

THE DOS AND DONT'S OF RE-HEATING ON SHABBAT:

Important Standards of Shabbat Food Preparation for Congregation Shaare Tefilla

Adapted from the guidelines Rabbi Barry Gelman of UOS in Houston put together for his congregation's "Halachic Community Standards."

Prohibitions regarding cooking or heating food on Shabbat are based on the Torah prohibitions against cooking and using fire on Shabbat and the rabbinic extensions of these laws. As a community, we welcome all participants regardless of the degree to which they implement these laws in their homes, recognizing that people and families experience different religious journeys from one another. We are also a community that thrives and grows through social interaction, especially on Shabbat. Inviting guests entails a responsibility to feed those guests food that adheres to the highest standards of food preparation, both with regard to the actual kashrut of the product and our Shabbat community standards. These community standards for Shabbat re-heating will allow everyone to feel comfortable hosting and being hosted on Shabbat, in any home in the Shaare community and will thus promote unity. Note that cooking is permitted on Yom Tov and most of these issues would not be applicable.

1. Do not put any **uncooked** food or beverage on a hot burner, in a heated oven, in a crock-pot that is on or in a heated urn on Shabbat itself.
2. **Do Not Heat any liquids on Shabbat:** Water or even fully cooked soup or stew - anything that can be poured out - needs to be put on the heat (in an urn, crock-pot, or on the stove) and left there, **BEFORE** Shabbat.

REHEATING COOKED FOODS:

Solid food that has cooled down (from the refrigerator, for example) may not be heated by placement right on the stove or in the oven.

You can reheat cold, solid, pre-cooked food by adhering to any one of the following procedures:

1. Put it on a warming tray ("plata" in Hebrew), which cannot be adjusted (tape the knob if there is one) and is not designed to cook (just to warm). **The tragic fire in Brooklyn several months ago that took the lives of seven of the Sasson children has brought to the fore safety concerns about these appliances. If you are concerned about this, the next option might work better for you, or speak to the Rabbi for further guidance.**
2. Put it on a "k'deira blech" or a "non-blech" which is a pan of water covered by another pan (not just a plain sheet of metal which is called a "blech").
3. Put it in a warming drawer or cupboard, which is designed just to warm, not to cook.

A simple blech 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, but not once it has cooled down. Without a blech, once you remove food from a stove (even a glass covered stove) you cannot even return it to the stove. A "k'deira blech" — meaning a pan of water covered by a flat lid (the equivalent of a double boiler) allows you to return cold solid pre-cooked food to the stove.

HOT FOOD on SHABBAT:

While these laws may *seem* daunting, there is not reason not to eat hot food on Shabbat (if you enjoy hot food). In fact, sources from as far back as the 12th century speak strongly against those who refrain from eating hot food on Shabbat, going to far as to suspect that they are Kara'ites! It is still possible to adhere to these restrictions and enjoy delicious, piping hot food on Shabbat morning.

- Keep food in a crock-pot or on the stove or in the oven overnight, but make sure that any food you serve is about **one-half cooked before Shabbat starts** (18 minutes after candle lighting). 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 12 or 24 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. Food in the crock-pot or on a heated stove should not be stirred 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 is a complicated matter and should not be done without consulting a rabbi.)

Hot Tea and coffee:

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).

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 me if you have any questions, doubts or issues regarding your comfort adhering to any of these standards.

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