

Introduction to Taste (Ta'am) Transfer

Gender/Kashrut Status Transfer

Foods and kitchenware (pots, pans, dishes, utensils, and containers) can absorb taste from each other and so adopt a new gender or kosher status. They can change from:

- Kosher to non-kosher,
- Kosher pareve (neutral) to kosher dairy or kosher meat, or
- Kosher Passover to kosher (or non-kosher) non-Passover.

NOTE You can sometimes change a utensil/container to kosher-pareve (see Kashering, below), but you cannot change a

- Gendered food to neutral-pareve, or
- Non-kosher food to kosher.

Taste Absorption

Taste gets absorbed in three ways: Heat, pressure, and soaking.

Heat

To absorb taste, and therefore gender or kashrut status, through heat, a food or utensil must be heated to 120° F or more while:

- Steamed with a *halachically* “liquid” food, or
- In wet physical contact with the food or utensil.

EXAMPLES

- Two hot pans, which are clean on their outsides, only transfer taste from one to the other if they are wet on the outside and are touching each other.
- A hot utensil placed onto a counter only transfers gender to the countertop if there is liquid or food at the point of contact.

NOTE All liquids plays a major role in facilitating taste transfer.

NOTE Taste, gender, or non-kosher status do not travel upstream into the utensil that food is being poured from. Even if you pour hot liquid (pareve or of one gender) from a pot onto a non-kosher or opposite gender food, the genders are not transferred back through the stream of liquid to the pot, even if any or all of the elements are more than 120 degrees.

SITUATION You pour hot liquid from some pareve vegetables into a non-kosher sink that had hot in it within 24 hours. There are dishes or utensils in the sink.

STATUS The dishes do not change gender unless the hot liquid fills up from the sink onto them. If so, the dishes or utensils become non-kosher. But no gender change occurs through the stream of liquid back to the pot of vegetables.

NOTE If the non-kosher sink had not had anything hot (120 degrees or above) in it for at least 24 hours, no change of gender or kosher status happens at all.

NOTE On Passover, gender and chametz status DO get transferred through a stream of hot liquid.

Pressure

To absorb taste, and therefore gender or kashrut status, through pressure or short-term soaking, one of the items must be spicy/charif.

Soaking

To absorb taste, and therefore gender or kashrut status, through long-term soaking, the food must soak for specific amounts of time.

NOTE If the food or utensil is not hot (120° F or more), is not spicy/charif, and is not soaking for a long time, there is no gender or kashrut-status transfer.

EXAMPLES

You may use a non-kosher utensil for any cold food of the opposite gender, so you may:

- Eat cold (kosher) cereal out of a meat or non-kosher bowl, or
- Use a meat or non-kosher spoon to eat kosher ice cream.

NOTE Even though these are permissible, they may not be done regularly but only on an ad hoc basis.

Food and Kitchenware: Which Influences What Hot or Spicy/Charif Foods

With hot (more than 120° F) or spicy/charif foods:

Foods and utensils/containers transfer taste to each other.

Cold or Non-Spicy Foods that Soak

With cold (less than 120° F) or non-spicy/charif foods that soak:

- Foods do not transfer taste to utensils/containers;
- Utensils/containers do NOT transfer taste to foods.

NOTE No substances (not salt, or any food...) absorb gender from the open air.

The 24-Hour Rule: Eino ben Yomo

Torah Law: Reverts to Kosher-Pareve

By Torah law, a utensil/container always reverts to kosher-pareve after 24 hours (since the taste of any absorbed food becomes ruined with time).

Rabbinic Law: Must Be Kashered

However, by rabbinic law, the utensil/container must be kashered before using.

NOTE Even by Torah law, a hot or spicy/charif food can revive the milk-meat or non-kosher status of another utensil/container (see below) even after 24 hours.

Accidentally or Intentionally

Food Hot and Accidentally Placed; Utensil Not Hot for 24 Hours

Kosher food hotter than 120° F (49° C) remains kosher if accidentally placed into a non-kosher, clean utensil that has not been heated to 120° F or more for at least 24 hours.

REASON After 24 hours, *b'di'avad*, the utensil has reverted to being *kosher-pareve*.

NOTE If the utensil had been “used” (heated to 120° F or more) within the preceding 24 hours, the hot food that accidentally entered the utensil would be non-*kosher*. Ask a *rabbi* for possible exceptions.

Food Hot and Intentionally Placed

If the hot food had been put into the utensil intentionally, the food would not be *kosher*.

REASON *Chazal* made a rule (*takana*) that if you intentionally place food of one gender into a utensil of the opposite gender and heat it to 120° F or more, the food is not *kosher*.