How to Prepare Food in a Non-Kosher Kitchen

BAKING IN NON-*KOSHER* OVEN

An oven that has not been used for at least 24 hours is considered, *d'oraita*, to be neutral/*pareve*, but only if it is clean. *D'rabanan*, it is still not *kosher*, but this may be useful for when you can be lenient; e.g., if there is a *safek*.

NOTE Even when baking in a non-*kosher* oven, you must cook the food in a *kosher* utensil.

INTRODUCTION TO BAKING IN NON-*KOSHER* OVEN

Baking in a Non-*Kosher* Oven

How To Tell if Oven Is Clean

To determine whether a non-*kosher* oven with black or brown spots is clean, scratch them:

- If the substance crumbles, the spots are OK and you may bake non-liquid food in that oven without covering the food.
- If the spots do not crumble or they remain immovable or come off in flakes rather than crumbles, consider the oven not clean.

Uncovered Food; Clean (Non-*Kosher*) Oven

You may cook food uncovered in a non-*kosher* oven if:

- The oven rack and walls are clean, and
- The food is not “liquid.”

  NOTE Non-liquid is defined as not being liquid before cooking OR not being liquid after cooking, but the food does not need to be non-liquid at both times. Examples of “non-liquid” foods:

  - Apple cobbler
  - Lasagna
  - Meat (that will create gravy at the end)
  - Pudding
  - Raw fish.

SITUATION You plan to bake uncovered food in a clean, non-*kosher* oven in which the racks are not clean.

WHAT TO DO Place two layers of foil under the baking utensil.

Double Wrapping

When To Double Wrap

Double-wrap food before baking in a non-*kosher* radiant-heat oven if:

- The rack and/or oven are not clean;
- The food that you are baking is liquid at any time during the cooking process; OR
- Some of the food you are baking spills onto the rack or oven surfaces.

How To Double Wrap

When wrapping food for cooking in a non-*kosher* oven, the wrapping material does not need to seal completely, but the:

- Food must be completely covered with two layers of foil or plastic;
- Layers must keep water vapor out from between the layers; and
- Surfaces of the utensil must all be covered.

SPILLED *KOSHER* FOOD IN NON-*KOSHER* OVEN

Kosher Food Spilling in Non-*Kosher* Oven

If *kosher* food spills inside a non-*kosher* oven in which you are cooking uncovered *kosher* food (whether liquid or non-liquid), consult a *rabbi* about whether the uncovered *kosher* food may still be eaten.

NOTE In this case, it makes no difference whether the oven is clean or dirty because the spilled food is wet and takes on the non-*kosher* status of the oven. When the spilled food vaporizes, it carries the non-*kosher* essence to the *kosher* food or utensil.

NOTE If the non-*kosher* oven had not been used for more than 24 hours, the food is probably still *kosher b'di'avad*.

NOTE This applies to food spilled either from the same utensil in which you were cooking the *kosher* food or from a different utensil.

FROZEN FOOD IN NON-*KOSHER* OVEN

Double Wrap Frozen Food in Non-*Kosher* Oven

Frozen food is considered to be wet food regarding cooking it in a non-*kosher* oven or regarding its being neutral for *dairy* and meat issues: If the oven is not *kosher*, the frozen food must be double wrapped, even if the oven is clean.

AIRLINE MEALS IN NON-*KOSHER* OVEN

Heating Airline Meals in Non-*Kosher* Oven

Airline meals are usually non-liquid, so even if they are single-wrapped, it is OK to heat them in a non-*kosher* oven as long as no non-*kosher* food contacts the *kosher* food container.

COOKING IN NON-*KOSHER* MICROWAVE OVEN

Microwave Oven: *Kosher* Status

Introduction to Microwave Oven: *Kosher* Status

If a microwave oven's walls/floor/door do not become hot (more than 120° F, or 49° C), the microwave oven does not become non-*kosher*, *dairy*, meat, or non-Passover/*chametz*.

NOTE A microwave oven that does not normally get hot, may get hotter than 120° F if you cook:

- A liquid or moist food for a long time (even if less than 10 minutes),
- Several liquid or moist items sequentially, or
- Popcorn and similar foods.

If a microwave oven's walls/floor/door get hot, the oven can become *dairy*, meat, or non-*kosher* (if they become one gender and then the opposite gender is cooked or if non-*kosher* food has been cooked in it). If any surface--including walls, door, floor, etc.--that gets hot are plastic or coated metal, it cannot be returned to *kosher* or *pareve*. However, if the surfaces are all made of metal, they may be kasherable. Consult a *rabbi*.

NOTE If the microwave oven does get hot, it cannot be *kashered* at all--not for *Passover* and not from non-*kosher* to *kosher*. To check if your microwave oven gets hot, see How To Check If a Microwave Oven Will Get Hot during Cooking

Microwave Oven: *Kosher* Status: Walls and Door

Since microwave oven walls and doors do not normally get hot (more than 120° F, or 49° C), there is usually no need to *kasher* them from *milk* to meat (or back to *milk*); from ordinary use to *Passover* use; or from non-*kosher* to *kosher*. Just clean all surfaces.

Microwave Oven: *Kosher* Status: Floor

Microwave oven floors can get hot, especially where there is no rotating glass tray and the utensil is placed directly on the oven floor. All microwave ovens should be assumed to get hot unless you have tested them personally.

Microwave Floor

Cover the floor (ideally with styrofoam or another substance that blocks heat and moisture) in a non-*kosher* microwave oven.

Glass Tray

The glass tray does not become non-*kosher* and does not become *dairy* or meat or *chametz* (unless it was removed and used in a conventional oven) as long as it is clean.

Plastic Tray Support

The plastic support under the glass tray must be cleaned and must be blocked from contact with actual cooking utensils and from food if the tray:

- Has any food of the gender opposite that of the food being cooked,
- Has non-*kosher* food on it, or
- Is dirty and you cannot tell with what.

How To Check If a Microwave Oven Will Get Hot during Cooking

To determine if the walls of a microwave oven will get hot during cooking:

- Boil water for as long as food would typically be cooked in that microwave oven, and
- Touch the inside walls, floor, door, and ceiling
    - If the walls are too hot to touch, the walls may acquire the gender of any food cooked in the oven. (If the walls are already the opposite gender when cooking a food, the oven may become non-*kosher*.)
    - If the walls are not too hot to touch, then no change of status occurs.

Non-*Kosher* Microwave Oven: Hot Oven, Liquid or Solid Food

If the walls of a non-*kosher* microwave oven get hotter than 120° F, you must double wrap any liquid or solid food you cook in that oven.

NOTE If you did not double wrap liquid or solid food cooked in a non-*kosher* microwave oven, consult a *rabbi* about whether you may eat the food.

Non-*Kosher* Microwave Oven: Non-Hot Oven

If the walls of a non-*kosher* microwave oven stay less than 120° F, you do not need to wrap or cover liquid or non-liquid food, as long as:

1. The microwave oven is clean and dry, and

2. If the tray is non-glass or non-Pyrex, you put a layer of separation (plastic, styrofoam, etc…) that blocks heat and any moisture underneath the cooking utensil.

COOKING ON NON-*KOSHER* STOVE

Setting Down Hot Lid on Non-*Kosher* Stove Top

SITUATION You set down a hot pot lid on a non-*kosher* stove top.

STATUS

- Lid is dry and stove is clean: lid remains *kosher*.
- Lid is dry or wet and stove is dirty: lid is non-*kosher*.
- Lid is wet and stove had hot non-*kosher* mixtures on it within the previous 24 hours--even if the stove is clean: lid is not *kosher*.
- Lid is dry or wet and stove is clean and did not have hot non-*kosher* mixtures on it within the previous 24 hours: lid is *kosher*.

COOKING WITH NON-*KOSHER* UTENSILS

Using a Non-*Kosher* Kitchen Utensil

Introduction to Using a Non-*Kosher* Cooking Utensil

You may not use a non-*kosher* cooking utensil (pot, pan, baking dish, etc.) for cooking even if the utensil is clean and has not been used for more than 24 hours (unless you *kasher* it first).

Fruit Cut with Non-*Kosher* Knife

You should wash most fresh fruit cut with a non-*kosher* knife in order to remove whatever non-*kosher* food might have been on the knife from before.

NOTE Fruit with a sharp taste—such as lemons or tart apples—may not be used if cut with a non-*kosher* knife, regardless of whether the knife had been used within 24 hours.

WASHING IN NON-*KOSHER* SINK

Using a Non-*Kosher* Sink

A dish is still *kosher b'di'avad* if heated to 120° F (49° C) or more in a clean, non-*kosher* sink that had remained below 120° F for the previous 24 hours.

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