

SERVING HOT FOOD ON SHABBOS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Serving food on Shabbos has its own set of rules of what may or may not be permitted. The following is a short review of some relevant halachos that apply to serving food on Shabbos:

When the food or water is still in a pot:

- If, for any reason, the pot cover was removed from the pot while the pot is on the heat source, it is forbidden to replace the cover on the pot unless it is clear that the food inside is completely cooked.
- It is permitted to lift off the lid of an urn and replace it, as long as the water inside was previously boiled - even if it is not boiling at the time that the lid is being removed and replaced. It is also permitted to dish out water from an urn.
- It is forbidden to stir hot food in a pot which is on the fire or blech, even if the food is completely cooked. It is also forbidden to stir hot food in a pot which has been removed from the fire or blech, but only if the food is not completely cooked.
- It is forbidden to dish out food from a pot which is directly on a flame, whether the food is completely cooked or not. Even if the pot is too heavy to pick up and remove from the fire, it is still prohibited to dish out food from it.
- It is forbidden to place a cold, wet ladle (either from tap water or from previously ladled soup which accumulated and got cold in the ladle) into a pot of hot soup, even if the pot is presently not on the fire or blech.
- Cooked noodles may be added directly into the pot of soup, if the pot is removed from its heat source.
- It is forbidden to pour hot water from the urn directly into a cup containing a teabag, cocoa or chocolate milk. It is forbidden to place a tea bag into a cup of hot water, or to pour hot water from a cup over a tea bag. Most poskim also strongly advise not to pour hot water from the urn directly into a cup containing instant tea, coffee or cocoa.
- It is permitted to pour hot water from an urn into a thermos bottle, even though the water will become "insulated" and retain its heat in the thermos bottle.

Note: It is strongly advised not to add sugar or salt to a pot of hot liquid even after it has been removed from the heat source. It is permitted, however, to add sugar or salt or any pre-cooked seasoning to solid food, e.g., a hot potato once it was removed from the heat source.

When the food or water is already served in a plate, bowl or cup:

- It is permitted to pour lemon juice, which is generally cooked before processing, into a cup of hot tea. But it is forbidden to place a slice of lemon into a cup of hot tea.
- It is permitted to add sugar to the tea or salt (or any other previously cooked spice) to the soup.
- It is permitted to add soup croutons or cooked noodles to a bowl of hot soup.
- It is permitted to place an ice cube or cold water into a bowl of hot soup.
- It is permitted to place an ice cube or cold water into a cup of hot tea. If, however, the tea is scalding [approx. 150°F], some poskim prohibit doing so and it should be avoided.
- It is permitted to dip challah into hot soup, but it is forbidden to dip a piece of cake or a cookie into hot tea or coffee.
- It is permitted to pour ketchup, mustard or mayonnaise over any hot food served on a plate.
- It is permitted to pour cold gravy (or cold soup) on any hot food served on a plate. Some poskim hold that unless the gravy is still warm, it should not be poured over a hot solid food (davar gush).
- It is permitted to eat hot cholent, whether it is soupy or lumpy, together with cold cuts or other pieces of cooked, cold meat.
- It is forbidden to place a pickle, or any other uncooked food item, on top of or underneath a hot solid food (davar gush).
- It is forbidden to add raw spices (e.g., pepper, garlic) to a davar gush.

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Rabbi Neustadt is the Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Harabbonim of Detroit and the Av Beis Din of the Beis Din Tzedek of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com