



KOF-K

Kosher Supervision 201 THE PLAZA, TEANECK, NJ 07666-5156 201.837.0500 FAX:201.837.0126

e-mail: [info@kof-k.org](mailto:info@kof-k.org) • website: [www.kof-k.org](http://www.kof-k.org)

בס"ד

## A-2

### Soft Cheese and Gevinas Akum

#### Issur

The *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>1</sup> says the reason for the *issur* of *gevinas akum* is because non-Jews often made cheese using non-kosher animal rennet.<sup>2</sup>

#### Background

The cheese making process is rather unique. Milk can be curdled either by placing an enzyme called rennet in the milk or with acid. Cheese is made by souring the milk and then curdling the milk. When milk is coagulated it will separate into curds and whey (see document A-1). The curd is solid and the whey is liquid.

#### Hard Cheese and Rennet

The rennet used to make the milk coagulate was taken from the lining of the stomach of a non-kosher animal.<sup>3</sup> Until recently non-kosher animals was the source for rennet. Science has manufactured rennet which does not require non-kosher animals. In most places in the United States no calf-rennet is used, but it is artificial. In Europe the non-kosher rennet can still be used for manufacturing cheese.<sup>4</sup> Any rennet type of process used to curdle the milk requires *gevinas yisroel*.<sup>5</sup> The cheeses which use rennet are referred to as hard cheese. Some examples of this are American cheese,<sup>6</sup> Blue cheese, Cheddar, Feta, Muenster, Mozzarella, Parmesan, and Swiss.<sup>7</sup> In order for rennet set cheese to be considered *gevinas yisroel* the *yid* has to own the rennet<sup>8</sup> or he has

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<sup>1</sup> Y.D. 115:2.

<sup>2</sup> See Levush 2, Chuchmas Adom 67:7.

<sup>3</sup> Rambam Hilchos Macholos Asuros 3:13, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 115:2, Aruch Ha'shulchan 16.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Kashrus.org in an article written by Horav Avrohom Gordimer, see Chelkes Yaakov Y.D. 38.

<sup>5</sup> Shulchan Aruch *ibid*, Shach 19, Kaf Ha'chaim 57. The Srdei Eish 1:19 says it is permitted to eat this type of cheese for a weak person, or old and poor people.

<sup>6</sup> Sappirim 5:page 2. Refer to Chelkes Binyomin 115:biurim b'dieved page 161.

<sup>7</sup> These items are part of a list compiled by Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer Shlita from the OU.

<sup>8</sup> Shach 20, Taz 11, Pischei Teshuva 115:6, Chuchmas Adom 67:7. The opinion of Ge'onei Nervorna (Tosfas Mesechtas Avoda Zara 35a "chadah," see Minchas Shlomo 2:2-3:100) is that cheeses of akum are permitted in locations that do not use animal rennet, but this is not l'halacha. (See Aruch Ha'shulchan 18). Refer to OU document A-181 as how can the Jew accomplish acquiring the rennet from the non-Jew.



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to place the rennet in the vat.<sup>9</sup> Most *kashrus* organizations require the *yid* either to add the rennet or for the *yid* to press the button on an automated rennet feeder.<sup>10</sup>

## Soft Cheeses

Acid set cheeses are made in different manner. There is a discussion in *poskim* if acid set cheeses have the same *halachos* as rennet set cheese.

The *Chuchmas Adom*<sup>11</sup> and the *Aruch Ha'shulchan*<sup>12</sup> seem to hold that soft cheese is included in the *gezeira* of *gevinas akum*.

Some say that since cottage cheese may be produced without anything added to it in order to make it coagulate it is not a concern of *gevinas akum*.<sup>13</sup>

The opinion of others is that all soft cheeses even if something is added to coagulate it is considered acid set and therefore not included in the *gezeira* of *gevinas akum*.<sup>14</sup>

*Horav Moshe Feinstein zt"l*<sup>15</sup> holds cheese which can become coagulated by just sitting out by itself is not included in the *gezeirah* of *gevinas akum*. His *teshuva* was specifically talking about cottage cheese.<sup>16</sup> However, he does add in the end of the *teshuva* that to publicize this *heter* is not something which is proper to do.<sup>17</sup> In a different *teshuva* he says it is not permitted or *ossur* and it is better to be stringent, but if one eats it you do not have to rebuke him.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, it would seem to apply to it to other soft cheeses as well if the appearance or taste is different than hard cheeses. The *metziahs* is that soft

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<sup>9</sup> Shach 115:20, Gr'a 14, Chuchmas Adom 67:7, Aruch Ha'shulchan 115:19. See Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:16. Others say there is no need for adding of the kosher rennet as long as the *yid* saw it being added (Rama 115:2, Nodeh B'yehuda 2:37, Pischei Teshuva 6, Mishnah Berurah O.C. 307:79, Shar Ha'tzyion 90, Aruch Ha'shulchan Y.D. ibid 19, see Chuchmas Adom 67:7). The minhag today is to be stringent like the Shach ibid (OU document A-132:page footnote 6, The Mashgiachs Check List from the OU). Refer to OU document A-159 if the mashgaich did not put in the rennet.

<sup>10</sup> OU document A-16.

<sup>11</sup> 53:38.

<sup>12</sup> 115:16. See Aruch Ha'shulchan ibid:20, and 28 where he implies that soft cheese is permitted. Refer to Chasam Sofer Y.D. 2:79.

<sup>13</sup> Chelkes Binyomin Y.D. 115:60. See Shevet Ha'Levi 4:86.

<sup>14</sup> Refer to Chelkes Binyomin 115:page 156 (biurim).

<sup>15</sup> Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:48, see Y.D. 1:50.

<sup>16</sup> Refer to Srdei Eish 1:19.

<sup>17</sup> Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:48.

<sup>18</sup> Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:50.



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cheeses do have a different look and taste therefore they were never part of the *gezeira* of *gevinas akum*.<sup>19</sup>

Other *poskim* permit the consumption of soft cheeses even *l'chatchilah*.<sup>20</sup> This is the opinion of *Horav* Yisroel Belsky Shlita quoting the opinion of *Horav Henkin zt"l*.<sup>21</sup> It is brought that *Horav Moshe Feinstein zt"l* used cottage cheese for his wife who was in need of it. Which would be a proof that soft cheese is not included in the *gezeira* of *gevinas akum*.<sup>22</sup> The custom of some of the major *kashrus* organizations is to go according to the lenient view.<sup>23</sup>

There is a discussion in the *poskim* if ricotta cheese is included in the *gezeira* of *gevinas akum* since it is a by-product of hard cheese. Many say that it is not included in the *gezeira*.<sup>24</sup>

## Difference between Soft and Hard Cheeses

Acid set cheeses have a course curd, thus they are just bunches of casein along with fat, and some water from the milk. They therefore, drip when lifted since they are not one unit. Rennet set cheeses has a rubbery smooth consistency since they stick together.<sup>25</sup>

## Minute Rennet Added to Soft Cheese

Some times the manufacturers of soft cheese add a minute amount of (kosher) rennet into the milk to speed up the process. Nonetheless, it is not considered a problem of *gevinas akum*. The reasoning is since the amount of rennet is so minute that it has no affect on the finished cheese product. The adding of the rennet is not for the benefit of the cheese, but it is for the benefit of the seller in order to have the finished cheese product earlier. In addition, even if the rennet does play a role it is *zeh v'zeh gorem* which is permitted in this situation.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>19</sup> As related by Rabbi Ari Senter Shlita.

<sup>20</sup> This is the opinion of Rabbi Tuvia Goldstein zt"l quoted in OU Document A-132:footnote 26.

<sup>21</sup> OU Document A-162.

<sup>22</sup> OU Document *ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> OU Document A-16. The Star-K is stringent and holds a *mashgiach* is required to add the acid to soft cheeses excluding yogurt which is not a soft cheese (Based on a discussion with Rabbi Rosen from the Star-K).

<sup>24</sup> *Darchei Teshuva* 115:30 quoting the opinion of the *Pri Chadash*, see *Birchei Yosef* 115:5, *Kaf Ha'chaim* 115:47, and 53 who is stringent.

<sup>25</sup> OU document entitled *Hamodia Milk Products*.

<sup>26</sup> The amount of rennet which is used in acid set cheeses is .7-.8 ml of rennet per 1000 lbs of milk. Rennet set cheeses use between 60-85 ml of rennet for the same amount of milk; this is almost 100 times more rennet (OU document A-16).



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## Baker's Cheese

Baker's cheese is commonly used in industrial settings to make cheese cake. Baker's cheese is an acid set cheese but rennet is added to give the cheese the desired texture (see footnote). If rennet would not be added then the final product would be too liquidy. The *poskim* at the OU decided that this cheese is a soft cheese even though rennet is placed into the milk.<sup>27</sup>

## Cheese made from *Cholov Akum*

We have established that soft cheese is not subject to the *halachos* of *gevinas akum*. However, a very common question which arises is if one is *makpid* not to eat *cholov akum*, can he eat cheese made from *cholov Stam*.

The *Rama*<sup>28</sup> says if a *yid* saw the cheese making of a *goy*<sup>29</sup> and did not see the milking of the milk the cheese is good *b'dieved*. The reason is because we are not concerned that the *goy* put in a *daver tomei* since milk which is taken from a non-kosher animal does not congeal. The *Shach*<sup>30</sup> says it is permitted if there will be a great loss.

*Horav Moshe Feinstein zt"l* questions why this is not a reason to permit this type of cheese even *l'chatchilah*. *Horav Moshe Feinstein zt"l* says that we do not *pasken* like this *Rama*.<sup>31</sup>

*Horav Moshe Feinstein zt"l* says one who is *makpid* on using only *cholov yisroel* nowadays is only a *chumra* (since the government makes sure that no other milk is mixed into the cow milk),<sup>32</sup> and one does not have to take the *chumra* a step further and be stringent

<sup>27</sup> OU document given to me by Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer. Baker's cheese tastes like ricotta or cream cheese. In addition very little rennet is used. One recipe calls for a "few drops" of rennet.

<sup>28</sup> Y.D. 115:2.

<sup>29</sup> Giving a hechsher on cheese is considered seeing the cheese making.

<sup>30</sup> Y.D. 115:22.

<sup>31</sup> Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:16.

<sup>32</sup> Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:47-49, see Chazon Ish Y.D. 41:4, Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society 5:pages 92-108. Refer to Darchei Teshuva 115:6-8. In the Sefer Pischei Halacha (Kashrus) page 107 he brings a teshuva from Horav Moshe Feinstein zt"l who says the heter was only if you can not get cholov yisroel easily, but if cholov yisroel is available then one should buy it (see Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:35, Y.D. 4:5). Many hold that Horav Moshe Feinstein's heter is not to be relied upon to permit cholov akum and it is always forbidden if a *yid* is not watching the milking. (Refer to Chasam Sofer Y.D. 107, Chuchmas Adom 67:1, Aruch Ha'shulchan 115:5-6, Minchas Elazar 4:25, Zekan Aron 2:44, Minchas Yitzchok 1:138, 2:21, 10:31:15, Be'er Moshe 4:52, Teshuvos V'hanhugas 1:441, 2:373, Melamed L'hoel Y.D. 36:4, Cheleks Yaakov 34, Chelkes Binyomin 115:16. The Melamed L'hoel Y.D. 33 says cholov akum is permitted for light headed people. According to some one can be lenient for young children and women within thirty days of giving birth (Teshuvos V'hanhugas 1:441, see Lev Avraham 74). Refer to Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:35

not to eat cheese which was made from such milk.<sup>33</sup> Although this may seem to be a great leniency for those who do not eat *cholv stam*, nonetheless, the *minhag* is that one who does not use *cholv stam* does not eat cheese made from *cholv stam* either.<sup>34</sup>

The following is a chart which states how much rennet is used for cheeses.<sup>35</sup>

| Cheese         | Milliliters of Rennet<br>per 1,000 pounds <sup>36</sup> of milk |
|----------------|---|
| Bakers cheese  | 70  |
| Blue cheese    | 72  |
| Brick cheese   | 86  |
| Cheddar cheese | 90  |
| Colby cheese   | 90  |
| Cottage cheese | 1   |
| Cream cheese   | 2   |
| Edam cheese    | 128   |
| Farmers cheese | 1   |
| Feta cheese    | 90  |

who says Yeshivas should be makpid on cholov yisroel because of chinuch for the students (See Lev Avraham 74). Some poskim are lenient are permit powered milk even for those who are makpid on cholov yisroel (Har Tzvi Y.D. 103-104 in great depth, Zekan Aron 2:44). The Chazon Ish was lenient for sick people (Orchos Rabbeinu 3:page 77:33, see Tzitz Eliezer 16:25). The minhag is if one is makpid on cholov yisroel he may not eat powered milk without it being cholov yisroel (Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Shearim Metzuyanin B'halacha 38:8, Teshuvos V'hanhugas 2:373, Opinion of the Star-K (Kashrus Kurrents), Tzohar 3:pages 33-34). One who only eats cholov yisroel may still eat foods which were cooked in dairy non – cholov yisroel equipment (Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Bais Avi 4:180:pages 364-365). One who is on a business trip and has no cholov yisroel can be lenient and drink cholov akum, and he should do hataras nedarim (Emes L'Yaakov Y.D. 115:footnote 45). Some say when going to a non-Jewish store to buy coffee and they have cholov yisroel milk there, the yid should make sure the non-Jew opens the milk in front of you, because maybe the non-Jew will put in cholov stam (Ohr Yisroel 20:page 186). A single woman who ate cholov yisroel because she thought it was ossur does not have to be matir neder if she gets married to a person who eats cholov stam (Rivevos Ephraim 8:303:2). As far as koshering a utensil which was used for cholov stam see OU documents K-60 and K-120. The Major Kashrus organizations hold of Horav Moshe's heter and give a hechsher based on it (OU, see OU document K-60, Kof-K, OK). The Star-K does not give a hechsher on Cholov Stam. The Star-D is cholov stam but it is not directly affiliated with the Star-K (based on a conversation with Rabbi Rosen).

<sup>33</sup> Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:16:pages 240-241.

<sup>34</sup> Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita.

<sup>35</sup> This list was adapted from Sappirim 6 (November 07). I want to thank Rabbi Dovid Cohn Shlita for providing me with this kuntres.

<sup>36</sup> Which is equal to 439 liters. (Sappirim *ibid*).



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|                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| Gouda cheese      | 128   |
| Limburger cheese  | 86    |
| Mozzarella cheese | 85-90 |
| Muenster cheese   | 86    |
| Neufchatel cheese | 2     |
| Paneer cheese     | 0     |
| Parmesan cheese   | 70    |
| Pot cheese        | 1     |
| Provolone cheese  | 85-90 |
| Reggiano cheese   | 70    |
| Ricotta cheese    | 0-4   |
| Romano cheese     | 70    |
| Roquefort cheese  | 72    |
| Sap Saga cheese   | 85-90 |
| Sour cream        | 1-6   |
| Swiss cheese      | 70    |
| Yogurt            | 0     |