PESAH, Regular Matsa or Matsa shemura?

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Matsa (in English “Matzah”) is a special unleavened bread made of a flat dough. The dough is prepared with flour and water, without yeast. The flour normally comes from wheat, but in theory, Matsa could also be made with barley, oats, rye or spelt’s flour. The whole elaboration process from the time the flour gets in contact with water until the Matsa is baked takes less than 18 minutes.

There are different types Matsot. In the coming days we will learn the differences between 1. Regular Matsa and Matsa Shemura, 2. Hand-made Matsa and machine-made Matsa and 3. Regular Matsa and egg Matsa (= Matsa ‘ashira).

Let us begin with regular Matsa and Matsa Shemura.

The difference between these two Matsot has to do with the level of supervision (*shemira*), more specifically, at what point of the elaboration of Matsa the supervision begins.

For Regular Matsa the supervision begins from the moment of the mixing of the flour with water. It is necessary to make sure that the flour was kept in a dry place (humidity makes the flour Hamets). Furthermore, the water to be used to make the dough should be at room temperature level (warmer water accelerates the process of fermentation). No dough, even a small piece, might be unattended. Any piece of dough left unbaked for 18 minutes is Hamets. The machines are cleaned after each production for residues of dough, water, etc.

Matsa Shemura: In addition to all the rules for regular Matsa, kept throughout the process of making the dough up to the baking of the actual Matsot, in the elaboration of Matsa Shemura the grain is supervised from the time of harvesting. For example: The wheat kernels

are carefully examined to make sure that there are no grains which have split or that are sprouting, in which case they could be affected by a minimum moisture. The grain is stored and transported in special places to protect it from humidity, etc.

Obviously both Matsot are Kasher for Pesah. The use of Matsa Shemura is recommended particularly for the first two nights of Pesah (in Israel, only the first night), when we say the Berakha ‘al akhilat Matsa. Why? Having Matsa Shemura during the nights of the Seder is a practice that we follow in attention to the Biblical words (Ex 12:17) □□□□□ □□ □□□□□□ “and you shall guard the unleavened bread”.

During the other days of Pesah there is no need to use Matsa Shemura because during the rest of the Holiday there is no formal obligation to eat Matsa but only to refrain from eating Hamets.