

KASHRUT: TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER

INTRODUCTION TO TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER

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Gender/Kashrut Status Transfer

Foods and kitchenware (pots, pans, dishes, utensils, and containers) can absorb taste from each other and so adopt a new gender or kosher status. They can change from:

- Kosher to non-kosher,
- Kosher pareve (neutral) to kosher dairy or kosher meat, or
- Kosher Passover to kosher (or non-kosher) non-Passover.

NOTE You can sometimes change a utensil/container to kosher-pareve (see Kashering, below), but you cannot change a

- Gendered food to neutral-pareve, or
- Non-kosher food to kosher.

Taste Absorption

Taste gets absorbed in three ways: Heat, pressure, and soaking.

Heat

To absorb taste, and therefore gender or kashrut status, through heat, a food or utensil must be heated to 120° F or more while:

- Steamed with a *halachically* “liquid” food, or
- In wet physical contact with the food or utensil.

EXAMPLES

- Two hot pans, which are clean on their outsides, only transfer taste from one to the other if they are wet on the outside and are touching each other.
- A hot utensil placed onto a counter only transfers gender to the countertop if there is liquid or food at the point of contact.

NOTE All liquids plays a major role in facilitating taste transfer.

NOTE Taste, gender, or non-kosher status do not travel upstream into the utensil that food is being poured from. Even if you pour hot liquid (pareve or of one gender) from a pot onto a non-kosher or opposite gender food, the genders are not transferred back through the stream of liquid to the pot, even if any or all of the elements are more than 120 degrees.

SITUATION You pour hot liquid from some pareve vegetables into a non-kosher sink that had hot in it within 24 hours. There are dishes or utensils in the sink.

STATUS The dishes do not change gender unless the hot liquid fills up from the sink onto them. If so, the dishes or utensils become non-kosher. But no gender change occurs through the stream of liquid back to the pot of vegetables.

NOTE If the non-kosher sink had not had anything hot (120 degrees or above) in it for at least 24 hours, no change of gender or kosher status happens at all.

NOTE On Passover, gender and chametz status DO get transferred through a stream of hot liquid.

Pressure

To absorb taste, and therefore gender or kashrut status, through pressure or short-term soaking, one of the items must be spicy/charif.

Soaking

To absorb taste, and therefore gender or kashrut status, through long-term soaking, the food must soak for specific amounts of time.

NOTE If the food or utensil is not hot (120° F or more), is not spicy/charif, and is not soaking for a long time, there is no gender or kashrut-status transfer.

EXAMPLES

You may use a non-kosher utensil for any cold food of the opposite gender, so you may:

- Eat cold (kosher) cereal out of a meat or non-kosher bowl, or
- Use a meat or non-kosher spoon to eat kosher ice cream.

NOTE Even though these are permissible, they may not be done regularly but only on an ad hoc basis.

Food and Kitchenware: Which Influences What

Hot or Spicy/Charif Foods

With hot (more than 120° F) or spicy/charif foods:

Foods and utensils/containers transfer taste to each other.

Cold or Non-Spicy Foods that Soak

With cold (less than 120° F) or non-spicy/charif foods that soak:

- Foods do not transfer taste to utensils/containers;
- Utensils/containers do NOT transfer taste to foods.

NOTE No substances (not salt, or any food...) absorb gender from the open air.

The 24-Hour Rule: Eino ben Yomo

Torah Law: Reverts to Kosher-Pareve

By Torah law, a utensil/container always reverts to kosher-pareve after 24 hours (since the taste of any absorbed food becomes ruined with time).

Rabbinic Law: Must Be Kashed

However, by rabbinic law, the utensil/container must be kashed before using.

NOTE Even by Torah law, a hot or spicy/charif food can revive the milk-meat or non-kosher status of another utensil/container (see below) even after 24 hours.

Accidentally or Intentionally

Food Hot and Accidentally Placed; Utensil Not Hot for 24 Hours

Kosher food hotter than 120° F (49° C) remains kosher if accidentally placed into a non-kosher, clean utensil that has not been heated to 120° F or more for at least 24 hours.

REASON After 24 hours, b'di'avad, the utensil has reverted to being kosher-pareve.

NOTE If the utensil had been “used” (heated to 120° F or more) within the preceding 24 hours, the hot food that accidentally entered the utensil would be non-kosher. Ask a rabbi for possible exceptions.

Food Hot and Intentionally Placed

If the hot food had been put into the utensil intentionally, the food would not be kosher.

REASON Chazal made a rule (takana) that if you intentionally place food of one gender into a utensil of the opposite gender and heat it to 120° F or more, the food is not kosher.

TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER: HEAT

TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER: HEAT: WHAT IS HOT (YAD SOLEDET BO)

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Heat: What Is Hot (Yad Soledet Bo)

“Hot” is 120° F (49° C). This is the temperature at which an average person cannot hold his/her hand in a food for more than a few seconds (yad soledet bo).

TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER: SPICY/CHARIF

TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER: SPICY/CHARIF: WHAT IS SPICY/CHARIF

Which Produce Is Spicy/Charif

Spicy/charif fruits and vegetables include:

- (Sour) Apples
- Chives
- Garlic
- (Tart) Grapefruits
- Horseradish
- Lemons
- Limes
- Mustard (fresh or prepared)
- Onions
- (Sour) Pineapples
- Radishes
- Scallions.

Judge the tartness of food by a sour apple: if the food you are judging is less tart, it is not spicy/charif.

NOTE Dried chives, onions, and garlic might be spicy/charif, depending on the individual product.

TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER: SPICY/CHARIF: FACTORS THAT AFFECT SPICY/CHARIF

TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER: SPICY/CHARIF: MIXTURES

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Mixtures: Diluted with Oil

Spicy/charif will not pick up gender if the spicy/charif taste is diluted by oil and it no longer tastes spicy/charif. Mixtures with a strong taste, containing pepper, lemon juice, garlic, etc., will pick up the gender of their container if in the container long enough to become cooked.

EXAMPLE Garlic oil will pick up gender of its container if in the container long enough to become cooked.

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Mixtures: Batel BaShishim

Spicy/charif food may become nullifiable (batel ba'shishim), but consult a rabbi about the exceptions and details.

TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER: SPICY/CHARIF: HEAT

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: When Cooked

Some spicy/charif foods, such as onions, lose their spicy/charif nature when cooked.

TASTE (TA'AM) TRANSFER: SPICY/CHARIF: PRESSURE

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Pressure: What Acquires Taste

Pressure can transfer taste from spicy/charif food to utensil/container or vice versa.

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Pressure: Types of Pressure

Here are some types of pressure that transfer taste from spicy/charif food to utensil/container or vice versa.

When a spicy/charif food is:

- Cut with a knife,
- Crushed,
- Squashed by a spoon or fork,
- Squeezed in a garlic press, or
- Juiced in a juicer (including in a plastic orange juicer with plastic done that fits under the half-orange and spins slowly back and forth electrically).

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Pressure: Food Absorbing Taste of Utensils

When a spicy/charif food takes on the gender of the cutting/squeezing utensil:

- You may not cook or eat that food with food of the opposite gender.
- However, you MAY eat the opposite-gender food immediately after eating the gendered spicy food without waiting.

SITUATION An onion is cut with a meat knife, on a meat cutting board:

- The onion acquires meat status.
- You MAY NOT later cut this onion with a dairy knife or on a dairy cutting board. (If you do, the onion, the dairy knife, and the dairy cutting board will all become non-kosher.)

EXCEPTION If the knife and cutting board had not been used (even for cold items) for at least 24 hours, consult a rabbi.

EXCEPTION If you can sand off the surface to below the level of any knife cuts, the board might be kosher. Consult a rabbi.

- You MAY NOT cook this onion in a dairy utensil.

- You MAY NOT eat this onion with dairy food.
- You MAY eat dairy immediately after eating this onion (as long as there is no actual meat mixed into the onion).
- You MAY cook this onion with fish (even though you may not cook meat and fish together) but the fish may not be eaten with dairy food.

SITUATION You cut an onion with a meat knife and fry it in a neutral/pareve pan.

STATUS The pan becomes meat, but consult a rabbi for possible leniencies.

SITUATION You cut an onion with a meat knife and fry it in a dairy pan.

STATUS The pan becomes non-kosher. If you cook a neutral/pareve food in that pan after 24 hours have passed since the onion was cooked in it, and you ate the pareve food with milk, it is OK b'di'avad but you may not do that l'chatchila.

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Non-Kosher Utensils

A non-kosher fork, knife, or spoon may not be used to eat or cut spicy/charif food, such as tart pineapple. (If the food is not spicy or hot, you may use a clean, non-kosher utensil on an ad hoc basis.)

EXAMPLE A non-kosher implement (fork, knife) that is stuck into a spicy/charif or salty food, such as a spicy pickle, will make that pickle non-kosher immediately.

Suggestion Cut onion, garlic, and other spicy/charif foods on a pareve board and with a pareve knife.

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Pressure: Utensils Absorbing Taste of Food

If you use a neutral/pareve utensil with pressure on a gendered spicy/charif food, you may not use this utensil with food of the opposite gender unless they are all clean and less than 120° F (49° C) and even then, only on an ad hoc basis, not as a regular practice.

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Pressure: Blade Sharpness

When cutting a spicy/charif food, pressure (not the physical sharpness of the knife's edge) transfers taste.

NOTE There is more likely to be higher pressure when cutting with a dull knife rather than with a sharp one!

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Pressure: Forgotten Gender

SITUATION You forgot the gender of a cut onion in the refrigerator.

WHAT TO DO

- You may eat the onion with pareve food.
- You may NOT use the onion with dairy or with meat.

Taste (Ta'am) Transfer: Spicy/Charif: Sitting in Container

Cold, spicy/charif, solid food (with no liquid) does not transfer gender UNLESS it was under pressure, so simply sitting in an opposite-gender or non-kosher container does not have any effect.

NOTE Cold, spicy/charif, liquid food sitting in an opposite-gender or non-kosher container is kosher only if it sat less time than needed to become cooked.

EXAMPLE You ate cold (less than 120° F, or 49° C) spicy/charif food of one gender on a cold plate of the opposite gender:

Liquid Food

If the cold spicy/charif food is liquid but it is in contact with a utensil of the opposite gender for less time than it takes to boil, it would be kosher but, again, you should only do this ad hoc.

TASTE TRANSFER: SOAKING

NON-SPICY/NON-CHARIF SOAKING: 24 HOURS OR MORE

Non-Spicy/Non-Charif Soaking: Transfers Taste to Utensil/Container

A non-spicy/non-[charif](#) liquid or food with any liquid (enough to pour, but that may be even one drop) that sits for 24 hours or more will transfer gender or non-[kosher](#) status to its container.

SITUATION [Dairy](#) or meat liquid-containing food is in [pareve](#) container.

STATUS Container will become [dairy](#) or meat (regardless of intention).

EXAMPLES

- [Milk](#) sitting in a [pareve](#) mug for 24 hours or more would make the [pareve](#) mug [dairy](#).
- Chicken soup sitting in a [pareve](#) stoneware bowl for 24 hours or more would make the bowl meat.

NOTE This does not apply to any type of cold glass container and the food and the container remain [kosher](#).

Non-Spicy/Non-Charif Non-Kosher Soaking: Makes Kosher Food Non-Kosher

Any non-spicy/non-[charif](#), non-[kosher](#) food that soaks (in water or any other liquid) with [kosher](#) food for 24 hours or more will render the [kosher](#) food non-[kosher](#).

SPICY/CHARIF SOAKING: LONG ENOUGH TO BE COOKED

Spicy/Charif Soaking: Long Enough To Be Cooked: Food and Utensil

Food soaked in brine, vinegar, or any spicy liquid for long enough to be cooked if heated on a burner or in an oven will absorb or transfer gender or non-[kosher](#) status from/to any utensil used with it.

SITUATION Neutral/[pareve](#) food in brine, such as spicy pickles or spicy olives, sits in a container for long enough to become cooked.

STATUS

- If the container is [dairy](#), the food will become [dairy](#).
- If the container is meat, the food will become meat.

NOTE You may not eat this formerly [pareve](#) food with food of the opposite gender.

SITUATION A pickle with spicy/[charif](#) pickle juice is placed into a [dairy](#) utensil/container (even if unused) for long enough to become cooked.

STATUS The pickle will become [dairy](#) and may not be eaten with meat.

NOTE This example does not apply to any type of glass container.

NOTE Food soaked in brine by a non-Jew does not become subject to [bishul akum](#).

NOTE Even if the utensil had not been used for more than 24 hours, a spicy/[charif](#) food will “revive” the gendered or non-[kosher](#) taste in the utensil. The utensil will then make the food gendered or non-[kosher](#). Consult a [rabbi](#) for possible exceptions.

