

A helpful guide for those making Shabbat for the first time

Important Standards of Shabbat Food Preparation for the UMD Kedma community

Prohibitions regarding cooking or heating food on Shabbat are based on the Torah prohibitions of not cooking and not using fire on Shabbat and the rabbinic extensions of these laws. Observing them is a personal decision for each individual to contemplate on their own. As a community we do not judge anyone for how or whether they implement these laws in their dorm rooms or apartments. People have a right to grow religiously and move towards observance at a pace appropriate for them. However, it is important for people to know what the community's halachik standards are.

When you host fellow students in your apartments, which has become a regular activity at UMD, you take upon yourself a responsibility to feed those guests food that they are halachically allowed to eat. That means keeping to community standards. In addition to making sure the food you serve is itself kosher according to community standards of kashruth, there are shabbat community standards which you need to observe regarding that food as well. Food that is cooked on Shabbat, or even heated incorrectly on Shabbat, is prohibited to be eaten. I am confident that these community standards for Shabbat re-heating will help unify our community because they will allow everyone to feel comfortable hosting and being hosted on Shabbat. So here it goes ...

Do not put any uncooked food or beverage on a hot burner, in a heated oven, or in a crock pot on Shabbat itself.

Moreover, there are many rules that apply even to fully cooked foods:

(1) Do not heat any liquids on Shabbat: Water or even fully cooked soup or stew - anything that can be poured out like a liquid - needs to be put on the heat (in an urn, crock-pot, or on the stove) and left there, BEFORE Shabbat.

(2) Do not reheat even solid food that has cooled down (from the refrigerator, for example) either by putting it right on the stove or in the oven. This will render it prohibited to be eaten on Shabbat (for you and your guests). You can reheat cold, solid, pre-cooked food by adhering to any one of the following procedures:

- Put it on a warming tray¹ ("plata" in Hebrew) which cannot be adjusted (tape the knob if there is one) and is not designed to cook (just to warm). (Based off of Rav Willig's pesak)
- Put it on top of a "k'deira al gabei k'deira", which is a flipped over pan on top of a blech (Sheet of metal that covers all the burners and ideally the knobs are also covered with either tin foil or the blech itself) (Based off of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's pesak)
- Put it on top of the crock pot cover of a cholent or other food.

"So, what does the blech (metal sheet over the stove) that I grew up with allow me to do?" A simple blech only allows you to return hot food (solid or liquid) which you removed from the stove (and had in mind to return to the stove) back to the stove - while the food remains hot. A blech does not allow you to reheat food once it has cooled down. Without a blech, once you remove food from a stove you cannot even return it to the stove even if you have in mind to do so.

Do ask the rabbi if you have any questions about these procedures for re-heating. REMEMBER: Only solid food which has already been cooked can be reheated. Liquids or uncooked food cannot.

Do eat hot food on Shabbat, if you can. It is a misguided Kara'ite custom to eat only cold food (unless that is what you like).

Do keep food in a crock pot or on the stove or in the oven overnight, but...

- Do: Make sure that any food you serve is cooked to the point of ki'Ma'achal Ben-Drusai² before Shabbat starts (18 minutes after candle lighting). Unfortunately, the exact definition of ki'Ma'achal Ben-Drusai is a major debate and not easy to apply equally to all food. You can see the appendix if you'd like to understand this more fully. Ultimately, you are looking for the food to be at the very least edible in extremely extenuating circumstances. For the sake of uniformity I will be presenting one of the many approaches to this topic here, however, if one is unable to keep this approach find Rabbi Neuman for possible alternatives. One definition of ki'Ma'achal Ben-Drusai is ½ cooked. For example, if you are making cholent, make sure you put it in with enough hours to make it minimally edible (hard, chewy, but edible) before Shabbat. If cholent takes five hours to be ready to be served (even if normally it is served after

¹ Which can easily be found in Shaloms or on Amazon

² A famous bandit from the time of the Talmud who ate his food on the run, and often minimally cooked.

12 hours...), the rabbis estimated one half of that would allow it to be minimally edible, meaning that you have to give it 2 ½ hours to cook before Shabbat starts. However, I would suggest that one test the food for one week to make sure it is at the very least minimally edible. If it is, then one can repeat the process without tasting the food each week³.

- Do Not: Stir food in the crock pot or on a heated stove once Shabbat comes in, at the very least until it is fully cooked. It is preferable to remove the ceramic insert of the crock pot before transferring the contents to a serving dish. (Please note: Adding water to the cholent on shabbos is a complicated matter and should not be done without consulting a rabbi)
- Do: Feel free to offer your guests tea or coffee; however, since brewing tea or coffee may be considered cooking, please follow the following special Shabbat procedures (these can be ignored on Yom Tov):
 - You may use instant coffee or tea or essence that is made before Shabbat by putting several tea bags in a cup of hot water, or you may make tea (or coffee) by the most common technique:
 - "K'li sh'lishi" (tertiary vessel) tea: Make sure that the tea bag only is immersed into a cup of water that has been twice transferred from the urn or kettle. For example, hot water is poured from the urn (primary vessel) into a teapot or carafe (secondary vessel) and from there to each person's cup (tertiary vessel). Once it is in their cup, they can then put in the tea bag without any fear of cooking (the water is still piping hot, just a little cooler than it was in the urn). (Based off of Rav Moshe Feinstein's pesak)

Do not be scared or intimidated! These laws are meant to be doable, and if you make a mistake, that is exactly what the rules were designed for: to protect the basic Torah laws of not cooking and not using fire on Shabbat. Please speak to the rabbi if you have any questions, doubts or issues regarding any of these standards. They are meant to enhance your Shabbat, not to diminish it. From our home to your home, with wishes for peace and unity,

Appendix: Ma'achal Ben-Drusai

There are some poskim who believe that ½ cooked is sufficient, however, this again depends upon actually tasting the food and seeing if it is minimally edible. However, it is more complicated - because all foods do not cook the same. For instance, the first half of cooking frozen foods may not in fact get the food to ½ cooked as the first leg of cooking merely defrosts the food. One may require more time in such a situation. Additionally, some foods may be considered edible after minimal cooking and don't really need to be ½ cooked. Ultimately, the key is deciding whether the food is edible and not simply following a time amount. For any questions feel free to reach out to Rabbi Neuman.

Appendix: Taking things out of the oven

The Star K writes:

“As mentioned, aside from the prohibition against cooking on *Shabbos* there is a prohibition against initiating a fire or causing increased burning. In the case of thermostatically controlled ovens and warming drawers, opening the oven or warming drawer will cause the mechanism to call for increased burning to make up for the heat lost by opening the door or drawer. The resulting effect is a *grama* of *havarah*, which is not permissible on *Shabbos*. However as discussed earlier, where one does not want or intend for an action to take place, and has no need for its result, the initial action is prohibited only by Rabbinic law. When coupled with the fact that the ensuing *melacha* is a reaction that was brought about indirectly, but was initiated through a *grama*, there is room for leniency and the initial action is permitted. Therefore food left in the oven or warming drawer from before *Shabbos* may be removed on *Shabbos*, despite the fact that this will eventually cause the oven to burn. This is because with the removal of the food the resulting additional burning is not wanted or intended. However this can be said only where all of the food is removed at one time. If some food remains in the oven to be heated, then the additional burning caused by the door opening is viewed as intentional and therefore prohibited. Most warming drawers and ovens are thermostatically controlled and would fall into the above category”. However, Rabbi Simon poskins like Rabbi Abbadi who maintains that even leaving some food in the oven while taking out other food, which causes the thermostat to regulate is not called wanted or intended and would still be permissible (Pesik Reisha di'lo nicha lei that is initiated by a *grama*).

Extra reading for your own understanding and edification:

Star K Website - <http://www.star-k.org/kashrus/kk-cooking-ovenshabbos.htm>

³ If you do not have time to do this and need to figure out a solution speak to Rabbi Neuman.