FISH and meat

12th of Cheshvan, 5771

Mixing fish and meat together is not restricted by Biblical law.

However, the Rabbis of the Talmud considered it a harmful mixture, and they forbade it for health considerations. The Gemara Pesachim (76b) teaches that one may not eat fish and meat together since this combination is considered sakana (harmful). Still, the Gemara is not explicit about what particular health hazard (dabar acher)meat and fish would trigger.

Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 116:2-3), following Rashi's opinion, identifies this danger as tsara'at, traditionally understood as a type of leprosy. By the way, and public opinion notwithstanding, Maimonides explicitly mentions that sara'at should not be identified exclusively as leprosy. He hints that sara'at was more a category of a (infectious?) disease (T. Tsarat 16, 10) than a particular disease.

Modern Rabbis also disagree about the specific health issue involved in mixing fish and meat.

"The combination of these two foods [fish and meat]can have negative health effects that are not readily apparent. Even if modern medicine does not recognize these health concerns, we can never be sure that the concerns are outdated" .

It could have been allergy or even, as I've heard from one of my teachers, the risk of swallowing a fish bone hidden in a piece of meat.

In any case, the prohibition of eating fish and meat together remains intact today.

The Rabbis sentenced "Chamira sakanta me-isura", when it gets

to preserving one's health (sakana), we should be stricter and more careful than when we are dealing with a religious prohibition (isur).

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Wednesday, October 27, 2010

FISH and milk

19th of Cheshvan, 5771

The Torah explicitly prohibits the mixing and consumption of meat and milk. The Rabbis extended this prohibition to include not only red meat but white meat (fowl) as well.

Last week we also explained the prohibition of mixing meat with fish, which the Rabbis forbade for a completely different reason: health concerns (see HOTD Wednesday Cheshvan 12).

What about fish with milk?

The Talmud (Chulin) states explicitly that fish and milk is a permitted combination.

However, Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575), the famous author of the Shulchan Arukh, indicated in his book 'Bet Yosef' the custom to refrain from eating fish and milk.

There were two explanations given by later commentators as of why Rabbi Yosef Caro would prohibit milk and fish.

1. Health considerations, similar to meat and fish. Keep in mind that milk and fish are two common animal food allergens. (Newly discovered health considerations would, in principle, override an explicit ruling of the Talmud)
2. Most Ashkenazi Rabbis and some prominent Sephardic Rabbis, however, considered Rabbi Yosef Caro's statement

as a ‘misprint’ on the text of the Bet Yosef, where a copyist confused between ‘milk’ and ‘meat’.

As of today most observant Jews, including our own community members, would not refrain from mixing fish and dairy.

Some Sephardic Jews, mostly from Syrian communities, and some Chassidic Jews, would still avoid eating fish with milk. However, even they would acknowledge that the problem only exists in mixing fish with ‘fresh milk’, and not with dairy products.

So they wouldn’t abstain from consuming, for example, fish with butter, cheese with salmon, etc.

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No comments:

Labels: Kashrut of Fish

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

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No comments:

Labels: Kashrut of Fish

Wednesday, October 13, 2010

Buying Kosher fish from a local fish

store

5th of Cheshvan, 5771

Can I buy fillet from a local fish store, which is not under rabbinical supervision? To answer this question, there are two issues we should bear in mind.

1. **Recognizing the fish/fillet as a Kosher (tahor) type.**
2. **The knife.**
3. **Recognizing a kosher specie is a Mitzva Min haTora.**

However, modern rabbis discussed if and when is possible to recognize a fish fillet.

I quote here two opinions.

1) According to the standard Ashkenazi custom (as written in the CRC web, under rabbi Gedalia Shwartz, Shlita) fish fillet can only be identifiable if it still has the skin. When the fillet does not have any skin left, you cannot identify the fish, therefore, you cannot buy it. This is for fresh or frozen fillet.

2)According to Sephardic custom (as taught by rabbi Eliyahu Ben Hayim , Shelita) if a person can recognize the fish fillet as a kosher specie, if he/she would be able to recognize this fish among ten other fillet, then is permitted to purchase that fillet, even though the fillet does not have any more skin. This is for fresh or for frozen fillet.

2. **The knife.**

1) Some authorities require to take your own knife to the fish store and to make sure they use that specific knife to cut the fish, in order to avoid any 'contamination' (noten ta'am) between Kosher and non Kosher fish by means of the knife.

2) Rabbi Ben Hayim allows using the sellers knife, provided:
a) The seller washes the knife with water from any eventual

solid vestiges or traces (*isur ba'ayn*). The knife does not absorb (so there is no particles' 'contamination' *ta'am*) because the fish is cold.

and

1. b) at home, the fish must be washed with water to make sure there is no solid vestiges or traces of a non Kosher fish.

When buying frozen fillet from Costco or other reliable stores we can assume that the knives were clean.

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No comments:

Labels: Kashrut of Fish

Wednesday, August 4, 2010

Some common NON-Kosher fish

24th of Av, 5770

Besides shellfish (shrimps, oysters, lobsters, etc) what other 'popular' fish are non Kosher and why?

Examples of non-kosher fish:

Catfish – it lacks scales entirely. Interesting for the kosher consumer to note, catfish (not Kosher!) is reported to have a similar taste to the increasingly popular tilapia (kosher!) Catfish and tilapia fillets look almost identical, though catfish is notably cheaper. **It is therefore quite possible that an unscrupulous fish retailer might switch the two!**

Basa or Tra (also called "China sole") – (family *Pangasiidae*) are currently the subject of both nomenclature debates and antidumping litigation. Vietnamese importers were marketing

them as catfish, to which they are nearly identical. Whether they are in fact catfish or not, **they are not kosher**.

Examples of NON-Kosher fish with 'scales'

Swordfish has scales but they are embedded to such an extent that it is impossible to remove them without making a hole or that its scales would fall off during its development, rendering swordfish as non-kosher.

Sturgeon definitely has scales, but it is not kosher. Its scales are classified as "ganoid", which means that they are covered with ganoin (similar in texture to fingernails) and cannot be removed without tearing the skin.

Burbot has cycloid scales (one of the types often referred to as "always kosher") yet because they are embedded, this fish is not kosher.

Sand lances may have tiny scales, but since they are not visible, this fish is not kosher.

Adapted from www.kashrut.org and www.ou.org

No comments:

Labels: Kashrut of Fish

Wednesday, July 28, 2010

What makes a fish 'Kosher'?

17th of Av, 5770

The Torah says that fish or any creature that lives in the water must have both scales (*kaskekset*) and fins (*senapir*) in order to be considered Kosher. The rabbis of the Talmud teach us that all fish that have scales also have fins, so in practice Kosher fish are identified simply by their scales.

Obviously, crustaceans (such as lobster) and other shellfish (such as clams) are not Kosher because they lack scales.

Not all scales are considered Kosher by Jewish Law. It must be removable without damage to the skin of the fish. Sturgeon, although it has primitive bony plates on its sides, is not considered Kosher because the scales cannot be removed without damaging the flesh. Sharks are similarly not Kosher, because their skin is covered with tiny teeth-like armor, which are not considered scales at all.

Jewish Law requires only a minimum number of scales to accord a fish Kosher status. Tuna, for example, have very few scales, yet are nevertheless considered a Kosher fish.

There are a few more factors that complicate this determination. For example, a given species of fish may be known by five or more names, some of which are common to known Kosher species. “Rock Salmon”, for example, is a non-Kosher fish (otherwise known as Atlantic Wolfish), and bears no relationship to the common Kosher species of true salmon.

For a list of Kosher and non kosher fish see: http://www.kashrut.com/articles/fish/