



Bishul Akum Conditions - Eaten Raw with Difficulty

INTRODUCTION

Our Sages instituted a rabbinic prohibition against consuming kosher food that was cooked by a non-Jew. This prohibition is known as *Bishul Akum*. One of the conditions for this prohibition to apply is whether the food is typically eaten raw.

Halachically, if a food is commonly eaten raw (*Ne'echal Chai*), it is exempt from the prohibition of *Bishul Akum*. This is because such food lacks the culinary significance or social context that could lead to inappropriate closeness between Jews and non-Jews—one of the primary concerns behind this rabbinic decree.

WHAT QUALIFIES AS “EATEN RAW”?

The *Gemara* (*Avodah Zara* 38:b) discusses what constitutes a food being “eaten raw.” There are many foods that can technically be consumed raw, although doing so may be either highly unpleasant or extremely rare. A modern example is raw eggs. Some athletes consume raw eggs—often blended into smoothies—for their high protein content, which is believed to support muscle growth and recovery.

Despite this practice, the consumption of raw eggs is generally considered unpalatable. Therefore, halachically, eggs are not considered *Ne'echal Chai*, and cooking them by a

non-Jew would be subject to the prohibition of *Bishul Akum* (see *Pesakim Uteshvot* 113:8).

THE SOURCE

The *Gemara* (*ibid*) discusses a dispute between *Rebi Yochanan* and *Chizkiyah*, along with *Bar Kappara*. The disagreement concerns large fish that are barely edible even after being salted. *Rebi Yochanan* holds that because these fish are difficult to consume raw—even when salted—they do not qualify as *Ne'echal Chai* and thus fall under the prohibition of *Bishul Akum*.

Bar Kappara and *Chizkiyah*, however, argue that even if a food is difficult to eat raw, as long as it is technically edible, it is still considered *Ne'echal Chai* and may be cooked by a non-Jew.

While early authorities debate which opinion is the accepted halacha, the *Tur* (YD 113) and *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 113:12) follow the opinion of the *Rashba* who rules in accordance with *Rebi Yochanan*.

The *Taz* (YD 113:14) further refines this ruling by distinguishing between foods that are nearly impossible to eat raw and those that are merely somewhat unpleasant. According to the *Taz*, only the former is included in the prohibition of *Bishul Akum* (see *Levushai Oz* YD 113:12).

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

In practice, since the *Shulchan Aruch's*



opinion is generally followed, most foods that are unpleasant or difficult to eat raw are included in the *Bishul Akum* prohibition. As mentioned in previous discussions, Rav Belsky zt"l emphasized that this qualification depends not on how many people eat the food raw, but rather on the nature of the raw consumption itself.

To clarify: even if thousands of athletes consume raw eggs, their general unpleasantness remains. Similarly, various nutrients and minerals consumed for health reasons may be eaten raw by many people but are still considered repulsive. The defining factor is the repulsiveness or unpleasantness of eating the item raw, not the number of people who do so.

An example cited by later authorities is unripe fruit. While unripe fruit may be used in processed food production, if the raw form is generally repulsive to eat, then the end product falls under *Bishul Akum* when cooked by a non-Jew (see *Pri Megadim* YD 113:12).

Poskim (Responsa *Shevet Halevi* 10:125, *Maharsham* 2:262) have also addressed the

status of foods that are routinely cooked or pasteurized for health and safety. A classic example is milk, which must be pasteurized before being sold commercially in many countries to eliminate harmful bacteria.

Would this requirement make milk subject to *Bishul Akum*, since it's not consumed raw in practice? Later authorities (ibid) rule definitively that pasteurization does not qualify as a halachically significant cooking process in this context. The reason is that the pasteurization is done solely for health reasons—not to enhance taste or quality—and milk, in essence, can be consumed raw.

Even if many people today find unpasteurized milk difficult to consume, this is attributed to habit and familiarity with pasteurized milk, not a fundamental change in its edibility. Therefore, pasteurized milk does not fall under the prohibition of *Bishul Akum*. ■

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