



Fish and Meat on the Same Table

The *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 116:2) based on *Gemara Pesachim* (66b) prohibits eating fish and meat mixed or cooked together. This article will examine the question of having fish and meat on the same table during a meal.

As mentioned in previous articles, our Sages decreed that meat and milk must not be placed on the same dining table without a *hekeir* (visual reminder). The *Ran* and *Ramban* explain that since meat and milk are each permissible for separate consumption, our Sages were concerned about them being mixed together.

As both fish and meat are permitted on their own, it would seem that the same ruling would apply to fish and meat.

Some halachic authorities rule that a *hekeir* must be present when fish and meat are being eaten at the same table (*Darchei Teshuva* 116:13). Other authorities say that even when an individual is eating fish by himself, it is prohibited for him to have meat on the table or vice versa (*Kaf Hachaim* 116:6).

However, this is not the accepted ruling (*Shevet Halevi* 6:111, *Ohel Yaakov* 116 note 44). Later authorities dismiss this comparison between meat-milk and meat-fish (See *Yabia Omer* YD 6:9). Even though there is room to logically apply the decree as relevant, the reasoning here is different. The basis for not mixing meat and fish is because of danger (health risk); our Sages had a tradition that such a mixture might cause *tzaraat* or other diseases. (Today certain halachic authorities maintain that there is no danger in mixing the two. However, we still uphold the separation of fish and meat today, as the custom was universally accepted, and there is no basis to abolish it, see *Chatam Sofer* 101.) Our Sages therefore, did not apply the decree regarding fish and meat on the same table, since the danger itself would be a deterrent not to mix the two. Even for those who aren't concerned by the health risk, there is no need to be stringent as fish and meat were not included in the decree.

Fish and meat should ideally be served on separate tables

In short, there is no problem having meat and fish at the same table during a meal as long as one is careful to adhere

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to the *halachot* of not mixing the two. This question can arise at any Shabbat table where fish is served before meat. Sometimes the fish is left on the table for some to continue eating it, while others have already started the main (meat) course.

Although the accepted custom permits having meat and fish on the table during a meal, there are certain situations where added precautions should be taken. At large *kiddushim*, where both fish and meat are served buffet style, care should

be taken that they do not get mixed together. To prevent this, fish and meat should ideally be served on separate tables or served one after the other. Alternatively, making an announcement before the *kiddush* should help make people aware. ■

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