

The Dos and Don'ts of Re-heating on Shabbat: Important Standards of Shabbat Food Preparation for the Anshe Sholom Community

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Prohibitions regarding cooking or heating food on Shabbat are based on the Torah prohibitions of not cooking and not using fire on Shabbat and the rabbinic extensions of these laws. **Observing them is a personal decision for each individual and family to contemplate on their own.** As a community we do not judge anyone for how or whether they implement these laws in their homes. People have a right to grow religiously and move towards observance at a pace appropriate for them. However, it is important for people to know what the community's halachic standards are.

When you invite people to your home, which I would hope becomes a regular activity, you take upon yourself a responsibility to feed those guests food that they are halachically allowed to eat. That means keeping to community standards. In addition to making sure the food you serve is itself kosher according to community standards of kashruth, there are shabbat community standards which you need to observe regarding that food. Food that is cooked on Shabbat, or even heated incorrectly on Shabbat, may even be prohibited to be eaten. I am confident that these community standards for Shabbat re-heating will help unify our community because they will allow everyone to feel comfortable hosting and being hosted on Shabbat, in any home in Lakeview.

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.

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.

Do Not Reheat even cooked solid food that has cooled down - from the refrigerator, for example - either by putting it right on the stove or in the oven. However, **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, but, rather, just to warm. **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.

"So, what does the blech - a metal sheet over the stove - that I grew up with allow me to do?" A simple blech only allows you to return hot food - solid or liquid - removed from the stove, assuming the food remains hot and you intended to return it to the blech in the first place. Preferably, the food should not even be put down before it is returned to the blech. A blech does not allow you to reheat food once it has cooled down. Without a blech, once you remove food from a stove - even a glass covered stove - and it cools down you cannot return it to the stove. A "k'deira blech" - meaning a pan of water covered by another blech (the equivalent of a double boiler) allows you to return **cold solid pre-cooked** food to the stove.

Special Exemption: If you are in a difficult situation, you may rely on a leniency which great Lithuanian rabbis have permitted: As long as food was in the oven or on a blech when Shabbat came in - from before candle lighting to an hour after candle lighting - that food - solids only! - can be returned to the oven or the blech even if it has cooled down. Therefore, if you didn't set up the k'deira blech or the warming tray before Shabbat, you can still use the extra solid food you had from Friday night for Shabbat lunch, if you need to.

REMEMBER: **Only solid foods which have already been cooked** can be reheated.

You may keep food in a **crock-pot** or on the stove or in the oven overnight, but make sure that any food you serve is at least **one-half cooked before Shabbat starts**. For example, if you are making cholent, make sure you put it in with enough hours to make it minimally edible - hard and chewy, perhaps, but edible - before Shabbat. If cholent takes five hours to be ready to be served - even if normally it is served after 12 hours - the rabbis estimated one half of that would allow it to be minimally edible, meaning that you have to give it 2-1/2 hours to cook before Shabbat starts.

Special Exemption: If you throw in some raw meat or chicken into the cholent right before Shabbat starts, then you do not have to follow the "half cooked" rule. Since there is no chance that the cholent will be ready until the next morning.

Do Not: Stir food in the crock-pot or on a heated stove once Shabbat comes in, at the very least until it is fully cooked. If possible, remove the inner pot from the outer metal element before scooping out the contents.

You may only add piping hot water to the crock-pot or a pot on the stove, and only by transferring it directly from a hot-water urn or another pot on the stove, via a ladle or a spoon, into the crock-pot.

Special Shabbat procedures for tea - which 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 . . .

"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 into a teapot or carafe, and from there to each person's cup. Once it is in their cup, they can then put in the tea bag without any fear of cooking, even though the water is still piping hot.

Please don't 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 the rabbi if you have any questions, doubts or issues regarding any of these standards. They are meant to enhance your Shabbat, not to diminish it.