



## Kosher Connections

Timely Insights into the World of Kashrus



CHICAGO RABBINICAL COUNCIL  
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### Traditional Foods

By Rabbi Dovid Aronin

When thinking of traditional Jewish foods, a stroll down the kosher aisle at Wal-Mart comes to mind; matzah, borsht and gefilte fish. However, the term “tradition” also has a different meaning, in that there are some foods which we may only eat if we have a tradition that they are kosher.

In discussing which animals are kosher, the Torah tells us that kosher animals possess certain physical characteristics. Kosher animals are to have split hooves and chew their cud. Kosher fish have fins and scales. When it comes to birds, however, the Torah does not give any signs. The Torah only lists 24 species of birds that are not kosher. All other birds are considered to be kosher.

Although no specific signs are given in the Torah, Rabbi Yosef Karo, the *Mechaber*, in his *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 75:2-3) does assign signs to kosher birds. Nevertheless, *Rema* writes that in his time, birds were only accepted as kosher if there was a *mesorah* (tradition) that the birds were eaten by Jews in the past. Such birds include chicken, duck and certain species of quail.

With the discovery of America, came the discovery of a new bird, the turkey. The question arises, if birds require a tradition to be eaten, how did the turkey become accepted as kosher? Surely the American natives did not possess a Jewish tradition that the turkey is kosher!

There are several explanations given by contemporary Poskim as to how it came to be that Jews have come to enjoy turkey. A simple explanation is that

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### Kashering Frying Pans

by Rabbi Dovid Cohen

*Kashering* is the process through which a piece of equipment which had been used for non-kosher food is prepared to be used with kosher food. For purposes of our discussion we can divide the methods of (hot) *kashering* into four groups:

1. *Libun gamur*....Using a torch or coals to heat all surfaces until they are red hot.
2. *Libun kal*.....Applying a torch or coals to all parts of the inside of the equipment until the outside reaches *yad soledes bo*. One common piece of equipment which is *kashered* with *libun kal* is an oven, and for that device a somewhat different method is used since the oven's flame does not come into direct contact with the oven-walls.
3. *Hag'alah*.....Filling the pot (or other utensil) with water, bringing the water to a rolling boil on the fire, and then overflowing the pot. Alternatively, flatware or other items being *kashered* can be submerged into the pot of boiling water.
4. *Iru'i kli rishon*.....Preparing a pot of boiling water as above, and methodically pouring water directly from the pot onto all surfaces of the counter or other area being *kashered*.



How does one determine whether *libun gamur* or *hag'alah* is required? [*Libun kal* can always be substituted for *hag'alah*, but the reverse is not true.] In particular, which method is appro-

appropriate when *kashering* a frying pan?

The principal rule is that *libun gamur* is only required for equipment which has direct contact with solid non-kosher food while on the fire. [The halacha for equipment which had only been used for kosher items (milk or meat separately) is more lenient.]<sup>1</sup> In this context, it is worth defining two terms from the above principle:

- *Direct contact with solid food*.....means that *libun gamur* is only required if there was no air or liquid between the non-kosher food and the equipment, and the non-kosher food was a solid. For example, in a grill, the meat is broiled directly on the racks, and therefore it must be *kashered* with *libun gamur*. However, in an oven or warming box, where there is *air/zei'ah* between the chamber and the food, and in the case of steam kettles which are used for cooking liquids, *libun gamur* is not required.
- *While on the fire*.....denotes that *libun gamur* is never necessary for utensils used off the fire, such as sinks and tables. It is also generally accepted that “fire” in this context refers to an actual flame or to an electric coil used for heating, but steam or water which is used as a heating medium is not considered fire. Accordingly, pans used to heat (solid) food in an oven must be *kashered* with *libun gamur*, but pans used to heat that same food in a vegetable steamer could be *kashered* with less rigorous methods because the vegetable steamer is “off the fire”.

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the turkey resembles other kosher birds, such as the Great Bustard. As such, the turkey does in fact have a *mesorah*. Others explain that turkey was introduced into Europe through India. The Jews of India follow the laws and customs of the Sfardic Jews who follow the *Mechaber's* opinion as brought in the *Shulchan Aruch*. As noted above, the *Mechaber* did not require a tradition to eat unknown birds, as long as they possess the signs of a kosher bird. Hence, the Sfardic Jews would have begun to eat the turkey, and the Jews of Europe may have relied on them. Of course, there are minority opinions who hold that turkey is not kosher based on this objection. Nevertheless, it is well accepted that a turkey is considered a kosher bird.

The ruling on the Muscovy duck, another bird native to the Americas, is not as clear. Although the Muscovy duck looks like a duck, it does have some differing features, such as hissing instead of quacking, some black feathering, beak and feet which are not exclusively yellow, and it is somewhat predatory in nature. In the early days of the country, Jews accepted it as kosher. When Rabbi Yissachar Dov Illowy became the Rav of New Orleans in 1860, he declared the duck as not kosher because there was no *mesorah*. The matter was sent to various *Poskim* of the time. Many *Poskim*,



including Rabbi Shamshon Refael Hirsch of Germany forbade the Muscovy duck.

Others, such as Rabbi Shmuel Salant of Yerushalayim allowed the bird to be eaten. Although it is accepted by some as a kosher bird, it is the cRc's position that Muscovy duck is not accepted as having a reliable *mesorah*.

In conclusion, we see that tradition plays a big role in what Jews eat, and "traditional" Jewish food can be a bit more complicated than which schmear to use on your bagel and lox!

## Frying Pans—continued<<<<<

There are a number of significant questions which arise from this rule, and our discussion will focus on one of them: whether *libun gamur* is required for equipment which is used with just a bit of liquid. [A further question is which method of *kashering* should be used if the equipment has different uses some of which demand *libun gamur* and others only require *hag'alah*; that topic is beyond the scope of this article.]

*Shulchan Aruch*<sup>2</sup> describes a *machvas* as a pan in which food is cooked with oil. He rules that a *machvas* can be *kashered* via *hag'alah*, and the accepted halacha is to follow this position regarding most *issurim*.<sup>3</sup> Such a pan may be *kashered* with *hag'alah* even though the oil occasionally dries up and food burns onto the pan walls.<sup>4</sup>

However, *Mishnah Berurah*<sup>5</sup> adds that a frying pan<sup>6</sup> that is merely greased with oil, fat or butter does not qualify as a *machvas*, and instead we consider that the non-kosher food had direct contact with the pan, such that *libun gamur* is required. There are two ways to interpret *Mishnah Berurah's* statement, as follows:

- Rav Yisroel Belsky, holds that *Mishnah Berurah* is referring to the amount of oil one might use when frying pancakes and the leniency of *machvas* only applies to deep fryers or pots used with considerable amounts of oil (or water).
- Rav Schwartz and others hold that *Mishnah Berurah* is only *machmir* if one uses an absolutely minimal amount of oil such as if one rubs a stick of butter across the pan before frying (as was once common) or sprays a Teflon pan with Pam (as is the current method). If however, one uses oil a bit more liberally (as described above), the pan is designated as a *machvas* and *libun gamur* is not required. [There are implications in the *Acharonim* to support this reading.]<sup>7</sup>

Thus, according to Rav Belsky just about every frying pan must be *kashered* with *libun gamur*, while the cRc would follow the ruling of Rav Schwartz that many can be *kashered* with *hag'alah* or *libun kal*.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> [Unless the utensil is *cheresh*,] *libun gamur* is not required for a utensil which had been used for *heter*, such as kosher meat or kosher milk, assuming they were not used in a manner which created *basar b'chalav* (*Magen Avraham* 451:11 based on *Shulchan Aruch* 509:5, and *R' Akiva Eiger* on *Shach* YD 121:8).

<sup>2</sup> *Shulchan Aruch* 451:11.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, *Rema* ad loc. says that for *Pesach* one should *l'chatchilah* perform *libun*, and even *Shulchan Aruch* YD 121:4 himself rules that *libun gamur* is required when *kashering* a *machvas* which had been used for other (non-*chametz*) *issurim*. Nonetheless, *Iggeros Moshe* YD III:14:b rules that for non-*chametz* one can *kasher* an *aino ben yomo machvas* with *hag'alah*. [He gives no explanation for this position and may merely be reporting the common custom to follow the *Rishonim* who take a lenient stance (and not accept *Shulchan Aruch*).]

<sup>4</sup> See *Mishnah Berurah* 451:63.

<sup>5</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 451:65.

<sup>6</sup> One of *Mishnah Berurah's* examples is a פסאדאווירען, which Rav Schwartz said is a *Yiddish* word for frying pan.

<sup>7</sup> See *Pri Megadim* MZ 451:16 and *Gra"z* 451:36.

## Olive Oil

by Rabbi Dovid Aronin

In general, crude vegetable oils do not pose a *kashrus* concern. However, in order to prepare oils for retail sales they can be processed to be deodorized, refined, and bleached them. These, and other hot processes done to prepare these oils for consumer use, are many times performed on equipment which is also used to process animal fats, which are not kosher. Accordingly, processed vegetable oils require *hash-gachah*.

Extra virgin olive oil is a notable exception. As with other oils, the description of "extra virgin" indicates that the oil is being obtained by cold pressing the produce, and there is no heat involved with the processing of the oil. This would alleviate any concern with shared equipment. Additionally, there are industry standards for olive oil as to what purity is required to label an item as extra virgin. It is for this reason, the cRc considers extra virgin olive oil as a Group 1 (inherently kosher) and does not require a *hechsher*. Other extra virgin oils, such as extra virgin coconut oil, do not have such an industry standard, and therefore they require a *hechsher*.

