

Voice OF THE VAAAD

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CHOCOLATE GELT

Chocolate coins have become one of the most popular Chanukah food items in recent times. Although this author knows of no special significance to this custom¹, it is well known that indulgence in chocolate needs no formal reason. So, in this article we will endeavor to explain some of the halachic background into the kosher certification of cocoa products in general.

A brief introduction into the unique nomenclature of chocolate is in order. When dealing with cocoa derived products, "butter" is not dairy and "liquor" is not alcoholic. Chocolate may contain "meat" and is supposed to have a "temper".²

Chocolate is derived from the bean of the cacao tree, which is native to the Amazon and thrives in hot, rainy, tropical areas around the world. These days, over 70% of the world's chocolate is grown in West Africa.³ The beans are carefully harvested by hand since machines could injure the cacao trees. Cocoa beans reside in pods, which are orange when ripe. Workers first remove the pod from the tree, split it open with a machete, and extract the beans.

These beans are very bitter. To develop their flavor, the beans are placed in large trays, covered with banana leaves, and left to ferment for two to seven days.⁴ The beans are cleaned and then roasted in large, rotating ovens. Roasting draws out flavor and

loosens the beans from their hulls. The roasted beans then go into a winnowing machine, which cracks the beans and removes their hulls. The remaining part of the bean is called the nib or the "meat" of the bean. The nibs are ground down under a series of rollers. This process results in a thick paste called chocolate "liquor". Chocolate liquor does not contain alcohol, rather it contains the main components of a good piece of chocolate.



Chocolate liquor contains cocoa solids and fatty cocoa "butter" in roughly equal proportion. Cocoa butter imparts no flavor or aroma to the finished chocolate, but gives it the wonderful smoothness known as "mouth feel". Cocoa butter has a very low melting point (it melts at body temperature) and is expressed as a clear liquid that floats to the top of a vessel, while the dense cocoa liquor settles to the bottom, much as oil and vinegar separate with a clear line of demarcation.⁵ At this point,

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the chocolate product is almost recognizable to the average consumer. The manufacturer then adds other ingredients like sugar, milk powder (only if making milk chocolate) and other flavorings to produce a tasty, finished product. The final step in production is “tempering”, a slow heating of the chocolate mix in which the cocoa butter reaches its most stable form as tiny crystals. This gives well-tempered chocolate its shiny surface, smoothness, and “snap” when you break it.

To put this arduous journey into perspective, it takes approximately 400 cocoa beans to make one pound of chocolate. Each cacao tree produces about 2,500 beans annually. With the high demand for chocolate worldwide, it is expected that by 2028 the global chocolate market will be worth more than 200 billion dollars!⁶

Kashrus concerns regarding chocolate start once the beans reach the roasting facility. Although the raw material is inherently kosher, the machinery used may not be dedicated to pure cocoa production. Additionally, in many European countries, animal fats are often added for softer texture. It is interesting to note that in the USA, according to FDA guidelines, such an item could not be labeled as plain chocolate. According to the FDA⁷, to be called chocolate, the product must contain cocoa, cocoa butter, sugar, lecithin and vanillin, nothing else. Milk chocolate also contains whole-milk solids. These definitions are ironclad; no deviations are tolerated. If, for example, another type of fat is used in place of, or in addition to, cocoa butter, the product may be called compound chocolate, but never plain chocolate. Lastly, the milk powder and various flavors added to the chocolate all need proper kosher certification.

The most common kashrus issue in chocolate manufacturing is how to make pareve chocolate. Chocolate companies typically produce milk chocolate and dark chocolate on the same lines. While the ingredients for a pareve chocolate are not hard

to come by, kashering the equipment presents a challenge. Typically, one would kasher this equipment with *hagalah*, which requires boiling hot water. But the equipment used for chocolate production is extremely water-sensitive and companies will not allow water to be introduced.⁸ The *Rama*⁹ allows kashering with liquids other than water *b'dieved*. In fact, chocolate companies themselves use cocoa butter to flush their equipment. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt”l* writes¹⁰ that one cannot use fats to kasher equipment. Only liquid oils can be used. Therefore, chocolate plants are typically kashered with oil. It is important to note that even oils can be solid. Therefore, only oils that are liquid at room temperature (such as soybean, canola, and sunflower oil) can be used for kashering.¹¹

Another fascinating halachic discussion surrounding chocolate is what *bracha* to recite before partaking of the sweet treat. The *Shaarei Teshuvah*¹² records that the common custom is to say “*Shehakol*” before drinking chocolate. The reason he discusses drinking and not eating is that eating chocolate is a relatively new invention. The first commercially produced chocolate bar did not hit the market until 1847!¹³ Drinking various forms of hot chocolate had existed already for hundreds of years. Now that eating chocolate has become so common, some halachic authorities¹⁴ suggested that since the cocoa beans were grown for the purpose of making chocolate, the chocolate should retain its status as a fruit and obligate the *bracha* “*Borei pri haetz*.”

However the majority of *poskim*¹⁵ have ruled that the appropriate *bracha* to make on eating chocolate is *shehakol*. Since the original fruit has undergone such a metamorphosis and numerous other ingredients were added to impart a specific taste, the appropriate *bracha* is *shehakol*.

A long journey ends in a refreshing treat for our Chanukah chocolate gelt. A *freilichen* Chanukah!

1 See <https://youtu.be/GSiKInvZHTU> and <https://torahdownloads.com/shiur-1013641.html> which discuss the minhag of Chanukah gelt, but that does not lend itself to distributing chocolate coins in its stead.

2 Kosher Food Production - The Story of Chocolate - Pages 253-257

3 <https://candyusa.com/story-of-chocolate/fun-facts-about-chocolate/>

4 <https://www.livescience.com/61754-chocolate-facts.html>

5 <https://www.scienceofcooking.com/chocolate/how-is-chocolate-made.htm>

6 <https://www.globenewswire.com>

7 See Kosher Food Production - ibid

8 See <https://www.hps-pigging.com/how-to-clean-a-chocolate-transfer-pipe-using-product-recovery-pigging/>

9 Orach Chaim 452:5

10 Igros Moshe YD 1:60

11 OU Daf HaKashrus - Consumer Edition - Issue 28

12 O.C. 202:19

13 <https://www.history.com/news/the-sweet-history-of-chocolate>

14 Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt”l* (Minchas Shlomo Vol. I, 91:2)

15 Vzos HaBracha pg. 103

DOUGHNUT MUSINGS

As we enjoy our variety of doughnuts this Chanukah, I would like to offer a thought to add some meaning to this sweet feast.

The simple reason people ascribe eating oily foods on Chanukah is to commemorate the miracle of the oil. While this basic approach has merit, I would like to explore a different approach into this ancient custom and explain why it is appropriate specifically in *golus* to fulfill this custom.¹

Tosfos in *Pesachim*² discusses which types of dough batter require separation of *challah*. *Tosfos* writes in the name of *Rabbeinu Tam* that a dough that is initially of a thick consistency, even if it is ultimately fried, is obligated have *challah* separated from and to recite a *hamotzie bracha* before eating it. The proof to this halacha is from the *menachos* that were brought with the various *korbonos* offered in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Even though they were fried in oil, the *bracha rishona* recited on them was *hamotzie*.³ Any food that requires *hamotzie* is obligated to have *challah* separated from it. We have now established a *halachic* link between dough foods fried in oil and the *menachos* offerings, but what we still need to understand how this connects to Chanukah.

The *Ramban*⁴ writes that when each individual lights their menorah on Chanukah it commemorates not only the miracle that transpired, but also represents a continuation of the menorah lighting that took place daily in the *Beis Hamikdash*. It follows⁵ that since our custom in the diaspora⁶ is to specifically light menorah inside our homes, we are transforming our homes on Chanuka to represent the *Beis Hamikdash*. Therefore, the meals eaten on Chanukah resemble the eating of the *korbonos* that transpired in the *Beis Hamikdash*. In the *Beis Hamikdash* the majority of eating was from either the meat, fowl or *menachos* offerings that were brought.

Year round, a person in their home often eats meat or fowl products but it is unusual to include a fried dough product as part of dinner.⁷ Therefore, specifically on Chanukah, when we are exhibiting a level of bringing the *Beis Hamikdash* into our homes, we have a custom to include doughnuts.⁸

For a list of local Vaad Hoer certified establishments that sell doughnuts, visit - <https://ovkosher.org/food/>

Enjoy!

1 See Voice of The Vaad issue #10 - <https://ovkosher.org/voice-of-the-vaad-10> for a discussion on this general topic.

2 37b s.v. D'chuli Almah

3 The Rishonim debate this halacha in Hilchos Challah (Tur YD 329). See Aruch HaShulchan YD 329:15 for his final ruling. Regarding the proper *bracha rishona* on a doughnut is, see; opinions of Shulchan Aruch & Rema OC 168:13. Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurebach zt"l in Halichos Shlomo – Moadim Vol I 17: Dvar Halacha I 1 writes that the custom is like the Rema.

4 Parshas BeHaloscha 8:2

5 As explained in the sefer Emek HaSufganim - Chapter 8

6 As codified in the Rema OC 671:8

7 One who eats a doughnut as part of their meal will fulfill the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch (mentioned in footnote #3) that a G-d fearing individual should only consume such items during a meal in which he has already recited *hamotzie*.

8 See Voice of The Vaad - issue #12 - <https://ovkosher.org/voice-of-the-vaad-12/> for a discussion of the custom to specifically eat dairy foods on Chanukah.

FROM THE VAAD INBOX

Question: *Can I wash my pareve dishes in a meat or dairy sink? What about putting my pareve utensils in my meat dishwasher?*

Answer: Yes and yes. Although one needs to have a designated sink (or separate sink racks) to wash meat and dairy utensils, it is not necessary to have a designated sink for pareve items. It is possible to “kasher” a sink to use for pareve by simply cleaning it well beforehand. The sink can then be used immediately for pareve use even without waiting the 24 hours necessary for regular kashering. Additionally, one can use their dairy or meat dishwasher to clean their pareve utensils¹ with the following caveats. The cavity and racks of



the dishwasher must be cleaned well and completely free of any food remnants. Additionally, the filter of the dishwasher must be cleaned well. Once that is done the dishwasher may be used for pareve items without waiting 24 hours or running a cycle beforehand.

The rationale for this *halacha* is as follows. The *bliyos*² from the sink or dishwasher that might enter the pareve utensils are no longer effective as they have first travelled into the sink/dishwasher then into the water and finally into the pareve vessel, this is called *nat bar nat*³. *Nat bar nat bliyos*⁴ that

become absorbed into the pareve vessels, are no longer potent and do not pose any halachic concern.⁵

¹ The pareve utensils need to be washed without any meat/dairy utensils in the dishwasher.
² Literally - absorbed flavors
³ Nat bar Nat is an acronym for Nosen Taam bar Nosen Taam. See Aruch HaShulchan YD 95:2 in detail explaining how this concept applies.

⁴ This is only true as the original bliyos were of kosher matter.
⁵ An additional factor to consider here is that the soap used in the sink/dishwasher might make the bliyos become pogum. See Shulchan Aruch YD 95:4 with Aruch HaShulchan YD 95:24

BIKUR CHOLIM SOCIETY

The Vaad Hoer - Bikur Cholim Society, currently stocks 5 kosher food closets in local hospitals:

- **Mercy Hospital** - Located on lobby level, in the area of Catherine's Cafe, beneath the row of microwaves. Code is 613 (manual lock).
- **Missouri Baptist Medical Center** - Located on the 3rd floor of the main tower (OB floor) across from the nurse's station. Code is 3333 enter (electronic lock).
- **St. Louis Children's Hospital** - Located on the 12th floor in room #1220Q
- Family Kitchen. To unlock the cabinet, press the lower left corner and then the lower right corner button (electronic lock).
- **St. Luke's Hospital** - Located on the 6th floor in the waiting area. Code is 613 (manual lock).
- **St. Mary's Hospital** - Located in building 4 East on the fourth floor. Nurse will direct you to the closet.

For more information or to volunteer, please reach out to **Mrs. Miriam Florans at 314-724-7444.**



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