

# PREPARING CHOLENT FOR SHABBOS

*by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt*

Question: What must be done in order to properly prepare cholent for Shabbos?

Discussion: Preparing cholent for Shabbos on top of the stove or inside the oven (crock pots are addressed in a separate discussion) is susceptible to the following Shabbos violations:

- The Rabbinic prohibition of putting food on a heat source before Shabbos and leaving it on during Shabbos. The reason for this prohibition is to prevent one from inadvertently "stoking the coals," whose modern equivalent is adjusting the knobs or dials to raise the temperature.
- The Rabbinic prohibition of returning — on Shabbos — food to a heat source, since then, too, one would be inclined to adjust the temperature. In addition, this is prohibited because it appears to be "cooking."

To avoid these potential violations when preparing cholent on a stovetop, the following guidelines must be adhered to: Although not halachically mandated, many poskim recommend that the fire be covered by a blech, even if the cholent is fully cooked before sunset.[1] If the cholent is less than half-cooked [or under extenuating circumstances, only a third cooked], a blech is halachically required.[2] Whether or not the knobs, dials or computerized number pads need to be covered as well is a subject of debate among contemporary poskim: Some require it[3], others strongly recommend it,[4] while others do not consider it important at all[5]. To remove a cholent pot from the fire on Shabbos with the intention of putting it right back on, e.g., to add water to it or to serve it at a kiddush before a meal, the following conditions must be met. These conditions are known as the "conditions for returning":

- 1.The fire (and knobs[6] ) must be covered with a blech. A blech may be placed over the fire on Shabbos[7].
- 2.The cholent must be completely cooked and still warm when returned to the flame.
- 3.The cholent pot should not be put down on any surface. B'diavad, if the cholent pot was put down on a table or countertop[8] (not on the floor[9] ), it may still be returned to the blech[10].

Question: What must be done in order to properly prepare cholent for Shabbos on a hotplate?

Discussion: Most poskim rule that even cholent which is less than half-cooked may be placed before Shabbos on a hotplate, even without a covering, since a hotplate has just one temperature setting that cannot be adjusted[11]. Returning food to an uncovered hot plate, however, is debatable: Many poskim forbid doing so[12], while others are more lenient[13]. In order to satisfy the views of all

poskim, cooked hot food should only be returned onto a hotplate if it is covered with a thick layer of aluminum foil.

Question: What must be done in order to properly prepare cholent for Shabbos inside the oven?

Discussion: It is advisable that the cholent be fully cooked before Shabbos begins. If it was not, or b'diavad, as long as the cholent is half cooked [or under extenuating circumstances, a third cooked], it may be left in the oven. If the cholent is not cooked to even this extent, then the cholent may not be left inside the oven — unless an oven insert is placed inside it.

In the opinion of many poskim, if the cholent was removed from inside the oven on Shabbos it may not be returned to the oven — unless there is an oven insert inside<sup>[14]</sup>. Even though in some ovens no fire is visible, still there is nothing that distinguishes the oven from its regular weekday appearance; it still looks like someone is cooking and the chance of their adjusting the temperature is still very real. [A minority opinion maintains that if the stove knobs etc., are covered or removed, and a piece of silver foil is placed underneath the pot, the cholent may be returned to the oven as long as it is completely cooked, still warm and was not put down on any surface, as detailed earlier.<sup>[15]</sup> ]

This prohibition poses a problem to those who want to eat some of their Shabbos cholent on Friday night. They cannot remove the cholent from the oven, since, as we just explained, it is forbidden to put it back in. They cannot dish cholent out of the pot while it is still inside the oven, since it is a Rabbinic prohibition to dish out food while it is still on the fire, even if the food is completely cooked<sup>[16]</sup>.

A possible solution to the problem is the following compromise: The oven rack should be slid part-way out of the oven so that the pot is not directly over the flame. The other part of the pot should remain inside the oven in an area which is yad soledes bo (at least 110° F). In this manner the cholent is not really being removed from the oven, and "returning" it would be permitted.

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1. Based on Rama 253:1, as explained by Beiur Halachah, s.v. v'nahagu. Chazon Ish, O.C. 37:3 disagrees, and holds that a blech is not necessary when the cholent is at least half cooked.

2. Although Chazon Ish, O.C. 37:11 disagrees and does not permit placing a less than half-cooked cholent on the fire even if the fire is covered with a blech, most poskim do not agree with his view; see Kaf ha-Chayim 253:11; Maharshag 2:50; Eidus l'Yisrael, pg. 119; Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:93; Rav Y.Y. Weiss (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 14); Tzitz Eliezer 7:15; Shevet ha-Levi 1:91.

3. Rav A. Kotler (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 338); Rav Y.Y. Weiss (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 14); Shevet ha-Levi 1:93.

4. Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:93; Be'er Moshe 7:3-4;

5. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shulchan Shlomo 253:5-3); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Orchos Shabbos 2:9, note 14.
6. According to the various views quoted earlier.
7. Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:93; 4:74-29; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos k'hilchasah 1, note 60); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Otzros ha-Shabbos, pg. 96); Shevet ha-Levi 1:91. Chazon Ish, O.C. 37:11; 50:9, however, holds that a blech may not be put on Shabbos if the metal will heat up to yad soledes bo, which is almost always the case.
8. Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y. S. Elyashiv (Shevus Yitzchak, pg. 155).
9. See Sha'ar Hatziyun 253:50. Placing the pot in a place where one would usually put the pot once one is finished with it would be the same as placing it on the floor. Therefore, one may not return a pot to a stovetop even b'diavad once it was placed in the fridge (even if it is still hot)..
10. Mishnah Berurah 253:56; Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:69.
11. Har Tzvi, 1:136; Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:74; Shevet ha-Levi 5:30. [A minority opinion disagrees and maintains that the halachos of a hot plate are no different than those of a stovetop; see Orchos Shabbos 2:13, quoting Rav Y.S. Elyashiv.]
12. See Chazon Ish 38:2; Igros Moshe 4:74-35; Shevus Yitzchak, pg. 102-103, quoting Rav Y.S. Elyashiv.
13. Rav S.Z. Auerbach , quoted in Shemiras Shabbos k'Hilchashah, third edition, 1, note 83.
14. Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:74-26, 27; Minchas Yitzchak 3:28; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Otzros ha-Shabbos, pg. 98).
15. Rav A. Kotler (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 354); Shevet ha-Levi 3:48.
16. Mishnah Berurah 318:117; Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:74:9. See Chazon Ish 37:15, who is somewhat more lenient.

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