

# DAIRY AFTER MEAT: HOW LONG A WAIT?

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

According to Torah Law it is forbidden to eat meat and dairy foods that were cooked together. According to Rabbinic Law, it is also forbidden to eat meat and milk at the same time even if they were not cooked together. Our Sages, who were always concerned lest prohibitions be transgressed inadvertently, protected us by establishing "fences" (seyagim) around various prohibitions. In this case, our Sages prohibited eating dairy foods even after eating meat. It is well-known that the taste of meat lingers in one's mouth long after it has been consumed, since a film of fatty residue remains in the throat and on the palate long after the meat has been swallowed.<sup>1</sup> In addition, actual pieces of meat can be stuck between the teeth after meat has been eaten.<sup>2</sup> For these two reasons, our Sages ordained that two things must happen before dairy can be eaten after meat: 1) Birkas ha-Mazon [or a berachah acharonah] must be recited over the meat meal.<sup>3</sup> 2) A substantial amount of time must elapse.

**Question:** How much time must elapse before dairy can be eaten after meat?

**Discussion:** Almost universally, the custom is to wait six hours before eating dairy after meat.<sup>4</sup> Although there are a few communities which follow other, more lenient customs—Dutch Jews wait one hour; German Jews wait three hours<sup>5</sup>—these customs apply only to those who are born into the tradition. One who abandons his custom to adopt a more lenient one is described by the poskim as a poreitz geder,<sup>6</sup> a "fence-breaker," and as one who transgresses the exhortation, "*Al titosh Toras imecha*"<sup>7</sup> —Do not forsake the teachings of your mother<sup>8</sup>. "

In the opinion of most halachic authorities, "six hours" means six full hours.<sup>9</sup> This is the custom practiced by most people. Some poskim are reported to have ruled, however, that five-and-a-half hours is sufficient.<sup>10</sup> Other poskim permit this leniency only after eating fowl, but not after eating meat.<sup>11</sup>

There is a view that states that the six hours are measured from Birkas ha-Mazon of the meat meal—even if no meat was consumed towards the end of the meal, until the beginning of the dairy meal—even if no dairy will be eaten at the beginning of the meal.<sup>12</sup> The custom, however, does not follow this opinion; the six hours are measured from the cessation of eating meat—not from the end

of the meal, until the actual consumption of dairy—not the beginning of the dairy meal.<sup>13</sup>

If one is in doubt whether or not six hours elapsed since he ate meat, he is permitted to eat dairy.<sup>14</sup>

One who finds strands of meat still lodged between his teeth after six hours must remove them and rinse his mouth before eating dairy.<sup>15</sup> One need not, however, wait six hours from the time meat was found lodged between his teeth before eating dairy.<sup>16</sup>

**Question:** Does one need to wait six hours after tasting—but not swallowing—meat or chicken soup before eating dairy?

**Discussion:** It depends on what, exactly, took place:

Tasting: Merely tasting—and not swallowing or chewing—solid or liquid meaty foods does not render one "meaty."<sup>17</sup> As long as one cleans and rinses his mouth he may eat dairy food immediately.<sup>18</sup> "Cleaning" the mouth is accomplished by eating a bulky pareve food and chewing it thoroughly. "Rinsing" the mouth means washing out the mouth with water or taking a drink of water or any other beverage.<sup>19</sup>

Chewing: One who chewed meat or chicken but did not swallow any, should clean and rinse his mouth and teeth, and wait at least one hour before eating dairy.<sup>20</sup>

Swallowing: One who swallowed—even without chewing—any solid or liquid meaty food, should wait six hours before partaking of dairy foods.<sup>21</sup>

**Question:** Is the requirement to wait six hours before eating dairy after eating meat relaxed for health reasons?

**Discussion:** A weak or sick person, a pregnant woman, a nursing mother or a child between the ages of three and nine who need dairy food for strength or nourishment<sup>22</sup> are not required to wait six hours between meat and dairy.<sup>23</sup> It is required, however, to recite Birkas ha-Mazon (or a berachah acharonah) over the meat meal, brush and clean one's mouth and hands, and wait one hour<sup>24</sup> before eating dairy.<sup>25</sup>

Infants till age three do not need to wait at all between meat and dairy.<sup>26</sup> Healthy children over the age of nine [or ten if they are physically underdeveloped] should wait six hours between meat and dairy.<sup>27</sup>

**Question:** Is one required to wait six hours after eating parve food cooked together with meat in the

same pot?

**Discussion:** Parve food that was cooked together with meat, such as a potato cooked in a meaty cholent or rice cooked in a pot together with chicken, is considered like meat; six hours must elapse before dairy (or parve food cooked in the same pot together with dairy) may be eaten.<sup>28</sup>

But there is no need to wait six hours after eating parve food that was cooked in a meaty pot but which contained no meat in the pot (such as fish cooked in a meat pot) or cut with a meat knife.<sup>29</sup> The halachah remains the same even if the food cooked in the meat pot was cooked with onions (or other sharp foods) or if the meaty knife was used to dice onions (or other sharp foods).<sup>30</sup> [Note that this applies only to dairy food eaten after parve food, not together with it.]

**Note:** Although one need not wait between eating sharp parve foods that were cooked or cut with a meaty pot or knife and eating dairy, according to some poskim, one does have to wait six hours between eating meat and eating sharp parve foods that were diced with a dairy knife or cooked in a dairy pot.<sup>32</sup> Other poskim, however, disagree and hold that one need not wait between eating meat and eating sharp dairy foods.<sup>33</sup>

---

Sources:

1. This is the reason given by Rashi (Chulin 105a, quoted in Tur, Y.D. 89) in explanation of this halachah.
2. This is the reason given by Rambam (Ma'achalos Assuros 9:28, quoted in Tur, Y.D. 89) in explanation of this halachah.
3. Shach, Y.D. 89:5; Rav Akiva Eiger, quoting Magen Avraham, O.C. 196:1.
4. Sephardic Jews are required to wait six hours between meat and dairy; for them it is not a matter of custom.
5. See Chayei Adam 127:10 who quotes a custom of those who wait only "several hours."
6. Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 89:7. See Koheles 10:8 and Rashi.
7. Mishlei 1:8. See Rashi.
8. Chochmas Adam 40:13. If, mistakenly, one recited a blessing over a dairy item within six hours of eating meat, he should avoid a berachah l'vatalah by eating a miniscule amount of the dairy food; Yechaveh Da'as 4:41; Badei ha-Shulchan 89:1, s.v. v'yeish.
9. See Darchei Teshuvah 89:6 quoting Gan ha-Melech and Chamudei Daniel. Many poskim also refer to this time period as a "quarter of the day and night" (see Shiyurei Berachah 89:4), which means that six hours is exact.
10. Ruling of Rav A. Kotler, as reported by his family and disciples. Nishmas Avraham, Y.D. 89:1 quotes some poskim who required a wait of a little more than five hours. Ha-Kashruth 10, note 76, quotes

Rav Y.S. Elyashiv as ruling that a little more than five hours is required according to the basic halachah. Practical Guide to Halachah, vol. 2, pg. 133, quotes Rav M. Feinstein as ruling that "in an emergency, maybe fifteen minutes before six hours, but not earlier."

11.Yabia Omer, Y.D. 1:4-13.

12.Aruch ha-Shulchan 89:4.

13.Badei ha-Shulchan 89:7; Pischei Halachah, The Laws of Kashrus, pg. 201.

14.Darchei Teshuvah 89:5; Badei ha-Shulchan 89:9.

15.Rama 89:1. Some poskim require cleaning the mouth as well, in addition to rinsing it; see Chochmas Adam 40:12 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 89:5.

16.Shach 89:2 and all poskim.

17.Darchei Teshuvah 89:22, quoting Rav S. Kluger.

18.Badei ha-Shulchan 89:16.

19.Y.D. 89:2. Brushing the teeth well is the equivalent of both rinsing and cleaning; Debreciner Rav, Pischei Halachah, pg. 112.

20.Rav Akiva Eiger, Y.D. 89:1; Yad Yehudah 89:1; Darchei Teshuvah 89:22; Badei ha-Shulchan 89:38. Other poskim are more stringent and require a six-hour wait in this case; see Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 89:1, quoting Peri Megadim 89:1.

21.Badei ha-Shulchan 89:17, based on Igros Moshe, Y.D. 2:26. But it is permitted to eat or drink dairy immediately after swallowing or chewing a meat vitamin; ibid.

22.Even if meat food is available but the person does not like it or is not in the mood for it; Chelkas Yaakov 2:88; Badei ha-Shulchan 89:37.

23. See Chochmas Adam 40:13; Aruch ha-Shulchan 89:7; Salmas Chayim 2:4; Chelkas Yaakov 2:88; Yechaveh Da'as 3:58; Badei ha-Shulchan 89:36, 37.

24.In an urgent case, waiting a full hour is not required; see Badei ha-Shulchan 89:36.

25.Hataras nedarim is not required in this case; see Dagul Mi-Revavah, Y.D. 214, and Mishnah Berurah 581:19 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 33. See Nishmas Avraham, Y.D. 89:1 quoting Rav S.Z. Auerbach.

26.Obviously, if there is no reason at all to feed the child dairy after meat, it should be avoided, since it is forbidden to feed prohibited items to anyone, even to an infant; Mishnah Berurah 343:3.

27.Chelkas Yaakov 2:88; Yechaveh Da'as 3:58 (who is lenient with children until a year before they are bar/bas mitzvah); Badei ha-Shulchan 89:37.

28.Rama, Y.D. 89:3, Rav Akiva Eiger and Kaf ha-Chayim 57.

29.Rama 89:3. Sometimes, if a meat pot or knife is not scrubbed clean, a fatty residue of meat will remain on the pot or knife. Most poskim (Shach 89:19, Chochmas Adam 40:13, Aruch ha-Shulchan 89:13, Darchei Teshuvah 89:42) do not require a six hour wait after eating parve foods cooked in such a pot or cut with such a knife, especially if the parve food was sixty times greater in quantity than the fatty residue of meat on the pot.

30.Rama 89:3, as explained by Rav Akiva Eiger and Beis Meir.

31.Or however many hours it is his custom to wait.

32.Peri Megadim, O.C. 494:6, quoted in Badei ha-Shulchan 89:90.

33. See Darchei Teshuvah, Y.D. 89:42, who quotes several poskim who are lenient, particularly if the knife was not used for hot dairy within the previous twenty-four hours. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv is quoted (ha-Kashrus 10, note 320) as ruling leniently on this issue.

---

Weekly-Halacha, Text Copyright © 2013 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and **Torah.org**.

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](mailto:dneustadt@cordetroit.com)