



When Is Dairy Bread Prohibited?

Our Sages decreed that one may not bake dairy bread, meaning bread containing milk, butter, or other dairy ingredients mixed into the dough. Since the finished product of dairy bread is generally indistinguishable from pareve bread, and bread serves as a staple component of most meals, there is a concern that dairy bread may inadvertently be eaten together with meat. To prevent such confusion, *Chazal* prohibited the production and consumption of dairy bread.

However, the *Gemara* provides two exceptions to this decree. First, if the bread is made in a distinctive shape, it serves as a clear reminder that the bread is dairy and will not be mistakenly consumed with meat. Second, if only a small quantity is produced — an

amount expected to be consumed within a single meal or a single day — the concern of confusion is significantly reduced. The *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 97:1) and later authorities (see *Aruch Hashulchan* 97:3-6) codify both exceptions as acceptable. In this article, we will examine the parameters and timing of these allowances.

KNEADING THE DOUGH

The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 36:a) explicitly uses the term “kneading,” stating that one may not knead dough with milk or other dairy ingredients. A simple reading suggests that the prohibition begins at the moment the dairy ingredient is mixed into the dough.

The *Yad Yehuda* (97:3), however, explains that this is not necessarily the case. The mere act of mixing milk into dough does not automatically render the dough prohibited, since one may still utilize either of the two recognized exceptions after the dough has been prepared. For example, one may subsequently shape the dough into distinctive forms or divide it into smaller portions that qualify under the allowance for limited quantities.

Later authorities discuss an additional scenario: May one intentionally add a small amount of milk to dough when the milk will be halachically nullified, constituting less than one-sixtieth of the mixture?

All authorities agree that if this occurred inadvertently, the dough and resulting bread may be consumed even with meat. Since the milk is halachically nullified, no violation of *Basar Bechalav* has occurred. This is evident from the ruling of the *Rema* in a related

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area of kashrut (see YD 99:6). Furthermore, such bread would not be classified as “dairy bread” for purposes of the rabbinic decree.

The question, however, is whether one may intentionally add a small amount of milk for this purpose. The later authorities are divided. The *Minchat Yaakov* (60:1) and the *Gilyon Maharsha* (YD 97:1) prohibit doing so, arguing that intentionally nullifying an ingredient is itself prohibited under established halachic principles.

The *Chavat Da'at* (97:2) and Responsa *Mahari”t* (YD 2:18) disagree. They argue that the prohibition against intentionally nullifying an ingredient applies only to substances that are independently prohibited, such as non-kosher food. Dairy products themselves are entirely permissible; therefore, adding a minute amount of milk to dough, where it will be nullified, is allowed even if one intends to consume the bread with meat.

Since there are many aspects of this specific *Shail”a* one should consult with their Rav.

CAN BREAD BE SALVAGED AFTER BAKING?

If dairy bread was baked without utilizing one of the permitted exceptions, can anything be done afterward to permit its consumption?

Several later authorities discuss whether the bread may be divided into smaller portions after baking. Some cite a tradition from an ancestor of Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz (*Kereti U’Pleiti* 97:1) who permitted such a solution, even if the division occurred after baking.

The *Chavat Da'at* (97:3) and many later

authorities disagree. In their view, once the bread has been baked in a prohibited manner, no subsequent modification can remove the prohibition. The bread remains prohibited regardless of later alterations.

LABELS AND PACKAGING AS A REMINDER

This dispute has important practical implications for modern commercial bakeries that produce dairy bread and indicate its status on the packaging.

In Responsa *Even Yisrael* (9:24) rules that a dairy label on the packaging is sufficient to permit the bread, even according to the stringent position of the *Chavat Da'at*. He explains that the *Gemara’s* prohibition applies to the act of kneading. Just as it is permissible to knead dough with the intention of forming it into small rolls or a distinctive shape, so too it is permissible to knead dough with the intention of placing a clear dairy label on the packaging or on the bread itself. According to this approach, the stringent authorities only prohibit cases where the dough was kneaded without any intention to make a special shape or small amount and only afterward, once the bread had already become prohibited, was an attempt made to rectify the situation.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Mesoret Moshe* 3:193) is quoted as rejecting this ruling, maintaining that a label does not satisfy the requirements of the rabbinic decree. A strong proof for this position may be found in the rulings of earlier authorities, who require that the identifying reminder (*heker*) be part of the bread itself. The *Chamudei*

Daniel (2:18) writes that the reminder must remain on the loaf, since if the identifying feature were removed or partially consumed, confusion could still result. Since packaging is merely an external wrapper and not part of the bread itself, it cannot be considered a valid *heker*.

OU Kosher follows this majority position and does not permit bakeries to produce standard loaves of dairy bread based solely on labels or signs placed on store shelves. Consumers in Israel should be aware, however, that several bakeries rely on the more lenient opinion and consider labeling sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the decree. ■

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