

In Hilchos Shabbos

You've heard the shaylos . . .

Now learn the issues & the opinions

Making Salads

Part 1: The melacha of Tochein

A summary of the weekly Wednesday night In Hilchos Shabbos shiur by Rabbi Shmuel Stein at the Miami Beach Community Kollel. To receive it weekly email InHilchosShabbos@gmail.com

Making a salad on Shabbos may seem like a simple and uncomplicated task, but in fact it is fraught with many Torah prohibitions. In fact, many great Torah scholars were careful to make egg salad for their Shabbos meal themselves, as its preparation involves many complicated halachos.¹

The first issue that arises when making a salad is cutting or chopping the vegetables, which may involve the *melacha* of *Tochein* (grinding). In the following paragraphs we will discuss the *halachos* of *Tochein* and the permissible methods of making salads on Shabbos.

The Melacha of Tochein (Grinding)

One of the thirty-nine *melachos* of Shabbos is the *melacha* of *Tochein*.² The *melacha* of *Tochein* was performed in the Mishkan when producing the bread for the *lechem hapanim* ("showbread"). In order to produce the bread, wheat kernels were ground into flour,³ and therefore, any act of grinding violates the *melacha* of *Tochein*.⁴ For example:

- One may not grind peppercorns in a pepper grinder on Shabbos in order to create freshly ground pepper.⁵
- One may not grate horseradish on Shabbos.
- One may not use a grinder to crush salt, spices or seasoning on Shabbos.



Cutting an object into small pieces

Although the act of *Tochein* that was performed in the Mishkan involved *grinding* wheat kernels into *particles*, the *melacha* of *Tochein* includes any act that reduces a large object into small pieces, such as cutting or chopping an object into small *pieces*. For example, the Gemara⁶ writes that one may not cut beets into small pieces on Shabbos. Although the object is not ground into particles, doing so still violates the *melacha* of *Tochein* since the large object is broken down into smaller pieces. Likewise, dicing onions or tomatoes into very small pieces involves the *melacha* of *Tochein*,⁷ as does crushing garlic into small pieces.

In order to properly understand how to avoid the prohibition of *Tochein* when making salads we will discuss the following points:

- 1) Which activities are prohibited under the *melacha* of *Tochein*
- 2) The four leniencies that permit *Tochein*
- 3) Using devices specifically designed for grinding

Which Activities Are Prohibited under the melacha of Tochein?

Although it is clear that grinding or cutting an object into very small pieces violates the *melacha* of *Tochein*,⁸ it is unclear exactly how small the pieces must be in order to be included in this *melacha*. The following questions are discussed by the *poskim*:

- ❖ When dicing vegetables for a salad, how small must the pieces be cut in order to be included in the *melacha* of *Tochein*?
- ❖ Is slicing vegetables (e.g., peppers or pickles) into long, thin slices included in the prohibition of *Tochein*?
- ❖ Is mashing vegetables (e.g., avocado or banana) included in the prohibition of *Tochein*?

In the following paragraphs we will define the parameters of the *melacha* of *Tochein* and the activities that are included in this *melacha*.

Dicing vegetables

The *Shulchan Aruch*⁹ writes, "Someone who cuts a vegetable into very small pieces violates the *melacha* of *Tochein*." Dicing vegetables violates the *melacha* of *Tochein*, because the vegetables are cut effectively into pieces that are now easier to eat. The *Mishna Berura*¹⁰ writes that it is clear from the *Shulchan Aruch* that only cutting a vegetable or fruit into very small pieces is included in the prohibition of *Tochein*, cutting them into larger pieces would not be included. For example:

- Cutting an apple into large pieces does not violate the *melacha* of *Tochein*.
- Cutting large pieces of watermelon or cantaloupe does not violate the *melacha* of *Tochein*.¹¹

Since the fruits and vegetables are not cut into "very small pieces," it is not considered an act of *Tochein*.

The *Mishna Berura*¹² writes that what still remains unclear is exactly how large one must cut the pieces in order to avoid the *melacha* of *Tochein*. For example:

- ❖ When cutting tomatoes and cucumbers for an Israeli salad, it is difficult to determine how large the pieces must be cut in order to avoid violating the *melacha* of *Tochein*.
- ❖ When cutting onions to add to an egg salad, it is hard to determine how large one must cut the pieces in order to avoid violating the *melacha* of *Tochein*.

This uncertainty presents a problem with dicing vegetables into small pieces on Shabbos, as it is difficult to determine exactly what is considered "very small pieces" and what is not. We will later discuss a permissible method of dicing vegetables on Shabbos.

Slicing vegetables into thin strips

Some *poskim*¹³ rule that slicing vegetables into thin strips is considered an act of *Tochein*, since the vegetable is cut into a very thin piece. Although the vegetable strips are long, cutting a vegetable in such a manner still violates the *melacha* of *Tochein* because the vegetable is cut into very thin pieces in width. Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv¹⁴ supports this opinion from the following Gemara:¹⁵

One who builds a basket out of reeds on Shabbos can violate eleven *melachos*. One of the *melachos* that is violated is *Tochein*, since the reeds must be cut into thin strips that are woven together to form the basket.



It seems to be clear from the Gemara that cutting the reeds into long strips is considered an act of *Tochein*.

Nevertheless, Rav Moshe Feinstein¹⁶ and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach¹⁷ disagree and rule that cutting vegetables into thin strips is not considered an act of *Tochein*. They explain that although the Gemara rules that cutting an object into thin strips in order to make a basket is prohibited, cutting *food* into thin strips would not be considered an act of *Tochein*. The reason for this distinction is as follows: Since the reeds must be cut specifically into the shape of a strip so that they can be used for making the basket, cutting them into thin strips is considered a significant act of *Tochein*. On the other hand, cutting vegetables into strips is not considered a significant act of *Tochein* because the must still be cut further in order to eat them. Only dicing vegetables into small pieces creates a significant change as they are then considerably easier to eat.¹⁸ Thus, according to Rav Moshe and Rav Shlomo Zalman, one may cut slices of cucumbers and carrots as well as strips of peppers on Shabbos.

Mashing fruits and vegetables

The Chazon Ish¹⁹ rules that mashing a fruit or vegetable is considered an act of *Tochein*. Since the fruit or vegetable becomes totally crushed, mashing can be considered the most effective form of *Tochein*. The Chazon Ish supports this based on the ruling of the Rema,²⁰ which states, "One may not crush figs on Shabbos (which would result in a sticky mass)." This ruling proves that crushing or mashing a fruit or vegetable on Shabbos is prohibited. Thus, according to the Chazon Ish:

- One may not mash a banana on Shabbos.
- One may not mash an avocado on Shabbos in order to make guacamole.
- One may not spread an avocado on a slice of bread on Shabbos.²¹

Rav Moshe Feinstein²² argues that mashing a fruit or vegetable does not constitute an act of *Tochein*. The *melacha* of *Tochein* can be accomplished only when an object is broken down into *separate pieces*; mashing a fruit or vegetable into one big mass does not constitute an act of *Tochein*. Although the Rema rules that crushing figs violates the *melacha* of *Tochein*, that is because crushing figs results in *separate pieces* of figs becoming stuck together to make one mass. By contrast, mashing a banana, or avocado, where there are no separate pieces created at all, does not violate the *melacha* of *Tochein*.

Nevertheless, Rav Moshe concludes, "Although it may be permissible to mash fruits and vegetables on Shabbos, if possible one should comply with the ruling of the Chazon Ish, who prohibits mashing fruits and vegetables on Shabbos. This can be accomplished using a *shinui* (an awkward manner) to mash fruits or vegetables." For example, one who wishes to mash a banana for a young child or an avocado to make guacamole salad should use the bottom of a cup or the handle of a knife. (The leniency of using a *shinui* will be discussed in more detail later.)

Mashing that results in separate pieces becoming stuck together: Even Rav Moshe agrees that mashing a fruit or vegetable is prohibited on Shabbos if it results in *separate pieces* becoming stuck together.²³ For example:

- One may not crush garlic on Shabbos, since the result is many small pieces of garlic becoming stuck together.
- One may not mash cooked potatoes.²⁴

The Four Leniencies that Permit Tochein

Until this point, we have discussed a number of activities that involve the *melacha* of *Tochein* such as dicing, slicing, or mashing, we will now discuss four leniencies that permit grinding on Shabbos.

I. Tochein applies only to *gidulei karka* (items that grow from the ground)

The *Shulchan Aruch*²⁵ rules that the prohibition of *Tochein* applies only to items that grow from the ground.²⁶ Since the *melacha* of *Tochein* is derived from the grinding that occurred in the Mishkan, it can include only acts of grinding that are similar to that which occurred in the Mishkan. The act of grinding performed in the Mishkan was done with items that grow from ground (i.e. kernels of wheat for the *lechem hapanim*), and therefore the prohibition of *Tochein* on Shabbos is limited to grinding foods that grow from the ground. Therefore:

- It is permitted to chop or mash eggs or liver.
- It is permitted to cut chicken or meat into very small pieces.
- It is permitted to cut cheese into small pieces.

Since these items do not grow from the ground, they are not included in the prohibition of *Tochein*.

One may not use an instrument designed for grinding. The *Shulchan Aruch*²⁷ writes that it is never permitted to use on Shabbos an instrument that is specifically designed for grinding. The *Mishna Berura*²⁸ explains that using such an instrument violates the prohibition of *Uvadin d'chol* (weekday activities), as they are designed to perform acts of grinding – which is a weekday activity. Therefore:

- One may not use a grater to grate a piece of cheese.²⁹
- When making egg salad one may not use a potato masher to chop the eggs.³⁰



Egg and cheese slicers. However, one may use an egg or cheese slicer on Shabbos, as they are not considered instruments designed for grinding.³¹ Rather, they are viewed as a series of knives that are used to cut the food. Accordingly, using them does not give off the appearance of a weekday activity and therefore does not violate the prohibition of *Uvadin d'chol*.



2. Grinding for immediate use

The Rema³² rules that one may grind a fruit or vegetable if it is done for immediate use. The *Mishna Berura*³³ explains that when one grinds food immediately before eating it we consider the grinding to be an “act of eating” and not an “act of grinding.” Just as it is permissible to chew a vegetable even though it is ground up as it is eaten, so too, one may grind a vegetable immediately before eating it, since we view it as an act of eating.³⁴ Accordingly:

- When preparing a salad on Shabbos one may cut and dice any vegetable so long as the cutting and dicing are done immediately before the meal.
- One may cut onions to add to an egg salad or for any other dish immediately before the meal begins.

The *Mishna Berura*³⁵ warns that one must be careful to cut these vegetables *immediately* before the meal is ready to begin. For example:

- One may not cut or chop vegetables in the morning, before going to *shul*, for Shabbos lunch.
- One may not chop vegetables well before the meal will start in order to leave time to do other things in the interim.

Since in these examples the acts of *Tochein* are not performed immediately before eating, it is prohibited *mid'Oraisa*. (See note³⁶ regarding how long before a meal is considered “immediately before the meal.”)

The stringent opinions who disagree with the ruling of the Rema

Although the Rema rules that the *melacha* of *Tochein* does not apply if it is done for immediate use, the *Mishnah Berura*³⁷ cites others who disagree with this leniency. The

Beis Yosef writes that even when cutting or chopping for immediate use, one should be careful to cut the pieces a “little bit larger [than one normally cuts them]³⁸.”

Rav Moshe Feinstein³⁹ rules that the *halacha* follows the opinion of the Rema, but unless there is a great need it is worthwhile for a *ba'al nefesh* (one who is scrupulous in *halacha*) to be stringent and cut the pieces a little larger than he normally cuts them.

One may not use an instrument designed for grinding. As we mentioned earlier, one may never use an instrument designed for grinding, as this violates the prohibition of *Uvadin d'chol*, performing weekday activities. This is true here as well, the leniency of “grinding for immediate” use only applies when using an ordinary utensil (such as a knife), one may not use an instrument designed for chopping. Furthermore, the *Mishna Berura*⁴⁰ explains that in regard to the leniency of “grinding for immediate” using an instrument designed for chopping is a more serious issue as it is prohibited *mid'Oraisa*. Since the grinding is performed with an instrument specifically designed for chopping, it can no longer be considered an “act of eating” but must always be considered an “act of grinding,” even if it was done for immediate use. Accordingly:

- One may not use a dicer to cut vegetables into small pieces, even if the dicing is done for immediate use of the vegetables.⁴¹
- One may not use a garlic press to crush garlic, even if the crushing is done for immediate use.⁴²
- One may not grind peppercorns in a grinder in order to create freshly ground pepper even if it is done immediately prior to the meal. Similarly, one may not use a grinder to crush salt or seasoning even if it is done immediately prior to the meal.



3. Using a *shinui* (performing the *melacha* in an awkward manner)

The *Shulchan Aruch*⁴³ rules that the *melacha* of *Tochein* is permitted if a *shinui* is used. In this regard, the *melacha* of *Tochein* is an exception to all other *malachos*. Generally, *Chazal* prohibited using a *shinui* to perform a *melacha*. However, they permitted it regarding *Tochein*, as they saw that this leniency was necessary for the preparation of food.⁴⁴ For example:

- The *Shulchan Aruch*⁴⁵ writes that one may crush peppercorns with the handle of a knife or with a plate. Since these are awkward ways to crush peppercorn, they are permitted on Shabbos.
- When mashing a banana, avocado, or cooked potato one may use the bottom of a cup.⁴⁶ (Even according to the opinion of the Chazon Ish, mentioned earlier, who rules that mashing is considered an act of *Tochein*.)
- One may use the handle of a knife or the bottom of a cup to crush garlic.

4. Ein *Tochein achar Tochein* (grinding foods that were already ground)

The Rema⁴⁷ rules that one may crumble a loaf of bread into small pieces on Shabbos. Since the ingredients of the bread (i.e., the kernels of wheat) were already ground once (into flour), it is permitted to grind them a second time. Likewise:

- One may crumble a cookie to use as a topping for a cake. As the flour in the cookie was ground before, the prohibition of *Tochein* no longer applies.⁴⁸
- One may cut up fruit leather into small pieces because the fruit has already been pureed.
- One may crumble a sugar cube into granules of sugar because the sugar was ground before.⁴⁹ (However, it is only permitted to cause the sugar to revert to its original form, one may not grind it even further into a powder because it was never ground into that form before.⁵⁰)
- One may crumble sugar or salt that has clumped together due to humidity⁵¹

One may not use an instrument designed for grinding. As we mentioned earlier, the *Shulchan Aruch*⁵² rules that it is never permitted to use an instrument that is specifically designed for grinding on Shabbos, as it is prohibited as *Uvadin d'chol*. Here too, one may not use a specialized instrument to grind or crumble foods that have been previously ground.⁵³ For example, one may not use a grater to grind a loaf of bread into small pieces.⁵⁴

The intention of this summary is to discuss common practical *shaylos*. One should consult a Rav concerning *p'sak halacha*.

1 Minhag Yisroel Torah 289:8 (pg. 86). He also brings other reasons for this custom. 2 Mishna Shabbos 73a 3 Rambam Shabbos 7:5 4 Opinion of Rav Hai Goan (quoted in introduction to *sefer Iglei Tal*) 5 Orchos Shabbos 5:16 6 Shabbos 74b Rashi d'h d'paris 7 Shulchan Aruch 321:12 8 Shulchan Aruch 321:12 9 Shulchan Aruch 321:12 10 Biur Halacha 321:12 d'h ha'michateich 11 Orchos Shabbos 5:3 12 321:44 13 Tzemach Tzedek quoted in *Ketzos Hashulchan* 129: badi 2, and Rav Elyasiv quoted in *Orchos Shabbos* Vol.1:54 14 Quoted in *Orchos Shabbos* 5 note 12 15 Shabbos 74b Rashi d'h Chayav 16 Igros Moshe O.C. Vol. 4:74 Tochein 3 17 Minchas Shlomo 1:91:13 18 Igros Moshe ibid 19 O.C. 57 d'h Linyan, *Shmiras Shabbos k'hilchaso* 6:8 20 321:12. The Rema only mentions cutting the figs, but does not explicitly discuss a case of *crushing* the fig. Nevertheless, the *Tosefta* (cited in the *Bais Yosef*), which is the source of the Rema's ruling, specifies that the figs were crushed. 21 *sefer* 39 melachos pg. 474 22 Igros Moshe O.C. Vol. 4:74, *Tochein* 2 23 Igros Moshe ibid number 3 (the Shabbos Kitchen pg. 130) 24 The Shabbos Kitchen pg. 130 [see *Igros Moshe O.C.* Vol. 4:74 *Tochein* 5]. Regarding whether the prohibition of *Tochein* applies to vegetables that were cooked: The *Shmiras Shabbos k'hilchaso* 6:9 note 22) rules that the *melacha* of *Tochein* does not apply to vegetables once they have been cooked and are now very soft (to the point that they are almost falling apart). Once the cooking process softens the vegetable to this degree it is already considered to have a status of being “mashed”, and therefore any further mashing is not accomplishing an act of *Tochein*. However, one may not use a potato masher to mash potatoes as this is prohibited under *Uvadin d'chol* (weekday activity) as we will discuss later. 25 321:9 *Mishna Berura* 321:31 26 Non-food items may not be ground even if they do not grow from the ground (*Chazon Ish* 57 d'h mah shekasav). For example, dirt that has hardened may not be ground or crumbled into smaller pieces. 27 321:10 28 *Mishna Berura* 321:36 29 *Shulchan Aruch* 321:10 (The Shabbos kitchen pg. 137) 30 ibid 31 *Shmiras Shabbos k'hilchaso* 6:3 ha'arah 12 from Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach, The Shabbos kitchen pg. 137 32 321:12 33 *Mishna Berura* 321:44 34 The Chazon Ish (57 d'h v'annam) rules that the leniency of “for immediate use” does not apply to mashing. One reason is that mashing is not considered *derech achila* as it is not merely a way to make it easier to eat the food but it actually changes the entire form of the food. However, many *poskim* (see *Orchos Shabbos* 5: note 18) including Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe O.C.* Vol. 4:74 *Tochein* 2) do not agree with this ruling and include mashing in the leniency of “for immediate use”. 35 321:45 36 *Poskim* write that we can define “immediately before the meal” as the amount of time that it generally takes to prepare the meal. For example, if it generally takes a half an hour to prepare for a meal, one may chop vegetables and perform other acts of *Tochein* during this half-hour preparation period prior to the start of the meal. Since it takes a half an hour to prepare for the meal this entire period is considered “immediately before the meal”. Similarly, if a larger meal takes an hour to prepare, one may begin performing acts of *Tochein* an hour before the meal. One does not need to wait until the end of the hour to perform acts of *Tochein* he may even begin to perform acts of *Tochein* in the beginning of the hour. However, one may only set this preparation period immediately before the meal. For example, one may not prepare for the meal and then go to *shul* to *daven*, as this cannot be considered immediately before the meal. (*Shmiras Shabbos k'hilchaso* 3:69, The Shabbos Kitchen page 100) 37 321:45 38 *Chazon Ish O.C.* 57 (d'h v'hinai). See also *Chut Shani* (1:12:3) where he explains that since people consider such a piece to be “big” we cannot consider it fit for eating; however, once people consider this piece to be “small” it is fit for eating and is considered *Tochein*. However, see *Minchas Shlomo* (1:91:13) where he gives a more lenient ruling on what is considered “small”, as he rules that any piece of food that one still just use his teeth to chew in order to eat is still considered “big” and is not included in *Tochein*. 39 O.C. Vol. 4:74 *Tochein* 2 40 *Mishna Berura* 321:45, *Biur Halacha* 321:12 d'h *Midi d'hovei*. Just like the *melacha* of *Borer* cannot be considered an “act of eating” when an instrument is used to sort the objects, similarly we cannot consider the grinding that is done to be an “act of eating” if a specialized instrument is used to grind the food. Therefore, doing so would violate the *melacha* d'*Oraisa* of *Tochein*. 41 *Shmiras Shabbos k'hilchaso* 6:3 42 The Shabbos Kitchen pg. 137 43 321:7 44 *Kitzur Hilchos Shabbos Tochein* (note 10), 39 *Melachos* pg. 475. See also *Mishna Berura* 321: end of 36 who writes that this leniency only applies when being performed for food preparation which indicates that this leniency was given specifically for preparing food for Shabbos. 45 321:7 46 *Mishna Berura* 321:25 [39 *Melachos* pg. 46] 47 321:12 48 *Mishna Berura* 321:25 [39 *Melachos* pg. 46] 49 *Orchos Shabbos* 5:20 50 ibid 51 ibid 52 321:10. The *Mishna Berura* (302:17) explains that this leniency only applies when it is obvious that the item has been ground before, such as bread which can only be made by first grinding the kernels of wheat. However, an item which is not apparent that it was once ground may not be ground on Shabbos. For example, one may not grind mud since it is not apparent that it was once ground. 53 *Biur Halacha* 321:12 d'h *Ifarer* 54 ibid