Halacha Review: Pesach

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**Milk, Eggs and Mushrooms**

 The Mishna Berura (448:33) writes, “Concerning milk from a cow that is fed *chometz* on Pesach, even if it belongs to a gentile, there is a disagreement among the authorities. The opinion of the Pri Megadim is to allow the milk only if the cow is milked 24 hours after eating *chometz*. Others allow the milk the same day if the cow is fed other foods besides the *chometz*.”

 The issue at hand is whether or not the *chometz* fed to the animal will create a prohibition on the animal and its byproducts. Whatever the animal ate before Pesach is irrelevant. Before Pesach the laws are more lenient and *chometz* in the animal’s diet will not prohibit the animal or its byproducts. The issue is specifically regarding the animal’s diet during Pesach. Therefore, milk purchased before Pesach is permitted regardless of the cow’s diet. The controversy is only relevant to the milk from a cow that is fed *chometz* on Pesach.

 In the first volume of Igros Moshe (O.C. #147) Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, wrote a lengthy explanation why the halacha would allow a Jew on Pesach to drink the milk from a cow that was fed *chometz* if the cow and *chometz* belonged to a non-Jew. However, the *minhag* of many communities is to avoid the controversy and to purchase milk before Pesach for the entire Yom Tov.

 In many communities there is a *minhag* not to eat chickens on Pesach that were fed *chometz* on Pesach. Even though it is permitted to slaughter chickens on Yom Tov and on Chol Hamoed, they were not fed *chometz*. Today, we purchase chickens that were slaughtered before Yom Tov. Similarly, the beef we eat on Pesach is slaughtered before Yom Tov. As mentioned above, the *chometz* in the animal’s feed before Pesach will not prohibit eating meat from the animal on Pesach.

 The Mishna Berura addresses the issue of milk, and mentions the disagreement among the authorities if the *chometz* that is fed to the cow will create a problem with its milk. There is a similar issue with eggs. If a chicken is fed *chometz* on Pesach, according to the opinions that the chicken is prohibited, the chicken’s eggs are also unfit. For this reason, many people purchase their eggs for the entire Pesach before the beginning of Yom Tov. It is a common practice among kosher grocery stores to stock up on eggs before the beginning of Pesach so they can provide their customers with eggs on Chol Hamoed that are not subject to the controversy.

 Those people who have the minhag to be strict are careful to purchase eggs on Chol Hamoed only from the kosher grocer. If someone did purchase eggs from the local (non-kosher) grocery store on Chol Hamoed Pesach and cooked with them, the halacha would allow it.

 Mushrooms that are commercially produced grow on a mash that includes rye. For this reason, there are some opinions that prohibit the use of mushrooms on Pesach. In my opinion, the mushrooms can be no more severe than chickens, eggs or milk. Therefore, I recommend the purchase of fresh mushrooms before the beginning of Yom Tov. Canned mushrooms with proper Pesach certification are permitted even when purchased on Chol Hamoed.

 One more note about mushrooms. The ordinary button mushrooms we eat do not require special inspection for insects. However, Portobello mushrooms have been found to be infested with insects. According to the “Orthodox Union (OU) Guide to Checking Fruits and Vegetables” the most common pests found in Portobello mushrooms are small whitish worms with black heads. These may be difficult to spot. Red colored worms can also be seen. They can be found embedded in the fan-like structure under the cap of the mushroom. The OU recommends the removal of the entire brown fan-like section beneath the cap before using the mushrooms. This applies to all year, not just Pesach.

**Food on Erev Pesach**

 *Chometz* may be eaten on *erev* Pesach during the first third of the day. Some have a *minhag* to specifically eat *chometz* on *erev* Pesach. If someone has difficulty cleaning his teeth (e.g., a teenager with braces) he should avoid *chometz* on *erev* Pesach. It is recommended for one with braces to avoid eating hot *chometz* for 24 hours before the time *chometz* is forbidden on *erev* Pesach.

 One may not eat matzah on *erev* Pesach. This prohibition extends back to the night before Pesach as well. Some communities have a *minhag* not to eat matzah beginning Rosh Chodesh Nissan, and others as far back as Purim. But the halacha only restricts the consumption of matzah on *erev* Pesach. In addition to matzah, one should not eat any baked matzah meal product on *erev* Pesach. Also, fried matzah and eggs (*matzah bry*) should not be eaten on *erev* Pesach. Even chicken or fish coated with matzah meal and fried or baked should not be eaten on *erev* Pesach. Again, this restriction is only on *erev* Pesach, and not the days leading up to *erev* Pesach.

 It is permitted to eat cooked matzah meal products, such as matzah balls, on *erev* Pesach. Those who have the *minhag* not to eat cooked matzah meal on Pesach would not eat matzah balls on *erev* Pesach once it is forbidden to eat *chometz*. Even those who eat cooked matzah meal products on *erev* Pesach must refrain from eating them within three hours of the end of the day. This last restriction is imposed to ensure that the matzah is eaten at the *seder* with an appetite. Small portions of meat, fish, salad, cheese, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and potato starch cakes may be eaten until sunset.

**Work on Erev Pesach**

 In the time of the *Bais Hamikdash* the *korban Pesach* was brought on *erev* Pesach after *chatzos* (mid-day). Therefore, that time of the day is treated in many respects as a Yom Tov even today. Many activities are curtailed in honor of the day. It is forbidden to wash soiled clothes on *erev* Pesach after *chatzos*. Spot cleaning is permitted, as well as washing the laundry of a young child or linens for guests. If not washing *erev* Pesach would make it necessary to wash clothing on Chol Hamoed, it is preferable to wash them *erev* Pesach after *chatzos* rather than on Chol Hamoed. It is permitted to activate a washing machine full of laundry before *chatzos* even though the machine will continue to clean after *chatzos.* Drying clothes in a dryer and ironing clothes (except pleats) are permitted on *erev* Pesach after *chatzos.* It is also permitted to give clothes to a gentile to launder after *chatzos*, and it is permitted to bring clothing to the dry cleaner after *chatzos*. It is permitted to pick up clothing from the dry cleaners on Chol Hamoed if they are needed for Yom Tov.

 It is permitted to mend clothing on *erev* Pesach, but one may not hem or otherwise sew new clothing. It is permitted to polish shoes all day *erev* Pesach. Picking up clothing from the tailor or dry cleaner is permitted all day.

 It is appropriate to groom oneself prior to Yom Tov. This includes haircuts and shaving. However, these activities may not be performed after *chatzos* on *erev* Pesach or on Chol Hamoed. However, after *chatzos* one may ask a gentile to perform these tasks in order to prepare for Yom Tov. Therefore, if one forgot to take a haircut in the morning he may go to a gentile barber in the afternoon. However, a gentile may not perform these tasks for a Jew on Chol Hamoed. A woman should not cut her hair after *chatzos* on *erev* Pesach but she may remove other hair from the body after *chatzos* and during Chol Hamoed.

 It is permitted to cut nails the entire day, *erev* Pesach, however it is preferable to cut them before *chatzos.* If a woman had a manicure *erev* Pesach, she may have another manicure on Chol Hamoed. However, if she did not have time to do her nails on *erev* Pesach, she may not have a manicure on Chol Hamoed. When it is necessary to cut nails for a mitzvah it is permitted on Chol Hamoed even if it was not done *erev* Yom Tov.

**Fast of the First Born**

 The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 470) writes that the firstborn child fasts on *erev* Pesach, whether he is the firstborn of his father or mother. Even though we don’t usually fast on a Friday, when *erev* Pesach is *erev* Shabbos the fast is on Friday. The Mishna Berura explains that this fast is meant to recall the death of the firstborn children in Egypt, and the miracle that occurred when the Jewish firstborn did not die. Firstborn girls do not fast, and there is a difference of opinion whether a firstborn by C-section fasts. The father of a firstborn son will fast for his son on *erev* Pesach until his son becomes bar mitzvah.

 The accepted custom is that a *siyum* is made *erev* Pesach, and the participants in the *siyum* do not have to fast. If a firstborn was present at the *siyum* he does not fast even if he did not eat at the *siyum*. If a firstborn missed the *siyum* but arrived for the meal, he may not eat. A firstborn by C-section should attend the *siyum* to avoid the disagreement whether he fasts or not. If he could not attend the *siyum*,he would not have to fast.

 In order to make a *siyum*, an entire *mesechta* of the Talmud or *seder mishnayos* should be learned. If the learning was done entirely in English, as long as every word was said, a *siyum* could be made.

 When *erev* Pesach occurs on Shabbos, the *minhag* is for the fast to be observed on the Thursday prior to Pesach. The *siyum* is made on that Thursday as well. If a firstborn did not attend a *siyum* and did not fast on Thursday, he would fast on Friday. If a father usually fasts in place of his firstborn son, and he missed the *siyum* and ate on Thursday, he would not fast on Friday.

 Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt”l*,* asked several questions relating to the custom of fasting on *erev* Pesach. First of all, the firstborn Egyptians died on the 15th of Nissan, so the firstborn Jew should really fast on Yom Tov, but due to the honor of Yom Tov, we push the fast back to the 14th. However, in many ways the 14th is also a semi-Yom Tov, so why don’t we push the fast back to the 13th of Nissan? Secondly, the miracle happened to the firstborn Jews of that time, so the event should be commemorated by the descendants of those firstborn children, whether or not they themselves were firstborn! Why should every firstborn of every generation commemorate the saving of the firstborn at *Yetzias Mitzrayim*? Another question is: why is the requirement to fast removed with a *siyum*? We don't find such a leniency with other fast days! And finally, if the purpose is to recall the miracle that the firstborn Jews did not perish, shouldn't the miracle be remembered with a holiday and celebration of sorts? Why would we designate a fast day when we commemorate a miraculous salvation?

 To resolve these questions Rav Shlomo Zalman gave a novel interpretation to the day. The fast is not merely a way to commemorate the miracle of the salvation of the Jewish first born. Rather, it is a day of introspection and *cheshbon hanefesh*. When Hashem saved the firstborn, they were designated to perform Hashem's service and were reserved for the *avodah* in the Mishkan and Bais Hamikdash. After the sin of the golden calf, the firstborn sons were rejected and the service in the Mishkan was given to the Kohanim from *shevet* Levi. As a result, whenever the Kohanim perform the *avodah*, it is a reminder of the sin of the firstborn. Erev Pesach, more than any other day of the year, is the day when the service of the Kohanim is highlighted and the honor of the Kohanim is on public display. On that day, the firstborn feel the shame and disgrace of their part in the sin of the golden calf more than any other time. Therefore, it was designated as a fast day for all firstborn children, a memorial of the miracle that spared the firstborn and the possibilities of what could have been. The reason a firstborn who participates in a *siyum* may eat is that the Torah is the solace and comfort for the firstborn. As our sages taught us, the Torah is more precious than "*peninim,*" referring to the Kohen Gadol who would enter the Holy of Holies. Even though the firstborn lost the *avodah*, they still have the Torah, which is greater (Avos 6:6).

***Shiurim* of Matzah at the *Seder***

 The measurement used to fulfill the *mitzvos* of eating matzah and marror is a *k’zayis,* the volume of an olive. There are different opinions of the correct volume of the olive for the purpose of fulfilling these *mitzvos*.

 According to the opinion of Tosafos, quoted in Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 486), the size of an olive is equal to half of the average chicken egg. According to the opinion of the Rambam, the size is less than a third of an average chicken egg. The Mishna Berura writes that to fulfill *mitzvos* from the Torah, such as eating matzah on Pesach night, one should eat a volume equal to the larger “olive” (half an egg). For *mitzvos* that are from the Rabbonon, such as eating marror, one should try to use the larger volume but would fulfill the mitzvah with the smaller size as well. If someone is ill, he may use the smaller measurement even for matzah.

 There is another method to determine the size of an olive, and it is through linear measurements involving the thickness of the thumb. The *gemora* in Pesachim 109a teaches that a box measuring two thumbs by two thumbs by two and a half and a fifth thumbs (2x2x2.7) will contain a *revi’is.* A *revi’is* is one and a half eggs. The volume of an olive will either be a third of a *revi’is* (Tosafos) or less than a quarter of a *revi’is* (Rambam).

 This method of measuring is considered more authoritative in finding the true volume of an olive, but again, there is great debate concerning the width of the thumb used as the basis for the calculations. In general, the opinions range between 2–2.4 cm, with a variance in the size of an olive ranging from 30–50 cc, according to the opinion of Tosafos, and 20–33 cc, according to the Rambam.

 There is another point to consider at the *seder*. According to the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 475), one should eat two olives of matzah for the mitzvah of *achilas matzah*. Also, the Mishna Berura brings a custom to eat two olives of matzah for the *afikoman*. To satisfy the opinion of “two olives,” one may rely on the smaller-sized olive.

 It is difficult to properly define the amounts of matzah necessary for the *mitzvos* of the *seder* because hand baked matzos are not uniform. Different matzah bakeries make matzos of different dimensions, and even the matzos from one bakery will not be identical. Below is a chart to help determine the proper amount of matzah to eat at the *seder*. The matzah dimensions below are based on the *sefer* *Halachos of K’zayis* by Rabbi Pinchos Bodner.

 The size of the *etzba*, the thickness of the thumb, is used to determine the size of the *k’zayis* in the tables below. The Chazon Ish was of the opinion that the *etzba* measures 2.4 cm. Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, wrote a *teshuva* measuring the *etzba* at 2.25 cm, but it is brought in his name to increase the size slightly to 2.295 cm to be extra careful. The Ma”harsham wrote that the *etzba* is only 2 cm. This opinion is followed by Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt”l, and is considered to be the *minhag* of Yerushalayim.

**SHIURIM OF MATZA FOR THE SEDER**

 The matzah dimensions below are based on the *sefer* *Halachos of K’zayis* by Rabbi Pinchos Bodner. The size of the *etzba*, the thickness of the thumb, is used to determine the size of the *k’zayis* in the tables below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Matzah Thickness | Matzos per pound | Diameter | Weight | Volume |
| **Thin**  | 9 | 11.5” | 51g | 93cc |
| **Medium** | 7.5 | 11” | 58g | 122cc |
| **Thick** | 6 | 10.75” | 72g | 140cc |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2 small k’zaysim | 1 large k’zayis (Tosafos) | 1 small k’azyis (Rambam) |
| *Etzba* | **2.4cm** | **2.29cm** | **2cm** | **2.4cm** | **2.29cm** | **2cm** | **2.4cm** | **2.29cm** | **2cm** |
| **Thin** | 70%36g |  | 42%22g | 53%27.4g | **46%****23.8g** | 32%16.4g | 35%18g | **31%****16g** | 21%11g |
| **Medium** | 54%31.4g |  | 32%19g | 41%23.7g | **35%****20.7g** | 24%14.3g | 27%15.7g | **23%****13.8g** | 16%9.5g |
| **Thick** | 46%34g |  | 28%20.6g | 35%25.7g | **31%****22.4g** | 21%15.4g | 23%17g | **20%****15g** | 14%10.3g |

**Practical Halacha**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Achilas Matza*** | ***Korech*** | ***Afikoman*** | ***Choleh*** |
| **Thin**  | 46% 23.8g | 31% 16g | 46% 23.8g | 21% 11g |
| **Medium** | 35% 20.7g | 23% 13.8g | 35% 20.7g | 16% 9.5g |
| **Thick** | 31% 22.4g | 20% 15g | 31% 22.4g | 14% 10.3g |

 By using the measurements of Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, for *achilas matzah* and *afikoman*, one is eating two small *k’zaysim* (measured with a 2 cm *etzba*) to satisfy the practice of eating two *k’zaysim* instead of one. For *korech* one may use the measurement of the smaller *k’zayis*.

 A *choleh,* one who is ill or can not eat so much matzah, may fulfill the *mitzvos* by eating one small *k’zayis*, measured with a 2 cm *etzba* for *achilas matzah, korech* and *afikoman.*

***Arbah Kossos* (Four cups of wine)**

 On Pesach we have a mitzvah to drink *Arbah Kossos,* four cups of wine. A red or pink wine, even one with a low-alcohol content (4.5% or higher), is the beverage of choice for the mitzvah. There are some products with less than 4% alcohol, and they are equivalent to grape juice. One who is ill and can not drink wine, or people who have difficulty tolerating wine, may drink grape juice. There are differing opinions whether one who can tolerate wine but does not enjoy it should drink wine or grape juice. The view of Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, is to drink wine when possible. For those who are allergic to the added sulfites in wine and grape juice, Kedem produces organic wine and grape juice without sulfites.

 The minimum size of the cup or goblet is a matter of disagreement among the *poskim*. For Friday night *kiddush*, one should use a goblet that holds at least 4.42 fluid ounces. For the other cups of the *arbah kossos*, and for Yom Tov *kiddush* on any other night of the week, a goblet that holds at least 3 fluid ounces is sufficient.

 For the mitzvah of *kiddush* during the year, one should drink a *meloh lugmav* (a cheekful) of wine, which is approximately an ounce. For the mitzvah of the *arbah kossos*, which includes the first cup used for *kiddush*, one should preferably drink the entire cup. However, one who only drinks the majority of the cup will fulfill the mitzvah. Many people use goblets in excess of 6 fluid ounces. Even though the goblet holds more than the required amount, one would still have to drink the majority of the goblet in order to fulfill the mitzvah. If one has difficulty drinking a large amount of wine or grape juice, he should use a small cup that meets the minimum requirement and drink the entire cupful. If that is still problematic, he should only drink the majority of the cup. At the conclusion of the *seder*, in order to recite the *bracha achrona* after the fourth cup, one would have to drink at least 3 ounces of the third or fourth cup.

 Some people prefer to dilute the wine. One may dilute wine with grape juice as long as the alcohol content remains at least 4.5%. For instance, one may dilute a wine with 9% alcohol content 50/50 with grape juice. If the wine is diluted with more than half grape juice, the wine loses its status as wine. One should not dilute wine with water as there are some *poskim* who are of the opinion that such a dilution may render the *bracha shehakol*. Similarly, one should not dilute grape juice with water as there are *poskim* who maintain that such a mixture is no longer grape juice and the *bracha* is *shehakol*.

 One who uses grape juice for the four cups should make sure that the grape juice is not made from concentrate. Grape juice sweetened with grape juice concentrate is acceptable, but grape juice from concentrate should not be used for *kiddush* or the *arbah kossos*. There are opinions that the *bracha* on grape juice made from concentrate is *shehakol*. Some people like to freeze their wine and grape juice. The *bracha* on frozen grape juice is also *shehakol*. One who may not drink wine or grape juice for medical reasons may fulfill the mitzvah with four glasses of tea.

 One should drink the cups of wine (or grape juice) quickly. Preferably, the cup should be finished in one or two drinks. One should not sip the wine, nor should one use a straw to drink the wine.

**Eruv Tavshilin**

 When the first or second day of Yom Tov occurs on Friday, it is forbidden to cook or bake on Yom Tov for Shabbos unless an Eruv Tavshilin has been prepared on *erev* Yom Tov. The Eruv Tavshilin enables one to prepare food on Friday for Shabbos. If Yom Tov occurs on Thursday and Friday, one may not prepare on Thursday for Shabbos. Thursday evening after nightfall is considered the beginning of Friday.

 On *erev* Yom Tov the head of household or his designee should set aside a baked item and a cooked item for the Eruv Tavshilin. The *eruv* is held in the right hand and the *bracha* אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על מצות ערוב is recited. After the *bracha*, an Aramaic proclamation found in the *siddur* or *machzor* is recited. If one does not understand the Aramaic, he should recite the declaration in English, as follows: "By virtue of this *eruv* we shall be permitted to cook, bake, keep food warm, carry, light candles, and do all preparations on Yom Tov (i.e. Friday) for Shabbos.”

 The baked item used for Eruv Tavshilin, should be a whole *challah* or *matzah*, at least the size of a large egg (approximately 2 fl. oz.). Preferably, the cooked item used for the *eruv* should be cooked on *erev* Yom Tov. The cooked item may be anything usually eaten with bread, such as cooked fish or meat; it should be the size of an olive (approximately 1 fl. oz.). Many have the custom to use a hard-boiled egg. Cooked cereals, rice, or potatoes may not be used. Related to the mitzvah of Eruv Tavshilin is the adage, “If a mitzvah is done with an item, one should attempt to use it for another mitzvah.” Therefore, there are those who use the loaf for לחם משנה Shabbos night and day, and then recite *hamotzie* on the loaf at *seuda sh'lishis*. The cooked item should be eaten on Shabbos as well. If one forgot to eat the Eruv Tavshilin on Shabbos, it does not invalidate the *eruv*.

 The *eruv* extends to all household members. Guests staying with the family are included in the family’s *eruv.* A person who is unable to make his own *eruv* may, by agreement, join in another person's *eruv*. If Reuven wants to join in Shimon’s *eruv*, then before Shimon recites the *bracha* and the *eruv* proclamation, Reuven must lift up the *eruv* food with the intention of obtaining a share in it. A short-term guest can also perform this procedure to be included in the household *eruv*.

Even with the *eruv*, the preparation for Shabbos should conclude early in the afternoon. All foods should be at least one-third cooked before the onset of Shabbos. Thus, one should not delay the preparation of *cholunt* or any other food that requires lengthy preparation. Even if one isn't planning to cook on Friday for Yom Tov (e.g., one is invited out for the Shabbos meals or is a guest in a hotel), an *eruv* should still be prepared. There is a disagreement among the *poskim* if a *bracha* is recited when an *eruv* is made in these situations. Therefore, one should not make a *bracha*. However, it is considered proper to cook something, such as heating water for Shabbos on Friday, and thereby a *bracha* would be recited when preparing the Eruv Tavshilin.

 If the *eru*v food was eaten before Shabbos, or if one forgot to make an Eruv Tavshilin, one should consult a competent Rabbinical authority.

**Ovens on Shabbos and Yom Tov**

 Modern ovens are equipped with many features to aid the homemaker and increase safety. It is important to review the basic halachos of using the oven on Shabbos and Yom Tov and how to properly use the modern oven without transgressing any prohibitions. Particularly, this year, 5772, when the first *seder* occurs on Shabbos, one must be careful and plan ahead for the *seder* meal. (The last time Pesach occurred on Shabbos was 5758 or 1998.)

 It is permitted to prepare food before Shabbos and place it in the oven before Shabbos begins. The controls of the oven should be covered. These food items must be partially cooked before Shabbos begins (at a minimum one-third done, preferably half done). If a raw *kugel* was placed in the oven right before Shabbos starts, and it bakes on Shabbos, it is forbidden to eat the *kugel* on Shabbos.

 If food was left in the oven before Shabbos, it is permitted to remove the food during the meal. However, one must be certain that by opening the oven door a light, icon, or electrical switch is not activated. One should wait until the flame or electric coil is burning before opening the oven door. The reasons are: a) it is prohibited to start an electrical reaction visible on the control panel, and b) it is prohibited to open the oven door when this will activate the thermostat to ignite the oven.

 On Shabbos, if the oven is on, some *poskim* maintain that everything in the oven should be removed at the same time. It is improper to remove one item, leaving others in the oven to be removed at a later time. Furthermore, after a food item has been removed from the oven, it is prohibited to put it back in the oven, even if it is fully cooked and held in the hands the entire time. The halacha of returning fully cooked food items to the *blech* when it is removed and held the entire time does not apply to returning food items into an oven.

 Today, there are many ovens with a Sabbath-mode. When the oven is in this mode, all icons, lights and signals are disabled so that the oven door may be opened on Shabbos. It also creates a delay that prevents the thermostat from immediately activating the flame or electric coil. Therefore, when the Sabbath-mode is engaged, it is permitted to remove the food from the oven on Shabbos. **However, the Sabbath-mode does not permit placing cold food into the oven on Shabbos or adjusting the temperature.** Furthermore, even with the Shabbos mode, all the food should be removed from the oven at the same time.

 Modern ovens have timer features. It is permitted to leave food in the oven before Shabbos and set the timer to shut the oven on Shabbos. Once the oven is shut off with a timer, it is permissible to remove one item from the oven while leaving other items inside the oven to be removed at a later time. It is prohibited to place a cold item into the hot oven that was shut off by the timer.

 One may not set the timer before Shabbos to activate the oven on Shabbos, and place food into the oven prior to the activation of the oven. This is prohibited even if the food is fully cooked.

 Warming drawers that are thermostat controlled are identical in their laws to the oven as described above.

 On Yom Tov it is permitted to prepare food for that day. When gas ovens were equipped with a constant gas pilot light, it was permitted to turn on the oven on Yom Tov. It is prohibited to activate an electric oven on Yom Tov. Today, even gas ovens are equipped with electronic ignitions, and therefore it is prohibited to turn on the oven on Yom Tov.

 If the oven was turned on before Yom Tov, it is permitted to bake in the oven. It is also permitted to raise the temperature of the oven on older models with knob-controls, while the flame or electric coil is burning. When the flame or electric coil is off, it is permitted to lower the temperature. With the modern touch-pad controls, it is prohibited to adjust the temperature controls. Furthermore, if there is a digital read-out that will change as soon as the oven door is opened, it is prohibited to open the oven door. Also, most modern ovens are equipped with a safety feature that shuts the oven automatically after 12 hours, which is quite a nuisance when you need an oven for two days of Yom Tov.

 To address these problems, the Sabbath-mode is designed to disengage the automatic shut off, and to clear the digital temperature read out, so that it would be permitted to open the oven door on Yom Tov. **However, even with the Sabbath-mode engaged, one should not adjust the temperature with the electronic touch-pad.**

**The *Brachos* on Blossoms**

 The Gemora in Berachos 43b teaches that if a person goes out in Nissan and sees a blossoming fruit tree, he should recite a blessing, thanking Hashem for creating fine creatures and trees to benefit Mankind. The wording of the *bracha* is found in the *siddur* :

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שלא חסר בעולמו דבר וברא בו בריות טובות ואילנות טובים להנות בהם בני אדם.

This is codified in Shulchan Aruch O.C. 226:1. The Shulchan Aruch writes that the *bracha* is said only once a year, and it may only be said before the fruits of the tree have matured.

 The Mishna Berura comments that the Gemora mentions Nissan because that is the normal time for the fruit trees to blossom in warm climates, but the blessing may be said in a different month if that is the when the first blossoms are seen. Many *poskim* disagree and maintain that this *bracha* is only said in the month of Nissan. The accepted practice is to recite the *bracha* only in the month of Nissan. Afterwards, the *bracha* may be said without שם ומלכות (without Hashem’s name or the mention of His kingdom). However, one who lives in the Southern Hemisphere would recite the *bracha* in Tishrei, since that is the appropriate season for the blossoming of fruit trees. Since the *bracha* is only said once a year, if a person said the *bracha* in Nissan and then traveled to Australia in Tishrei, he would not recite the *bracha* again.

 The Mishna Berura goes on to qualify that the blessing is only said upon seeing the blossoms of a fruit-bearing tree. If the first time the tree was seen, the fruits of the tree were already mature, the Vilna Gaon held that the *bracha* may be said. However, if the fruit was ready for picking, one should not say the *bracha* on trees, rather the *bracha* *Shehechiyanu* would be in order. If the tree had been seen with its blossoms and the *bracha* was not said, and when the tree is seen a second time the fruits are mature, a *bracha* is not said.

 The common practice is to say the *bracha* during the daytime hours of the week, not at night and not on Shabbos or Yom Tov. The halacha, however, does allow for the *bracha* to be said at night if there is enough light for the blossom to be clearly seen. Also, if the last day to say the *bracha –*the first day of Rosh Chodesh Iyar– is on Shabbos, and that is the first time the blossoms are seen, one could recite the *bracha* on Shabbos.

 The *bracha* is said by men, women and children. It is preferable to say the *bracha* in the vicinity of two trees that have blossomed, as the wording of the *bracha* is in plural. However, the halacha allows for the *bracha* to be said even on one tree.

**Brief Reminders for Pesach 5772**

**This year the first *seder* is Friday night. Many preparations that may be done on Yom Tov must be done this year on *erev* Yom Tov. Below is a check list of items that should be prepared before Yom Tov.**

* Boil eggs (and potatoes if you use them for *karpas*)
* Roast the *zeroah*
* Grate/Grind Horseradish
* Rinse and check Romaine lettuce
* Mix the *charoses*
* Prepare salt water
* Have the meal food cooked and placed on the *blech* or in the oven

**Important Times for April 6, *erev* Pesach**

Finish eating *chometz* by 11:02 am Friday morning.

Finish burning *chometz* by 12:19 pm Friday afternoon.

*Chatzos* *erev* Pesach is at 1:35 pm.

Refrain from eating *mezonos* on *erev* Pesach after 4:50 pm.

Candle-lighting by 7:47 pm.

**Important Times for April 7, First day Pesach**

Finish *seuda shelishis* by 4:50 pm.

Candle-lighting not before 9:06 pm (9:18 pm according to Rabbeinu Tam)

**Eruv Tavshilin on last day of Chol Hamoed, Thursday, April 12.**