



Absorption of Flavor in Halacha

Jewish law strictly prohibits the consumption of non-kosher foods in their original form as well as the flavor derived from these foods. The Talmud and early authorities go into great detail to explain the laws regarding the absorption of prohibited flavors.

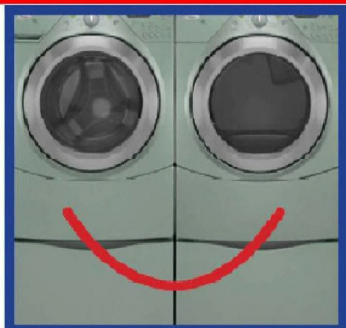
Absorption of flavor into food is very applicable in regards to cooking utensils. During the cooking process, the utensil (pot, pan, glass, etc) absorbs the food's flavor. Upon reuse of the utensil for cooking, the flavor can be reabsorbed into the next food being cooked. As such, when non-kosher food has been cooked in a pot or pan, it is prohibited to use the utensil to

cook kosher food. Halacha maintains that when the pot is reheated, the non-kosher flavor will be released into the new food being cooked and render it non-kosher.

A basic principle in kashrut maintains that only flavor that has remained in the utensil for the last twenty-four hours can cause the food to become non-kosher. The basis for this halacha is found in the Talmud. The Gemara in *Avodah Zara* (86:A) rules that biblically it is permissible to cook kosher food in a pot in which non-kosher food was cooked over twenty-four hours prior since the aging of the flavor has caused it to become defective or distasteful. In other words, only tasteful flavor is prohibited, but flavor that is distasteful is not considered prohibited when mixed in with kosher food.

Based on the aforementioned ruling, if someone were to cook kosher food in a non-kosher utensil which sat unused for

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over twenty-four hours, the food would theoretically remain kosher and be fit for consumption. However, our Sages decreed (Ibid) that it is strictly prohibited to cook in a non-kosher pot even if it was not used in the last twenty-four hours. The concern is that one might mistakenly cook in a pot that has been used in the last twenty-four hours. The halachic concept of twenty-four hours is referred to as *Ben-Yomo* or *Eino Ben Yomo*. *Ben Yomo* refers to a utensil that was used for cooking in the last twenty-four hours, while *Eino Ben-Yomo* refers to a utensil that was not used for cooking in the last twenty-four hours.

Even though our Sages strictly prohibited cooking in an *Eino Ben Yomo* non-kosher utensil, cases exist in which the food may be considered kosher. Whenever asking a Rav a kashrut question regarding the status of a utensil, of food cooked in non-kosher utensils, or utensils used for meat and then milk (and vice versa) it is essential to know whether the utensil is *Ben-Yomo* or *Eino Ben-Yomo*. A proper halachic ruling can only be given upon knowing the status of the utensil.

The details of *Ben Yomo* and *Eino Ben Yomo* utensils will be further discussed in upcoming articles. ■

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