the surface under the pan with aluminum foil. In a conventional oven, one cover is adequate, while in a microwave oven, a double wrap is preferable. Alternatively, the oven can be kashered. (See below.)

B. Pareve food prepared in a meat or dairy oven:

1. Pareve food is unaffected by the cooking process in any of the following situations:
 - a. The pareve food is dry and there is no edible meat or dairy residue in the oven, or
 - b. the food is covered, or
 - c. the oven is clean of meat and dairy residue and has not been used for meat or dairy products containing liquid for at least 24 hours.
2. Pareve food is affected by the cooking process if:
 - a. the pareve food contains liquid, and the

food is cooked uncovered in an oven that was used for meat or dairy products containing liquid within the last 24 hours, or the pareve food is not covered and there is dairy or meat residue on the oven surface.

- b. Pareve food that is affected may be eaten before or after the opposite food category that affected it, but not together with the opposite food category.

C. To use a non-kosher oven without kashering: Double wrap the food item.

D. To kasher a conventional oven:

1. Clean the oven surface thoroughly with an oven cleaner.
2. Allow a 24-hour downtime before kashering.
3. Turn the oven on to the highest setting for one hour.

E. To kasher a microwave oven:

1. Clean the oven thoroughly.
2. Allow a 24 hour downtime before kashering.
3. Place a bowl of water in the oven.
4. Operate at the highest setting for ten minutes.
5. Refill the bowl, move to another location and again operate the oven for ten minutes in order to kasher the area where the bowl previously rested.
6. If there is a glass plate on the oven surface, it is preferable to cover or replace the plate.