



Bishul Akum Conditions – Current State

Our Sages decreed that food cooked by non-Jews—*Bishul Akum*—is prohibited for consumption, even when the ingredients themselves are entirely kosher. To apply this prohibition, the Sages established specific criteria under which food is classified as *Bishul Akum*. One key condition is that the food must be of a type not typically eaten raw. If a food is commonly consumed raw, it is exempt from the laws of *Bishul Akum*. In halacha, this condition is referred to as *ne'echal chai*—literally, “eaten raw.” This article explores the halachic standard for determining whether a food is considered raw.

PRESENT STATE

The *Gemara* (*Avodah Zara* 38:b) discusses

that small fish which have been salted are considered edible. Consequently, even if such fish are later cooked by a non-Jew, they would still be permitted for consumption. This raises an important question: why should the salting process matter, given that the fish, in its raw state, is inedible and would seemingly fall under the prohibition of *Bishul Akum*?

Rashi and *Rambam* explain that this *Gemara* establishes a fundamental principle regarding *ne'echal chai*: although the fish is not edible when raw, the salting process renders the food *ne'echal chai*. Therefore, once the fish has been salted and rendered edible, it is no longer subject to the laws of *Bishul Akum*. Conversely, if the fish has not been salted and remains inedible in its raw form, it would require *Bishul Yisrael*.

In short, the standard of *ne'echal chai* depends on the current status of the food before being cooked. Early halachic authorities applied this concept broadly and provided numerous examples. For instance, the *Rashba* rules that while raw wheat was commonly consumed in earlier times, once it is ground into flour—rendering it inedible—it becomes subject to the laws of *Bishul Akum*. The *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 113:12) and later authorities adopts this position.

CRANBERRIES

Does the prohibition of *Bishul Akum* apply to cranberries?



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Cranberries are used in various culinary applications, including cranberry sauce (commonly paired with meat dishes or used in pie fillings), cranberry juice, and dried cranberries. Regarding cranberry juice, there would appear to be no issue of *Bishul Akum*, since the cranberry becomes secondary to the water—similar to the rulings of the *Taz* (YD 114:1) and *Shach* (YD 114:1) concerning barley used in beer production. As discussed in previous articles, the same principle applies to coffee and tea as such most beverages are not subject to *Bishul Akum*.

Cranberries that are sweetened and then cooked also pose no halachic concern related to *Bishul Akum*, assuming they are considered edible through the sweetening process. However, the core question is whether cranberries are edible raw.

One of North America's most popular cranberry products is from Ocean Spray, a company certified by the OU Kosher. OU Kosher reached out to Ocean Spray to clarify the status of raw cranberries. Ocean Spray responded:

“As far as we know, there are no problems associated with consuming raw cranberries. However, most people prefer cranberries in their cooked form. Cranberries are a very tart, bitter fruit; they are usually more enjoyable once they have been sweetened in some way.”

Thus, while cranberries are typically cooked and sweetened to enhance flavor,

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they can be eaten raw. OU Kosher also identified two dishes that use raw cranberries without any cooking. This supports the position that cranberries, though commonly sweetened, are not inherently inedible when raw.

Based on this understanding, OU Kosher does not require *Bishul Yisrael* for cranberries (See *Otzar Bishulei Akum* 11:6). ■

Kashrut Questions in Israel?

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