



Bishul Akum Conditions- Eaten Raw - Part 2

Our Sages prohibited the consumption of kosher food cooked by non-Jews, a decree known as *Bishul Akum*. In previous articles, we examined the conditions that determine whether this prohibition applies. One of these conditions is whether a food is commonly eaten raw. The rationale behind the prohibition is to discourage excessive social interaction with non-Jews, which could potentially lead to intermarriage.

The halachic ruling is clear: if a food is typically eaten raw, it is not subject to *Bishul Akum*. This is because such food is not considered significant or unique in a way that fosters close social bonding. Since raw-edible foods lack this unique culinary aspect, our Sages did not include them in the prohibition.

As eating habits evolve over time, it is essential to assess whether historical and

culinary developments affect which foods qualify for the *Bishul Akum* prohibition. Although halacha is rooted in tradition, it accounts for changes in societal norms, particularly in how food is prepared and consumed.

HISTORICAL CHANGES

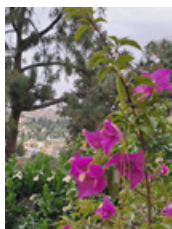
An analysis of rulings by early and later halachic authorities reveals that what is considered "eaten raw" can change depending on the time period and food culture.

For example, the *Shach* (YD 113:2) ruled that mushrooms fall under the *Bishul Akum* prohibition, reflecting a time when raw mushrooms were not commonly eaten. Today, however, raw mushrooms are widely consumed, and therefore, they are no longer subject to the prohibition (*Pitchei Halacha* p.289).

On the stricter side, the *Darchei Teshuva* (113:6) presents the case of certain oils. The *Gemara* (Avodah Zara 38:b) mentions that some oils are exempt from *Bishul Akum* because they are eaten raw. However, many modern oils, such as canola or cottonseed, are not typically consumed raw. As such, the *Darchei Teshuva* holds that these oils do require *Bishul Yisrael* (see *Pesakim U'teshuvot* 113:8 for the accepted lenient opinion

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regarding oil).

Other examples of foods that were once cooked exclusively but are now eaten raw include spinach, broccoli, and cauliflower. In the not-too-distant past, these were generally only eaten cooked, but today they are commonly consumed raw and are thus exempt from *Bishul Akum* (*Otzar Halachot* p.261).

GEOGRAPHICAL & CULINARY DIFFERENCES

A central question among the authorities is: What determines whether a food is considered "eaten raw"? The *Pri Chadash* (113:3) writes about this extensively.

He begins by citing the *Rashbam* (cited in *Hagahot Oshri*, *Avodah Zara* 2:38), who suggests that the rule of *Ne'echal Chai* (eaten raw) might be subjective—dependent on each individual's dietary preferences. According to this view, if someone personally never eats a certain food raw, then that food would be subject to *Bishul Akum* for that individual. The *Bnei Chayai* (113:2), a later authority, rules in accordance with this opinion. The rationale is that since the decree is based on the social intimacy created by shared meals, the halacha should reflect the individual's experience. If a person never eats a particular food raw, consuming it when cooked by a non-Jew could potentially lead to the type of social closeness our Sages sought to prevent.

However, the *Pri Chadash* strongly rejects this position. He brings numerous proofs from the *Gemara* that halachic standards are determined by communal norms, not individual behavior. Therefore, even if an

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individual does not eat a food raw, if the general population does, that food is exempt from *Bishul Akum* for everyone.

Conversely, if a food is not typically eaten raw by the broader public—even if a small minority does consume it raw—it still falls under the prohibition (*Pesakim U'tehuvot* 113:3).

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

The discussion becomes more complex when considering differences between countries or communities in eating customs.

The *Pri Chadash* (ibid) appears to maintain that the standard for determining whether a food is eaten raw must be based on global

majority consumption. The *Magen Avraham* (OH 320:1) agrees with this view. However, the *Aruch HaShulchan* (YD 113:12) and *Chochmat Adam* (66:4) take a different stance: if a particular country or large community has a distinct culinary custom, then that local custom defines the halachic ruling for its residents, regardless of global trends.

Later authorities confirm that the prevailing custom is to follow the *Aruch HaShulchan* and *Chochmat Adam* (*Pesakim U'teshuvot*, *ibid*). A practical example of this is found in the Far East, where vegetables such as carrots and peppers are consumed only when cooked. Accordingly, Jewish communities in those regions are required to adhere to *Bishul Yisrael* for such vegetables, even though in Western countries they are eaten raw and therefore exempt.

SUMMARY

- “*Ne’echal Chai*” (eaten raw) is determined by contemporary eating habits. Foods like spinach and broccoli, once only consumed cooked, are now eaten raw and are not subject to *Bishul Akum*.
- Halachic norms follow the majority: Even if an individual has personal preferences, halacha is based on widespread societal behavior.
- Local customs matter: In countries or communities where food consumption differs significantly, those local practices define the halachic requirements for *Bishul Akum*, even if they differ from global norms. ■

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