

Heating up food on Shabbat

1. One may place cold fully cooked solid food on top of a pot that is on the fire on Shabbat.¹
2. Some say that placing food on a “Kedeirah Blech,” a rectangular box filled with water placed on top of the fire before Shabbat, is the same as placing food on top of a pot on the fire, while others say that it merely like a covered fire, to which one may not return food without fulfilling certain conditions (see note #1).²
3. Some say that placing food on an electric hotplate is not a usual way of cooking and doesn’t require the conditions of Hachzara, while others say that it is considered like a covered fire.³
4. Some say that if solid food was on the Blech during Bein HaShemashot and was removed on Shabbat, it may be returned to a covered fire on Shabbat as long as it is fully cooked, while many others reject this leniency.⁴

1. The Mishnah (Shabbat 36b) records Beit Hillel’s opinion that one may not return a pot to a Kirah (type of stove meant to hold two pots) on Shabbat if the Kirah is heated with pressed sesame or wood unless the coals were covered with ashes or removed. The Mishna Brurah 253:55 quotes the Ran 17b, who says that the reason Chazal prohibited placing fully cooked food on the fire on Shabbat is that it looks like one is cooking on Shabbat. Shaar HaTzion 235:37 also quotes Rabbeinu Tam, who explains that it is prohibited lest a person stoke the coals on Shabbat.

The Gemara and Rishonim discuss under what conditions may one return food to the fire. Based on the Rama 253:2, Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 1:18 rules that one may return food to a fire on Shabbat only under the following conditions: 1) the food is fully cooked, 2) it’s still somewhat hot (see note 4), 3) it was removed with intent to be returned, 4) one kept his hand on it, and 5) the fire is covered. For the slightly variant conditions according to Sephardim, see Yalkut Yosef 253:9.

The Tosefta (Shabbat 3:23) permits placing a pot of food on top of another pot (Kedeirah Al Gabei Kedeirah) on Shabbat in order to preserve the heat of the top pot but not in order to heat it up. The Bet Yosef 258 quotes Rabbeinu Yerucham, who cites the Rosh’s opinion that the requirement that the food be hot is true only regarding foods that weren’t fully cooked or liquids, but a cold fully cooked solid may be placed on top of a pot on Shabbat. Rabbeinu Yerucham then quotes a second opinion that placing cold food on top of a pot is like placing it on a fire which is forbidden. S”A 318:8 rules like the Rosh.

The Pri Megadim E”A 253:33 explains that the above leniency only applies if the bottom pot is filled with food, and not if it is empty. Bei’ur Halacha 253:3 D”H Veyezaher agrees. Thus, Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 1:42 rules that one may place cold fully cooked solid food on top of another pot of food that is on the fire, even if it will become Yad Soldet Bo.

2. A “Kedeirah Blech” is a covered rectangular metal box containing water that is meant to serve as a “pot” on top of the fire upon which pots can rest. Rav Hershel Schachter (“Hilchos Bishul B’Shabbos”, min 56-9) rules that a “Kedeirah Blech” is like a pot on top of a pot and is permissible. Rav Mordechai Willig (Am Mordechai p. 28), though, argues that since the water inside the “Kedierah Blech” isn’t meant to be consumed, it is not similar to the case of a pot on top of a pot. Rabbi Elyashiv (cited

by The 39 Melachos Bishul #211-2), Rabbi Belsky (ibid.), and Rabbi Dovid Cohen (oukosher.org) agree.

3. Rav Mordechai Willig (Am Mordechai p. 48) writes that one may heat up cold fully cooked solid food on an electric hotplate which is not used for cooking and has only one temperature setting. Halachos of Shabbos (p. 313), Shabbos Kitchen (p. 43), and Chazon Ovadyah (p. 78) agree. See Sh”t Igrot Moshe 4:74:35 who rules that if it is impossible to cook on a particular electric hotplate, one may heat up already warm food on it if it has only one setting. Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 1:30, however, rules that an electric hot plate is like a covered fire and one may not return food onto it without fulfilling the other conditions of Hachzara. Rabbi Belsky (quoted by Halachically Speaking 4:16:3) and Orchot Shabbat (p. 99) agree.

4. The Ran (Shabbat 17b) infers from the Yerushalmi that if food was on the fire from before Shabbat and was removed only once Shabbat began, it may be returned without all of the conditions of Hachzara. Bet Yosef 253:2 writes that many Rishonim, including Tosfot, Rosh, and Rambam, disagree with the Ran. Nonetheless, the Rama 253:2 records the minhag to rely on the Ran but advises one to be strict. Mishna Brurah 253:63 explains that this leniency only removes the conditions of intending to return the food and keeping it in one’s hand; the food would still have to be fully cooked and placed on a covered fire.

Magen Avraham 253:36 writes that besides for the other conditions of Hachzara it is only permitted to return a solid food to a covered fire if it is not completely cold because otherwise it looks like one is cooking on Shabbat. Bei’ur Halacha 253:5 D”H UBilvad, however, explains that the Gra argues that only liquids need to be warm in order to be returned, but solids may be returned even if they are cold. Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 1:20 and Sh”t Igrot Moshe 4:74:31 rule like the Magen Avraham, while Chazon Ovadyah (p. 80) agrees with the Gra.

Rav Soloveitchik (cited by Rabbi Jachter in “Hachzara and Hatmana”, koltorah.org) ruled that one may rely on the Ran. This is also relying on the Gra’s opinion that only liquids need to be warm. Rav Mordechai Willig (Am Mordechai p. 47), however, rules that initially one should not rely on this lenient ruling. Rav Hershel Schachter (“Hilchos Bishul B’Shabbos”, min 52-5), Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 1:23, 39 Melachos (Bishul #203), and Halachos of Shabbos (p. 355) agree.