

The Gerald and Karin Feldhamer OU Kosher Halacha Yomis

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This Column is dedicated in memory of:

Rav Chaim Yisroel ben Reb Dov HaLevi Belsky, zt'l

Senior OU Kosher Halachic Consultant from 1987-2016

1. I bought a hand soap that is made from tallow (animal fat). Is there any problem with using this soap?

Even though there is no prohibition of deriving benefit from forbidden fats, there remains a concern. Regarding Yom Kippur, the Gemarah states that *sicha k'shtiya* (anointing oneself is like drinking), and that is why anointing is prohibited on Yom Kippur. The *Vilna Gaon* (Beur HaGra OC 326) applies the same principal to anointing oneself with non-kosher animal fat, because having the oils absorbed into one's skin is similar to drinking. However, not all *poskim* are in agreement. *Rabbeinu Tam* held that *sicha k'shtiya* does not apply to non-kosher food, and there is no restriction against anointing oneself with non-kosher fat or oil and there is no prohibition at all. The *Mishnah Berurah* (Beur Halacha 326, s.v. *b'she'ar*) writes that the prevailing custom is to be lenient to use animal-fat soap, but there are some individuals who are stringent. The *Aruch Hashulchan* (YD 117:29) writes that nowadays the fats in soap become completely inedible. Therefore, today all would agree that there is no concern in washing oneself with such soap.

2. I am taking a cooking class. I know that I am not permitted to cook meat and milk together. May I put the ingredients together and then ask a non-Jew to turn on the oven?

No, this too is not permitted. One may not ask a non-Jew to perform an action that one is prohibited from doing themselves. This is known as *amira l'akum* (literally, asking a non-Jew), and it is a Rabbinic prohibition. Even if the meat is *neveila* (non-kosher meat) it is still strictly forbidden. Although in a previous Halacha we saw that there is a disagreement about whether one may benefit from *neveila* that was cooked with milk, and the *Rambam* was lenient, that leniency is limited to the prohibition of benefitting from meat and milk. Regarding the prohibition of cooking meat and milk, even the *Rambam* agrees that the Torah prohibition still applies to cooking *neveila* with milk.

3. I am taking a cooking class. I am required to prepare a dish that contains milk and meat. I do not have to cook the food, but I must marinate beef in a dairy dressing. Is this permitted?

Yes. The prohibition of *basar b'chalav* is only to cook milk and meat. Other combinations which do not involve heat are permitted. Therefore, one may soak meat in milk even for more than 24 hours

and one may even salt milk and meat together. One may also benefit from these combinations. Obviously, one would not be permitted to sample their work, since there is a Rabbinic prohibition to eat meat that came into contact with milk. However, the prohibition of cooking meat and milk does not apply. If milk and meat were soaked together for 24 hours it would be forbidden to cook the meat, even if the milk was washed off. Taste from the milk is absorbed inside of the meat, and it is prohibited to cook meat with absorbed taste of milk.

4. My office has a non-kosher toaster oven. I see people heating pepperoni pizza (basar b'chalav) in it. Am I permitted to heat up my sandwich in this toaster if I double wrap my food in two layers of aluminum foil?

The Rema (YD 87:4) writes that one may not stoke the flame under a pot that belongs to a non-Jew. This is because there is a concern that the pot may have previously been used with meat and with milk. By stoking the flame one is drawing out the taste that was absorbed in the walls of the pot and cooking it in the water. Although the meat and milk were already cooked, it is forbidden to further the cooking. The same concern would exist with a toaster oven. There can be drips of cheese or other foods that are forbidden because of basar b'chalav on the toaster tray or stuck to the walls of the oven. Unless the toaster is cleaned before using, one might be further cooking the basar b'chalav and this is forbidden. Therefore, it is not recommended for one to use a non-kosher toaster even if the food is double wrapped, unless it is first cleaned.

5. Can I place double wrapped food in a dirty, non-kosher microwave oven, or must I be concerned that I might be cooking basar b'chalav?

In the previous Halacha Yomis, we discussed the concern with turning on a dirty, non-kosher toaster oven that was splattered with basar b'chalav. However, there is a difference between how a conventional toaster oven works and how a microwave oven works. The toaster oven itself gets hot and heats up all the food that is inside. All the crumbs and food residue inside a toaster oven will get hot and be cooked. However, the walls of a microwave do not heat up the food. A microwave works by heating up the water molecules inside the food. Dry residue inside a microwave oven will not get hot and will not be cooked. One should brush out the microwave so that there are no large crumbs that might get heated, but one need not clean the microwave, since the dry residue inside the microwave will not get cooked.