Can Utensils Lined With Teflon or Silverstone Be Kashered?

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This paper was approved by the CILS on May 29, 1991, by a vote of seventeen in favor (17-4-0). Voting in favor: Rabbis Kassel Abelson, Ben Zion Bergman, Stanley Bramnick, Elliot N. Dorff, Amy Eilberg, Richard L. Eisenberg, Don Perez Elkins, Jerome M. Epstein, Samuel Frain, Reuven Kimelman, Herbert Mandell, Avram Israel Reissner, Joel E. Rembaum, Seymour J. Rosenbloom, Joel Roth, Morris M. Shapiro, and Gordon Tucker.

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שאלה
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תשובה
Teflon is manufactured by the DuPont Company. Teflon is the name of an entire family of non-stick coatings. Teflon is a synthetic fluorine-carbon compound. Silverstone is a member of the Teflon family, more exactly Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE). It is used for the coating of pots. Teflon is chemically inert, non-absorbing and remains unchanged at full cooking temperatures (up to 600°F/316°C). When Teflon/Silverstone is used to coat non-stick metal cookware, it is applied in a very thin film, the average thickness of the coating being less than 2 mils (1 mil = 1/1000 inch). Some manufacturers recommend using only plastic utensils for mixing or stirring and not metal ones, since Teflon/Silverstone may scratch. If Teflon/Silverstone is scratched, the coating is so thin that the scratch will go down to the underlying metal.

Though Teflon was first manufactured in 1938, there were forerunners, coatings applied to metal pots to make them better cooking vessels than plain metal. Questions about kashering such pots were directed to previous generations of rabbis. The problem that disturbed the authorities of past generations was the nature of the coating. The composition of the coating was a carefully guarded trade secret held closely by the craftsmen who made the cookware. There are authorities who held that in the absence of definitive information, the coating should be considered as earthenware. Consequently, they did not permit such cookware to be kashered by boiling water if it inadvertently
became ת"ר. The Hatam Sofer evidently believed that it was תורס, and he required that the metal of the pot be kashered only with burning coals regardless of the damage done to the coating of the cooking vessel:

The Maharam Shick has doubts, even though a “modern rabbi” investigated the chemical composition of the coating and determined that it is not תורס, and consequently permitted kashering it if it became ת"ר by תרמא, though not for use on Passover. The Maharam is reluctant to trust the testimony of non-Jewish craftsmen, that the coating is not made of תורס. Nonetheless the Maharam concludes that if it is shown definitely that it is not made of תורס, then there are grounds to permit it to be kashered, not only for year around use, but for Passover use as well:

The Arukh Hashulhan deals with the same issues and provides us with a useful approach to the question. He also describes metal cooking ware lined with white coating whose composition is doubtful – since the manufacturers keep the formula secret. If such cookware inadvertently becomes ת"ר, kashering it by תרמא (heating it until it glows) requires considerable expertise to avoid irreparable damage. In these cases where it is uncertain whether the coating is of metal or תורס, and the pot itself is metal, then to avoid considerable material loss, kashering by תרמא (boiling water) is permitted. And if it can be demonstrated that it is not תורס, it is certainly kasherable by boiling water. And since there is some indication that the coating is not תורס, it is reasonable to consider it like metal and permit it to be kashered by תרמא:

Rabbi Isaac Klein concludes his investigation of the nature of Teflon as follows: “Today we know that the lining is not made of a porous substance, nor of a substance that would be damaged by boiling. Hence kashering should be permitted.”\(^1\)

**Conclusion**

The composition of Teflon (Silverstone) is well known and easily verifiable. It is a fluoro-carbon compound and not תורס (earthenware). When it is used to line metal cookware, it does not absorb food nor the taste of food that is cooked in it. It is chemically inert and is

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1 Responsa of the Hatarn Sofer, Part 2, 113.  
2 Responsa of Maharam Schick, Orah Hayyim 238.  
3 Arukh Hashulhan, Yoreh De'ah 121:27.  
not affected by cooking, even at high temperatures. If the coating is scratched, then the food will touch the metal of the pot. Hence, if such cookware becomes טורף, it may be kashered by תורף, by careful cleansing and by boiling water. The same would apply to kashering for Pesah. In the case of Pesah the cooking pot should be kasherred only after 24 hours of non-use, and the kashering should be complete by 10:00 A.M. במשה. Baking pans may not be kasherred. In general, it is recommended that, where feasible, separate cookware be purchased for Passover use.