

EATING MEAT AND FISH TOGETHER

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

The Sages of the Talmud[1], in their infinite wisdom, determined that eating meat and fish together[2] is a *sakanah* — injurious to one's health. Although medical science presents no evidence that eating meat and fish together causes illness, we accept the Rabbis' decree unequivocally, for we know that their pronouncements are sacrosanct, their knowledge being as close to Divine wisdom as is humanly attainable. Indeed there have been *poskim*, most notably Magen Avraham[3], who have ruled that environmental conditions have changed so, that what once posed a danger no longer does and this prohibition no longer applies[4]. But the vast majority of *poskim* disagree[5], and the basic halachah forbids eating meat (including poultry[6]) and fish together[7]. This is surely the universal custom and should be strictly adhered to[8].

Since it is prohibited to mix meat and fish in any way, one should also not bake a pot of fish and a pot of meat together in the same oven, unless at least one of the pots is tightly covered. If both pots were left uncovered, then even *b'diavad* it is questionable if the foods may be eaten[9]. A *rav* should be consulted.

Bread that was baked in an oven together with an uncovered pot of fish may be eaten with meat. Likewise bread that was baked in an oven together with an uncovered pot of meat may be eaten with fish. But bread or any other food that was baked, cooked or roasted in a pot together with fish may not be eaten with meat, nor may food that was baked, cooked or roasted in a pot together with meat be eaten with fish[10].

Pots and Dishes

The prohibition against eating fish and meat applies only when the two foods themselves are actually mixed together. But the *ta'am* (meat or fish taste) exuding from inside the pots or dishes used in their preparation or consumption is of no consequence. There is no requirement to set aside separate dishes and pots for the use of fish and meat. It is, therefore, permitted:

- to cook meat in a pot, remove the meat, scrub the pot thoroughly and then cook fish in that pot even on the same day[11].
- to bake an uncovered pot of fish in an oven and then bake an uncovered pot of meat in the same oven, as long as the oven walls are wiped clean of any spills[12].
- to use the same grinder to grind both meat and fish separately, even if onions or other sharp foods were added, provided that the blade and receptacle are wiped clean between uses[13].

- to use a clean meaty knife to slice onions that will be cooked with fish[14].

Similarly, if some chicken soup, for example, inadvertently splashed against the outside of a pot containing fish while it was cooking on the stove, the fish may be eaten. This is because only the ta'am of the chicken will affect the fish, and that, as stated in yesterday's Discussion, is of no consequence[15].

Even if, inadvertently, fish and meat were actually cooked together in the same pot (and thus may not be eaten), the pot that was used does not need to undergo a koshering process in order for it to be used in the future. It is sufficient to merely scrub it clean and wait twenty-four hours before using it again[16].

When fish and meat are eaten consecutively:

The Rishonim debate the degree of severity to which the prohibition against eating fish and meat together extends. Some maintain that we must avoid the mixture to such an extent that even a greasy film which lingers in the mouth or on the hands must be carefully washed off before eating meat after fish, or fish after meat. Others, however, hold that we need not be concerned with fatty residue, and there is no need to wash one's mouth and hands between eating these two foods. The final halachah, basically, follows the second opinion[17].

The following rules apply when both fish and meat will be served at the same meal: Care must be taken that the foods do not mix. Silverware that was used for fish should not be used for meat unless they are rinsed in between. But it is permitted to place both of the foods on the table at the same time[18]. While it is customary in many places to eat fish before meat, this is not a requirement and it is permitted l'chatchilah to eat meat before fish[19].

Although, as stated earlier, we are not concerned with fatty residue and one is not required to wash his hands[20] and rinse his mouth between fish and meat, the poskim do require some type of break between eating fish and meat. Some[21] require that a drink[22] be taken between them, while others[23] stipulate that a food item be eaten in addition to the drink[24].

Question: What could be done if, inadvertently, a piece of fish fell into a pot of chicken soup?

Discussion: After removing the piece of fish from the soup[25] (if it can be found), one must estimate whether or not there is sixty times more soup (including vegetables, etc.) than the piece of fish that fell into it. If there is sixty times more soup, then the soup is permitted to be eaten[26]. If not, then the soup should not be eaten[27]. Under extenuating circumstances (e.g., discarding the soup would entail a serious monetary loss; the soup is needed for Shabbos or for important guests; shalom bayis, etc.), it is permitted to add more water or other ingredients to the soup so that there will be sixty times more soup than the piece of fish[28].

1. Pesachim 76b.
2. The Talmudic advisory warns only against eating fish and meat that were roasted together. The Rishonim deduced that eating them together even if they were prepared separately is also prohibited; Tur, Y.D. 116:2 and Derishah 5.
3. Quoted without comment by Mishnah Berurah 173:3 and Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 116:10. This is also the view of Teshuvos Maharshdam 4:124, quoting Sefer ha-Kaneh.
4. Note that Rambam does not mention this prohibition at all, probably for the reasons mentioned by the Magen Avraham; see Chasam Sofer, Y.D. 101 and Tiferes Tzvi 91.
5. See Chochmas Adam 68:1; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav (Shemiras Guf v'Nefesh 9); Maharam Shick, Y.D. 244; Yad Efrayim, Y.D. 116:3 quoting Shevus Ya'akov 3:70; and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 33:1, who all either question or ignore the Magen Avraham's opinion.
6. Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 116:2.
7. The poskim do, however, take the Magen Avraham's view into consideration and allow for some leniency in certain questionable situations; see notes 29 and 31.
8. Chasam Sofer, Y.D. 101; Divrei Malkiel 2:53; Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 173:9.
9. If the oven was small and tightly closed then we are concerned with reicha — that one food will absorb the aroma emitted by the other (Chochmas Adam 68:1). In larger ovens, where reicha is less of a problem, ze'ah — steam which carries the taste of one food to the other — is still an issue.
10. Taz, Y.D. 116:2. See Chelkas Yaakov 1:109.
11. Taz, Y.D. 95:3, quoted by most of the later poskim. There is a minority view that holds that separate pots should be used for cooking fish and meat (see Tur, Y.D. 116:2, quoted by Chachmas Adam 68:1). Although the basic halachah does not require it (see also note 25), it is customary in some homes to have separate pots for fish and meat.
12. According to minority view quoted in the previous note, the oven should be koshered between baking fish and meat.
13. Darchei Teshuvah 116:23. A minority view recommends not to use the same grinder for fish and meat if they are going to be ground with onions or garlic, but the basic halachah permits it; see Shevet ha-Levi 6:111.
14. See previous note for the minority view.
15. Pri Megadim, quoted by Rav Akiva Eiger, Y.D. 116:2.

16. Divrei Malkiel 2:53; Kaf ha-Chayim, Y.D. 116:3; Shemiras ha-Guf v'ha-Nefesh, 1:26 quoting Harav P. Epstein. A minority opinion holds that when koshering is possible (e.g., with a metal pot), it should be done; see Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 116:3 and Shevet ha-Levi 6:111.
17. Rama, Y.D. 116:3; Mishnah Berurah 173:4. Sefaradim, however, rule in accordance with the first opinion; Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 173:4; Yalkut Yosef 173:2.
18. Noda b'Yehudah, Kama, E.H. 13; Shevet ha-Levi 6:111; Yabia Omer, Y.D. 6:9. It is also permitted for one person to eat fish and one person to eat meat on the same table at the same time, even while sharing the same tablecloth; Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 173:6.
19. See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 33:1 and Ben Ish Chai, Pinchas 8:10. See also Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 173:2 and Y.D. 116:2: between meat and fish ...
20. In the atypical case (e.g., silverware is not being used) when the hands are soiled from fish, they should be wiped clean before partaking of meat; see Pri To'ar, Y.D. 116:3.
21. Chochmas Adam 68:1, quoted by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 173:2. There is no need to swish the drink around in the mouth.
22. For unknown reasons, Tosafos, Moed Katan 11a (quoted by Rav Akiva Eiger, Y.D. 116 and by Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 170:79), advises against drinking water after fish. She'arim Metzuyanin b'Halachah 33:2 suggests that for this reason whiskey — and not water — is customarily drunk between fish and meat.
23. Rama, Y.D. 116:3, quoted by Mishnah Berurah 173:4.
24. A food item dipped in wine or another beverage covers both requirements; Y.D. 116:3, as explained by Perishah 23.
25. On Shabbos, some soup should be removed along with the fish.
26. Chochmas Adam 68:1; Pischei Teshuvah 116:3; Aruch ha-Shulchan 116:10. While a minority view maintains that "dangers" such as fish and meat together are not bateil b'shishim (Taz, Y.D. 116:2), most poskim do not accept this stringency; see Yabia Omer, Y.D. 1:7.
27. If it is questionable whether or not there is sixty times more soup than fish, some poskim are lenient while others are stringent. A rav should be consulted.
28. Although there is a general rule that bitul b'shishim must happen on its own and one cannot cause it to happen intentionally, many poskim permit doing so concerning a fish and meat mixture; see Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 116:3 and Divrei Malkiel 2:53. Since other poskim disagree (see Darchei Teshuvah 116:20, 21), one should rely on this leniency only under extenuating circumstances. See also Yabia Omer, Y.D. 1:8.

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