One of the most commonly accepted chumros on Pesach is to avoid gebrokts—matzah which was fully baked and then soaked in water. When did this custom start? How binding is it? Does it apply to children? Can one use a little water? Does a woman follow her husband’s custom? These questions and many others will be answered in this issue.

Source

From the Gemorah and Shulchan Aruch it is clear that soaked matzah need not be avoided on Pesach (other than using it for the mitzvah of matzah). Nonetheless, the

1. This word literally means “broken” and it has come to mean wet matzah because matzah is usually ground or broken up into crumbs before it is mixed with water.
2. Meseches Pesachim 39b, Rashi “ofuy”.
custom of many has become not to soak matzah in water.⁴

The Reasons
Some say the reason is that we are concerned that a pocket of dry flour might be in the matzah. This flour will turn into chometz if it is subsequently immersed in water. This was not a concern in earlier times, as they kneaded the dough properly.⁵ Others suggest that we want people to maintain the taste of matzah in their mouths, and soaking would spoil the flavor.⁶ Some say that the prohibition is to avoid a maris ayin issue, as matzah meal (which is gebroks) may be confused with regular flour.⁷

The Stringent Custom
The custom, followed primarily⁸ by those with Chassidic background,⁹ is to refrain from soaking matzah in any amount of water (see fruit juice below).¹⁰ This was the custom of the Chofetz Chaim zt”l.¹¹ The custom of the Steipler zt”l was to be stringent as well.¹²

Avoiding Gebroks
Many have the custom to cover the matzah all Yom Tov (except last day, see below) to avoid any contact with water.¹³ Some people wipe the containers which contain the

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4. Refer to Pri Chadash 461, Sharei Teshuva 460:10. This custom is only a chumra and not according to the letter of the law (Madanei Shmuel page 118, Ohr L’tzyion 3:11:13, Teshuvos V’hanhagos 1:304).
6. Refer to Ohr Yisroel 15:page 138.
7. Sharei Teshuva 460:10. Refer to Shalmei Moed page 412 about making foods which look like chometz (i.e. noodles). See Ravan Meseches Pesachim 434.
8. Some who were not Chassidish also had this custom (See Ohr Yisroel 15:page 142).
9. Moadim L’simcha Nissan 2:pages 438-444. The reason why this custom is kept by mainly Chassidim is because of that the Arizal maintains that one should keep all stringencies on Pesach (Moadim L’Simcha Nissan 2:page 433:footnote 1). Some say this custom started with the Marzitcha Maggid (Moadim L’simcha ibid:footnote 2, Ohr Yisroel 15:page 139, see Minhag Yisroel 2:pages 144-146). The Ba’al Shem Tov zt”l did not have this custom (ibid). The earliest authority to quote this custom lived between the years 1090-1170 (Minhag Yisroel 2:page 145).
13. Sharei Halacha U’minhag 2:page 126:203, Haminhgaim Chabad quoted in Ohr Yisroel 15:page 142, Moadim L’simcha Nissan 2:page 451, Chag Hamatzos page 405:14, Minhag Avoseinu B’yudeinu 2:page 457, Orchos Rabbeinu 2:page 51:51, Minhagei Maharyav 375-376, Ohr Yisroel ibid quoting many others who had the same custom (Skever,
matzah in order to avoid any possibility of chometz. Some do not eat matzah with any dish. Those who adhere to this custom do not place the matzah in water, soup, batter, or make fish with matzah meal.

The Lenient Opinions

The opinion of many poskim is that one does not have to be concerned about this, as our matzahs are very thin and there is no concern of dry flour in the dough. In addition, any dry flour was baked together with the matzah, and once it is baked it cannot become chometz. Based on this, the custom of many people is to brok on Pesach.

What is Included in Gebrokts?

Gebrokts is not limited to matzah which becomes wet. Rather, it applies to any food containing matzah or matzah meal that was mixed in liquid or made into a dough or batter and then baked or cooked. Examples include matzah balls, kreplach, all cakes and pastries made from a matzah meal batter, and gefilte fish made with matzah meal.

Erev Pesach

According to some poskim, gebrokts is permitted on Erev Pesach, as cooked matzah is not considered matzah (matzah may not be eaten on Erev Pesach). This is very common when Erev Pesach falls out on Shabbos and one wants to eat shalosh seudos and brok (i.e. kneidlach, kreplach, or gefilte fish made with matzah meal). L’halacha it should only be

18. Refer to Meseches Pesachim 39b.
19. This is the custom of Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, and Harav Moshe Feinstein zt”l (as related by Harav Aron Felder Shlita) as well as many other Rabbonim, see Chasam Sofer O.C. 138, Y.D. 222, Minhagei Chasam Sofer 10:25, Kaf Ha’chaim 461:31, Betzel Hachuchma 6:40, Maharshag 1:56, Massei Rav 187 (custom of the Gr’a, see Biur Ha’Gra 463:3), Matzah Sh’ruya page 6 says the Gr’a laughed about the custom, opinion of the Chazzon Ish zt”l (Tama D’kra page 335:19).
22. Refer to Chai Adom 129:13, Mishnah Berurah 444:8, Ohr L’tzion 3:13:3, 3:14:1. See Shulchan Aruch Harav 444:4, Mishnah Berurah 471:20, Aruch Ha’shulchan 444:5, Shar Ha’tzion 19, Moadim V’zemanim, 7:175. It has to be bigger than a kezayis so one can wash (Shulchan Aruch Harav ibid, Shar Ha’tzion ibid).
eaten until the tenth hour of the day. One is not permitted to eat cake made from matzah meal on the entire Erev Pesach.

Chicken stuffing made with matzah meal is considered cooked for this purpose, even if it is roasted, because the fat and juices of the chicken have the effect of cooking the matzah. Cakes and cookies made with potato starch are permitted the entire day.

Soaking in Fruit Juice

The question arises whether the prohibition includes soaking matzah in fruit juice. Some poskim limit the concern to water, which alone can create chometz, but placing fruit juice on the matzah is permitted. The custom of many was to soak matzah in wine and milk (without any added water). According to this opinion, one may make matzah brei (crushed matzah fried in butter and eggs), pancakes made from matzah meal mixed with pure fruit juice and eggs, and cakes made with matzah meal, eggs, and pure fruit juice.

Others extend the prohibition to fruit juice as well.

The overwhelming custom today seems that we treat fruit juice like water. This opinion causes some concern regarding charoses, which contains wine. If we treat fruit juice like water, how do we put maror with charoses on the matzah for the

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23. Mishnah Berurah 444:8, Shevet Ha’Levi 8:117:1, opinion of Harav Elyashiv Shlita quoted in Halacha Shel Pesach page 491:footnote 124, see Mekadesh Yisroel (pamphlet) Pesach page 27.

24. Siddur Pesach K’hilchoso 15:14, Shevet Ha’Levi 8:117:1, Ohr L’tzyion 3:13:3, 3:14:1. Refer to Shulchan Aruch Harav 471:9. The reason for this is since it is baked it may not be considered matzah ashirah. There is a discussion if matzah brei which is fried is permitted (refer to Chai Adom 129:13, Shar Ha’tzyion 444:1, 471:20, Ohr L’tzyion 3:13:3). In regard to eating matzah ashirah for Shabbos until the time when chometz is permitted see Igros Moshe O.C. 15 in depth, Shearim Metzuynaim B’halacha (Harav Moshe Feinstein zt”l I never ate matzah ashirah in this context, as related by Harav Aron Felder Shlita).

25. Opinion of Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita quoted in Rabbi Ribiat Shlita’s notes on Hilchos Pesach page 89.

26. Harav Webster Shlita on Erev Pesach which occurs on Shabbos page 42.

27. Shulchan Aruch Harav (teshuvos) 6, see Sharei Teshuva ibid, Kinyan Torah 2:87, Mikroei Kodesh Pesach 2:15, Halacha Shel Pesach page 491:33. Also see Minag Avoseinu B’yudeinu 2:pages 459-461. According to the lenient opinion one is permitted to eat matzah brei (Piskei Teshuvos 463:1).


29. Mikoreh Kodesh Pesach 2:15, Ohr Yisroel 15:page 143, Natei Gavriel Pesach 2:49:page 50 quoting the opinion of the Steipler zt”l.


32. Refer to Tur 475, Shulchan Aruch 475:1, Magen Avraham 7, Chok Yaakov 11, Shulchan Aruch Harav 19, V’yagid Moshe pages 218-219 in depth.

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Some say that one should take some dry charoses and put it on and shake some of it off.

**Boiling**

Some have the custom that one may place the matzah in boiling water even if he does not brok.

**Utensils**

A utensil which was used with gebroks food may be used for non-gebrokts. Nonetheless, the custom of some is to have separate utensils for gebroks, and only use such a utensil on the last day of Pesach (see below). Some permit food which was cooked in the same pot with gebroks foods.

**Women and Children**

Some say that this stringency does not apply to women and children. A woman who was once stringent, and now finds it hard to do so should be matir neder before abandoning the custom.

**Eating it Right Away**

Some poskim say that one may soak the matzah in water and eat it right away, since there is not enough time for it to become chometz. Thus, one could dip his matzah in soup and eat it immediately.

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33. Moadim L’simcha Nissan 2:page 445. The same applies to using wet lettuce for korech and marror (ibid:footnote 11). One who wants to be stringent should dry off the lettuce beforehand.


37. Many use the same utensils which were used for Pesach (Minhag Avoseinu B’yudeinu 2:page 467, Ohr Yisroel pages 147-148). Some say that there is no concern with using this utensil next Pesach even for non-gebrokts (Sharei Yemi Pesach page 118:footnote 28, Madanei Shmuel page 335, Ohr Yisroel ibid:footnote 74, Halichos Shlomo Pesach 4:footnote 30, see Sharei Teshuvah O.C. 451:1, Pischei Teshuva Y.D. 122:3). Others were stringent (Moadim L’simcha Nissan 2:page 450).


39. Ohr Yisroel 15:page 145.


43. Sharei Teshuva 460:10, opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt”l quoted in Halacha Shel Pesach page 491:footnote 127.
Spreads

Many people have the misconception that one who does not brok may not have a spread on the matzah. However, some permit butter or cheese on matzah. Eggs are permitted as well.

Frozen Matzah

Frozen matzah may be eaten without a concern of gebroks.

The Last Day of Pesach

The custom is to be lenient with gebroks on the last day of Pesach. Some explain that we signify that those who eat gebroks the entire Yom Tov are not doing anything wrong. Others explain that one should have Simchas Yom Tov. Others say that the various dietary customs preclude any possibility of people mingling. We want to accomplish this at least on the last day of Pesach, so we all brok. This was the custom of the Chofetz Chaim zt"l.

Muktzah

Although many do not use matzah meal that is gebroked on Pesach (except for the last day) it is not muktzah throughout Pesach.

Zimun

One is allowed to be m'zamin with someone who eats gebroks even if he does not.

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45. Shevet Ha’kehasi 4:132, Moadim L’simcha Nissan 2:page 444. See Igrata D’chedvusa 41:14:page 223 who is not so convinced that cheese is permitted.

46. Halacha Shel Pesach page 492:37.


53. Chazzon Ish Shabbos 49:15, Minchas Shlomo 2:page 126, Shalmei Moed page 345, see Moadim V’zmanim 7:176. Refer to Piskei Teshuvos 308:33.

54. Rivevos Ephraim 7:375.
Matzah is Hard to Chew

One who finds it hard to eat the matzah may dip it in water without soaking it. If the matzah is still too hard one should be matir neder and brok. One may place water in his mouth and then eat the matzah.

Cooking and Preparing Gebroks on Chol Hamoed

According to some poskim, one should not cook gebroks on Chol Hamoed for the last day of Yom Tov. Others say that one can be lenient, and this seems to be the custom of many people.

Husband and Wife

The custom of broking can sometimes cause discord between spouses, with some people refusing to eat at the in-law’s home. The question arises if the wife has to follow the husband’s custom in this regard or not.

The consensus of the poskim is that the wife should follow the custom of her husband, and there is no need to be matir neder beforehand. The husband may choose to allow her to follow her father’s custom.

Father’s Custom

If the father has the custom not to brok, his child may switch his custom if there is...
an important need to do so. 64 He should be matir neder in such a case. 65

**Gebrokts After Pesach**

There is no reason to refrain from eating gebroks after Pesach due to the concern that one may get used to eating it on Pesach (of the upcoming year). 66

**Sofek**

If it is questionable whether water touched matzah one can be lenient and eat the matzah even if he is stringent with gebroks. 67

**Other Customs Regarding Food**

Besides the custom regarding gebroks, there are many other customs that apply during the Yom Tov of Pesach. The main reason for the added chumros is because even a slight amount chometz is forbidden. 68 The Radvaz 69 addresses why chometz is so stringent that even a slight amount is ossur on Pesach, and we have to search, burn and annul it. He explains that, “We know chometz on Pesach alludes to the yetzer hara (the leaven in the dough). A person must therefore completely rid himself of the yetzer hara, searching after it in all areas; even the slightest amount can not be ignored.” He concludes by saying, “This explanation is true and correct.” In addition, it is quoted in the name of the Arizal that one who is careful with a slight amount of chometz is guaranteed that he will not sin all year. 70 Every woman should follow her husband’s chumra. 71

We will list many of them below. 72

**Not to Mish (Mix)**

One of the more famous chumros is not to eat (mish) in other people’s homes (or buy processed foods) 73 In addition, people do not lend utensils to other people on Pesach. 74

65. Ibid. See opinion of Harav Elyashiv Shlita quoted in his Haggadah on page 12, and Chut Shuni Pesach page 161:2.
66. Igros Moshe O.C. 3:64.
68. Shar Ha’tzyion 444:52, Minhag Yisroel Torah 2:page 203.
69. 3:546. See Nemukei Orach Chaim 443.
70. Be’er Heitiv 447:1.
72. For other items which some people refrain from see Minhag Yisroel Torah 2:pages 205-216, Chag Hamatzos 25:23 (tea), 27 (certain spices), 28 (honey), 29 (milk), 42 (water).
74. Natei Gavriel Pesach 40:4:footnote 7 “this is minhag yisroel”.
**Borscht**

The reason for eating borscht on Pesach is because some amei ha'aretz say that when the *posuk* forbids fermented food, it means anything which has a sour taste. Therefore, we drink borscht to prove these people wrong.⁷⁵

**Carp**

In previous years, carp was shipped alive from city to city by placing alcohol on a piece of *chometz* in the fish's mouth. After it died, the *chometz* was absorbed. Therefore, many had the custom to refrain from eating carp on *Pesach*.⁷⁶ Although this practice has been discontinued, some people still have the custom.⁷⁷ Some have the custom to eat fake fish which is made out of chicken instead.⁷⁸

**Saying “Bread”**

Some people have the custom not to say the word “bread” on *Pesach*.⁷⁹ Some had the custom not to mention the word “bagel” as well.⁸⁰

**Whiskey**

The manufacture of whiskey for *Pesach* is very difficult, and therefore, many do not drink whiskey on *Pesach*.⁸¹

**Dried Fruits**

Many have the custom not to eat dried fruits on *Pesach* since there is a concern that it was dried on the same equipment as bread.⁸²

**Fruit and Vegetables Which can be Peeled**

Some have the custom to only use fruits and vegetable that can be peeled for *Pesach*.⁸³ Others say there is no concern for this.⁸⁴

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⁷⁷.   Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita.

⁷⁸.   Halacha Shel Pesach page 160:footnote 43.


⁸².   Rama 467:8, Chai Adom 127:2, Minhat Yisroel Torah ibid:page 212. Refer to Bais Yosef 467, Sharei Teshuva 14, Shulchan Aruch Harav 17, Mishnah Berurah 26.


Potato Starch
Some have the custom to refrain from eating potato starch, since it looks like wheat.  However, the custom is not to be concerned about this, especially since the bag is clearly labeled as potato starch.

Oil
Many people have the custom not to use oil on Pesach, and make their own oil from chickens. However, some are lenient since there are very good hechsherim that certify oil for Pesach.

Utensil on Floor
Some have the custom that if any utensil falls on the floor, the utensil is not used for the duration of Pesach. Some apply this custom to matzah or other food that fell on the floor.

Haughtiness
Each person should hold of his chumros, and it is not considered haughtiness to do so.

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85. Shalmei Moed page 412.
86. Aprakasias D’yana 1:117, Orchos Chaim 463:5, see Arugas Habosem 124, Maharam Shik 236.
89. Minhag Yisroel Torah 2:page 218:5. Others maintain one should wash off the utensil and it may be used (opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt”l quoted in Shalmei Moed page 331. See Natei Gavriel Pesach 2:63:footnote 17).
90. If the food can be washed then it is permitted to be eaten (Natei Gavriel Pesach 2:40:3).

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