OU KASHRUT PAGE

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Cooked Food in a Non-Kosher Gas-Station

In modern-day Israel, it is common to walk into any gas station and find a wide array of kosher products available for purchase, including cold beverages, snacks, nuts, and sandwiches. Any item that is sealed and bears a reliable kosher certification may be purchased without concern—even if the establishment is open on Shabbat.

However, purchasing freshly cooked items on-site is a more complex matter. Many gas station convenience stores do not possess kosher certification, unlike most food establishments in Israel. Moreover, the fact that these stores are typically open on Shabbat raises additional halachic concerns.

COOKED FOODS

Many gas station convenience stores offer cooked food items such as hot dogs, hot sandwiches, and baked goods. While these items may originate from kosher suppliers, this does not guarantee their kosher status. Observant customers may inquire about the kosher certification and see packaging attesting to the products' kosher origin, but this is ultimately irrelevant if the store itself is not under kosher supervision.

Without certification, there is no way to ensure that the products consistently come from kosher sources. For example, a gas station may begin by using kosher hot dogs but later switch to a cheaper, non-kosher alternative without notifying customers. Additionally, utensils may be used interchangeably for dairy and meat products, which is a serious kashrut concern.

Further halachic issues can arise. One such issue is *Bishul Akum*—the rabbinic prohibition against consuming food cooked entirely by a non-Jew, unless a Jew participated in the cooking process. Even if the food is kosher in origin, if it is cooked exclusively by a non-Jew, it becomes prohibited.

Another important halachic principle is *Basar Shenitalem Min Ha'ayin* (see *Shulchan Aruch* YD 63), which prohibits consumption of meat that was not sealed and supervised by a Jew. If raw meat products are left unsealed—for example, while thawing—and non-Jewish employees are alone in the store, such meat becomes prohibited for consumption although they have certification when arriving at the store.

SHABBAT

Some gas stations may claim that all their food is kosher and all staff are Jewish. However, serious halachic concerns remain if the store operates on Shabbat. According to the *Gemara* (*Chulin* 15:a) and *Shulchan Aruch*

(OC 318:1), food that is knowingly cooked in violation of Shabbat by a Jew may not be consumed. Furthermore, later authorities extend this prohibition to those for whom the act was performed.

The *Ktav Sofer* (*Orach Chaim* 50) asserts that an establishment open on Shabbat for the purpose of serving refreshments implicates any customer as an accessory to the Shabbat desecration. As such, any food prepared on Shabbat is considered to have been made for the customer, rendering it prohibited—even if it appears kosher.

Another significant issue involves the utensils used. As mentioned, food cooked on Shabbat is forbidden due to its association with intentional Shabbat desecration. According to the *Rashba*, the utensils used in preparing such food also become prohibited, as they are considered to have absorbed the taste of non-kosher food. The *Mishna Berura* (318:4) accepts this ruling. Therefore, any food subsequently cooked in those utensils—even days or weeks later—is also considered non-kosher.

It is worth addressing a common misconception: A Jewish-owned restaurant in Israel cannot be considered kosher if it operates on Shabbat. Based on the halachic principles outlined above, this belief is incorrect.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

In a gas station that is not kosher-certified and operates seven days a week, no unpackaged or freshly prepared food should be consumed. Even hot beverages, such as coffee, should be avoided, since equipment used on Shabbat (such as coffee machines) may render future use non-kosher.

If a gas station is not certified but is closed on Shabbat, there may be room to purchase hot beverages like coffee, assuming the ingredients are kosher and equipment is exclusively kosher. Nevertheless, other cooked items—such as pastries, sandwiches, and hot desserts—should be avoided due to concerns regarding *Bishul Akum* and other halachic issues mentioned above. ■

Kashrut Questions in Israel?
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