



Glatt/Chalakh Beef

Among the most familiar terms in the world of kosher food is Glatt meat. When planning a simcha or catered event, it is common to hear the question, “Will you be serving Glatt?” Over the years, the term has become synonymous with a higher standard of kashrut, often being used as a general expression of meticulous kosher observance.

However, the term Glatt applies exclusively to the kashrut of beef and lamb. It has no halachic relevance to poultry (at least until very recently), and it certainly has no application to other areas of kashrut. Nevertheless, one frequently encounters advertisements for “Glatt Kosher” dairy restaurants or poultry products—an inaccurate use of a term that properly relates only to the inspection of an animal’s lungs after shechitah.

Because of the widespread misunderstanding surrounding this subject, it is worthwhile to examine the basics of what Glatt (or *Chalakh*) actually means, its halachic source, and the

practical standards followed today in Israel and throughout the world.

THE HALACHIC SOURCE

The Torah teaches that an animal suffering from certain life-threatening injuries or illnesses is not kosher, even if it undergoes a perfectly valid shechitah. Such an animal is known as a *treifah*. The various injuries and defects that render an animal non-kosher are collectively referred to as *treifot*.

Although *Chazal* identify numerous physical conditions that can render an animal a *treifah*, they also established the principle that the overwhelming majority of animals are healthy. Consequently, there is generally no obligation to inspect every organ after slaughter. The notable exception is the lungs.

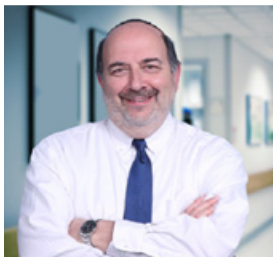
Although most cattle have healthy lungs, a significant minority develop punctures, lesions, or other abnormalities that may render them *treif*. Because these defects occur with sufficient frequency, every kosher-slaughtered animal must undergo a thorough lung inspection.

If an actual puncture or other halachically disqualifying defect is found, the animal is immediately classified as *treif*. It is removed from kosher production and may not be sold as kosher meat.

SIRCHOT (ADHESIONS)

One of the most common findings during lung inspection is the presence of

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sirchot—adhesions or membranous attachments connecting one section of the lung to another or to the chest wall.

The Gemara teaches that the presence of a *sircha* may indicate that a puncture once existed beneath the adhesion, which later healed by forming scar tissue. Since an animal with a punctured lung is a *treifah*, the halachic significance of *sirchot* became the subject of extensive discussion among early authorities.

Here lies one of the fundamental differences between the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema.

The Shulchan Aruch maintains that while there are certain types and locations of adhesions that do not invalidate the animal, a *sircha* that raises concern cannot be “tested” or peeled away in an attempt to prove the lung is kosher. According to this approach, any attempt to validate such an adhesion through physical examination is halachically unacceptable.

The Rema, however, adopts a different approach. He agrees that problematic adhesions may indicate a *treifah*, but based on earlier Ashkenazic authorities he permits a carefully regulated method of examination. If the membrane is found to be extremely thin and fragile, separating with minimal contact and without any force, it is considered merely a superficial mucus-like attachment rather than a true *sircha*. In such cases, the animal may remain kosher.

The Rema himself notes that the “Checking” method is a halachic leniency, yet rules that it had become the accepted custom throughout

Ashkenazic communities.

HISTORICAL PRACTICE

Historically, Sephardic communities followed the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch, while Ashkenazic communities relied upon the inspection procedures described by the Rema.

In practice, however, many communities adopted a broader standard commonly referred to simply as Kosher meat. Under this system, the leniencies of both traditions were utilized. Meat would be approved if the adhesion met the criteria accepted by either the Shulchan Aruch or Rema. This became the standard sold in many kosher butcher shops for generations.

WHAT IS GLATT?

During the twentieth century, many Ashkenazic communities - particularly in the United States and parts of Europe—began adopting more stringent standards. Rabbinic authorities increasingly felt that combining the leniencies of both the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema was inappropriate.

The term Glatt, meaning “smooth” in Yiddish, came into use to describe meat that met a significantly higher standard. The name

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refers to lungs that are essentially smooth and free of significant adhesions.

Under modern Glatt standards, only a very limited number of extremely minor adhesions may be accepted, and only if they separate effortlessly without the application of force. Many authorities limit this to only a few insignificant membranes. Meat approved based on this standard became the accepted norm among virtually all major kosher certification agencies in North America, while the older “Kosher” standard has largely disappeared from the international kosher marketplace.

CHALAK BEIT YOSEF

The development of the Israeli meat industry required the Chief Rabbinate to determine which standards would be recognized for official certification. After considerable discussion, two distinct standards were established.

Kasher (*Kasher U'Muchshar*) permits the inspection procedures accepted by the Rema while also incorporating the leniencies recognized by both the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema. This represents the lower of the two official standards.

Chalak Beit Yosef, by contrast, follows the stricter interpretation of the Shulchan Aruch regarding *sirchot*. It does not rely upon the Ashkenazic method of checking adhesions and therefore represents the highest standard accepted by both Sephardic authorities and many Ashkenazic communities. In Israel, this standard is commonly referred to simply as *Chalak*.

Although many Ashkenazim continue to rely on the American Glatt standard, others prefer to consume only *Chalak Beit Yosef*, thereby satisfying the stricter opinions of both traditions.

UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S STANDARDS

Today, three practical standards are commonly encountered.

The first is *Kasher*, the standard still recognized in Israel that incorporates the accepted leniencies of both Ashkenazic and Sephardic practice.

The second is Glatt, the standard developed primarily in North America. This standard is considerably stricter than traditional Ashkenazic practice and places severe limitations on acceptable adhesions, but it does not necessarily satisfy the requirements of the Shulchan Aruch.

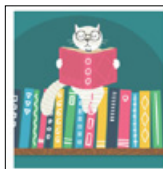
The third is *Chalak Beit Yosef*, which follows the strict rulings of the Shulchan Aruch and is widely accepted by Sephardic communities as well as many Ashkenazim.

In Israel, the overwhelming majority of Sephardim, together with many Ashkenazim, consume only *Chalak Beit Yosef*. Likewise, someone who accepts only Glatt meat abroad should recognize that the standard known simply as *Kasher* in Israel is not equivalent to the Glatt standard commonly found in North America and may not meet the standards practiced within his own community.

Understanding these distinctions enables consumers to make informed decisions and appreciate that the terms *Kasher*, *Glatt*, and *Chalak* are not interchangeable. Each reflects a distinct halachic approach to one of the most carefully scrutinized aspects of kosher meat production. ■

Kashrut Questions in Israel?

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