

“Tochein” - Grinding:

A. The Prohibition:

1. “Tochein” - grinding - is breaking down a substance into small particles.
2. The prohibition is not limited to grinding food into powder.
3. It includes any activity that reduces a large item into very small pieces.
4. Shredding, grating, and chopping are all forbidden.
5. Dicing or otherwise cutting a food item into **very small pieces** is also prohibited.
6. The precise definition of what constitutes ‘very small pieces’ is unclear.
7. Accordingly, one must refrain from cutting any food matter into pieces generally considered by people to be ‘very small’ even though these pieces could, in turn, be cut into yet smaller pieces. e.g. - one may not cut onions or the vegetables into what people would call ‘very small pieces.’

B. Mashing:

1. Mashing is also considered a form of grinding.
2. When the mashing results in a large piece being reduced to small, separate pieces (e.g. mashed potatoes), it is **definitely forbidden**.
3. Even where the mashing leaves a single, soft mass (e.g. a mashed banana or avocado), some Poskim rule that it is prohibited.

C. Utensils Which May Not Be Used:

1. It is forbidden to use any sort of utensil to reduce an item to small pieces.

2. This includes not only tools designed specifically for grinding, such as a grinder, masher, or grater, but even utensil commonly used in ordinary food preparation, such as a knife or fork.
3. **Specialized grinding implements may not be used under any circumstances** to cut up any sort of food item. (this is viewed as an everyday activity.)
4. Certain exceptions do apply to ordinary cutting utensils.

D. Types of Food Subject to this Prohibition:

1. The prohibition applies only to foods that are produce of the earth, such as fruits and vegetables.
2. Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, cheese and all other foods that are not produce of the earth are not subject to this prohibition.
3. Even these foods may only be cut with ordinary utensils, such as a fork and knife.
4. Specialized bringing implements are forbidden with all foods.
5. “Ein Tochein Acher Tochein” - there is no prohibition against grinding something that was previously ground.
6. If a food was once **ground finely**, (not just into small pieces) and was then reconstituted into solid, one is permitted to bring it up again - but only with ordinary utensils.

E. **Circumstances in Which Grinding is Permitted:**

1. When using the handle of a knife or fork, since it is a highly **irregular manner** of grinding. You should also use a **shinui** in the choice of cutting surface – e.g. using a bowl instead of a cutting board
2. Many Poskim permit using a regular utensil when the food is being prepared for **immediate consumption**.

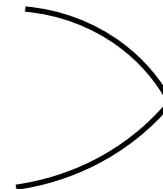
(which is viewed as an act of eating - not preliminary to eating) Other Poskim disagree. It is proper to abide by the stricter opinion. However, in case of necessity, the lenient view may be followed. (e.g. for the immediate use of a baby if other foods are not available.) [see below for more examples.]

3. It is also considered "immediate" if one makes the food right before beginning the meal in which it will be eaten.
4. The above leniency applies whether one is preparing for one's own immediate consumption or another person's immediate consumption.
5. There is a view that does not extend this exemption of immediate consumption to mashing, even in a case of necessity. Therefore, if food must be mashed for baby, it is preferable to do so only with the handle of a utensil.

F. Practical Applications:

1. Specialized Grinding Implements:

- Grinder (coffee, nut or spice grinder)
- Garlic press
- Grater
- Potato masher
- Mortar & pestle
- Egg & Cheese Slicers - permitted
- Peeler - permitted

 **Prohibited**

2. Meat, Poultry, Cheese, Eggs, Etc.

- All foods that do not grow w from the ground are exempt from the prohibition of grinding, and may be chopped into small pieces.
- Specialized grinding implements may not be used.

3. Baked / Baking Products:

- bread, Challah, cake, cookies and all similar products made from flour may be crumbled into tiny pieces.
- Chocolate and sugar can be crumbled into small pieces.
- Salt granules which solidified because of a moisture may be crushed, however, one may not crush salt crystals (looking like blocks) or any other spice which has never yet been crushed unless one does two Shinui's (changes) by using the handle of the knife or fork on a plate or the table
- Specialized grinding implements may not be used.

4. Fruits & Vegetables:

- Foods that grow from the earth may not be chopped, mashed, grated or otherwise cut into small pieces.
- Even if already cut into small pieces, they may not be reduced to yet smaller pieces.
- One may cut, chop, or mash them with the handle of utensil.
- One may mash bananas, avocados, or potatoes using the handle of a utensil.
- The key factor here is that when you mash the item, be careful that it stays connected together as one solid mass, rather than breaking up into tiny pieces. For example, in mashing a baked potato it often crumbles apart; this would be a full-fledged act of Tochen.
- In case of necessity (i.e. for a baby), one may cut or chop (but not mash) them with an ordinary utensil, for immediate use.
- When cutting onions or other vegetables into small pieces for a salad, one should do so immediately prior to the meal in which they will be eaten, and cut the vegetables into larger pieces than usual. “**The**

pieces should not be cut so small that they could be swallowed without chewing.”

- Fruits or vegetables which were cooked to the point that it's easy to crush may be crushed.

5. Cereals:

- Cereals (e.g. cornflakes) should not be crushed into small pieces unless it is known that the ingredients has initially been reduced to powder form.

Cutting Food:

A. Shaping Foods:

1. It is permitted to cut food into a specific ***simple*** shape or form.
2. A watermelon may be cut into squares, triangles or balls.
3. One may use scooper or similar utensil which creates a particular shape.
4. Cutting food into a meaningful shape, such as a letter or a number is forbidden, as it is writing.
5. Shaping food into any distinct figure, such as a person, animal, plant or flower is prohibited, as it is considered form of writing.
6. One may not use a fruit- cutting knife which creates a design in the fruit it cuts, and one may not put whitefish into a mold to create a fish-shaped presentation.

B. Breaking Apart Shapes or Words.

1. Cutting apart lettering or destroying a picture is forbidden, under the activity of erasing.
2. A cake decorated with frosting in the form of words, letters or any distinct object. is forbidden to be cut in a way which deforms the letters or ruins the picture.
3. ***Sfardim rule leniently on this issue.***

4. One may cut in between the words and even between the letters of the frosting.
5. Once the cake is cut, one is permitted to bite into it even though the s destroys the remaining letters.
6. One is permitted to bite into cookie which is decorated with figure even the figure will break apart.
7. When cutting fruit which has a word stamped on it or a sticker attached to it, one must avoid cutting through any letters or figures.
8. The restrictions against cutting apart figures only applies if the figures are made of frosting or another substance which is **added** to the cake. Figures which are **baked into the fiber** of the cake itself may be cut or broken apart, even before eating the cake.
9. The same holds true for an entire cake or cookie that is baked in the shape of letter or figure.

NOTE: Someone who holds that it's forbidden to open a bottle on Shabbos is forbidden to ask another Jew who holds that it's permissible to open a bottle on shabbos. However, some say that if one is only strict based on the custom of his Rabbis or father one may ask someone who holds it's permissible. However, if he one who holds it is permissible to do it for himself, it is permissible for others to benefit from what he has already done.

Marinating & Salting Food:

A. The Prohibition:

1. It is prohibited to marinate any food item in spicy liquid, as it alters the quality of the food, and is comparable to cooking.
2. The prohibition applies to all foods, including vegetables, fish, and meat.

3. With most vegetables, salting is also included in the prohibition of marinating. Therefore it is generally prohibited to salt certain vegetables.

B. Permitted Ways to Salt Food:

1. It is permitted to salt one single piece of food at a time, if it will be eaten immediately. Food may also be dipped into salt, one piece at a time, immediately before eating.
2. It is permitted to salt a large amount of food (i.e. more than one piece) only if oil, or some similar liquid, is poured on the food, so the sharpness of the salt is weakened. The liquid should preferably be added before the salting, but it can also be added after the salting.
3. When salting a vegetable salad, one should add liquid (e.g. oil, salad dressing) to the salad.
4. ***Sfardim are lenient according to the basic law***, but it is praiseworthy to add liquid.

C. Food excluded From This Prohibition:

1. The prohibition only applies to those foods which are commonly pickled, and whose quality or texture can be altered by the salting. This includes most vegetables, which tend to harden when salted, and beans, which soften when salted. The quality of bitter and pungent foods can also be improved by salting.
2. The prohibition would apply to ***radishes, onions, garlic, cucumbers***, and similar vegetables.
3. Foods where salt merely adds flavour are exempt from the prohibition, and may be salted in large quantities.
4. This exemption applies to cooked meat, fish, eggs, and similar foods.
5. This exemption applies to slices of tomatoes, peppers, and similar vegetables.

6. However, even these foods should not be salted far in advance of eating.
7. A salad that contains a medley of vegetables may be salted as long as the majority of vegetables in the mixture are the varieties that aren't commonly pickled.
8. If the salad contains oil, vinegar or salad dressing it is surely permissible to add salt [here, even if a majority of the vegetables are of the variety that are commonly pickled] as once the dressing has been added it weakens the salt's ability to further pickle any of the vegetables, as we discussed yesterday

Smoothing Food:

A. The Prohibition:

1. It is forbidden to smooth surfaces such as wax, bars of soap, etc.
2. It is forbidden to smooth, rub, or spread any dense substance,
3. Fluids which have no density, such as ordinary oil, are permitted to be rubbed or spread onto another surface.
4. The Poskim are in dispute as to whether this prohibited activity of smoothing applies to food items.
5. The Rama rules that the lenient view may be followed. Nevertheless, he rules that one who is strict shall be blessed. i.e. It is praiseworthy to follow the stringent view which includes foods in the prohibition.
6. It is praiseworthy to avoid smoothing out any thick substance.
7. This stringency applies only where one wants the food to appear smooth for decorative purposes, such as icing a cake or smoothing out an egg salad.

8. In a case where one intends merely to spread the food substance over large area, but does not care whether the surface appears smooth (e.g. spreading butter on bread), there is no basis for this stringency.
9. It is permitted to spread any firm substance (e.g. butter, jam, cheese, egg or tuna salad) on slice of bread, as long as one does not intentionally smooth out their surface.

B. Practical Applications:

1. It is praiseworthy to avoid smoothing the surface of an humous, babaganush, egg or tuna salad, or a platter of mashed potatoes, to make it appear more presentable.
2. It is praiseworthy to avoid spreading icing evenly over a cake in order to decorate it nicely.
3. If the icing is being spread on the cake to merely cover the cake it is permitted.
4. It is praiseworthy not to smooth out a food solely for aesthetic reasons, for example, creating ripples in a dish of mashed potatoes by rolling a spoon or fork over the top.
5. It is permitted to spread butter, cream, jelly, or any other substance on bread, as long as one does not intend to make the surface appear smooth.