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The Kashrut of Cultured Chicken¹

Approved on May 13, 2026, by a vote of 20-0-0. Voting in favor: Rabbis Aaron Alexander, Pamela Barmash, Emily Barton, Chaya Bender, Suzanne Brody, Nate Crane, Aviva Fellman, David J. Fine, Daniel Nevins, Matthew Nover, Micah Peltz, Joel Pitkowsky, Marcelo Polakoff, Avram Israel Reisner, Karen Reiss Medwed, Rachel Safman, Robert Scheinberg, Miriam T. Spitzer, Stewart Vogel, and Raysh Weiss. Voting Against: None. Abstaining None.

שאלה (Question)

Is cultured (lab-grown) chicken² kosher? If so, is cultured chicken considered to be meat or pareve?

תשובה (Response)

Introduction

Cultured chicken refers to the production of meat that is molecularly identical to conventional chicken, but is grown in a lab rather than from a fertilized chicken egg. The process used to create cultured chicken largely parallels that used to create other forms of cultured meat, the kashrut of which was addressed by Rabbi Daniel Nevins in 2017.³ However, the fact that the halakhic history of its kashrut is different from that of other sources of meat highlights a need for a teshuvah explicitly clarifying the kashrut status of cultured chicken.

The Technology

Cultured chicken is a form of producing a substance molecularly identical to that of conventional chicken meat outside of a living animal. Cultured chicken is produced using tissue

¹The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly provides guidance in matters of halakhah for the Conservative movement. Individual rabbis, however, are authorized to interpret and apply halakhah for their communities.

² Any use of the term “chicken” in this teshuva refers to those varieties which are uniformly understood to be kosher (as opposed to any of the varieties whose kashrut status has been called into question). Furthermore, use of the term “chicken” in this teshuvah should be understood to include other kosher species of fowl.

³ R’ Daniel Nevins, *The Kashrut of Cultured Meat*, Approved, November 14, 2017. The authors also give special thanks to Rabbi Nevins for his close reading, explanations, and other assistance.

engineering techniques and has been noted for its potential to address issues around animal welfare, food security and human health. The process of creating cultured chicken starts with a somatic cell taken via biopsy from a live chicken.⁴ Once the cells have been selected, they are placed in steel tanks and combined with a broth-like mixture that includes amino acids, fatty acids, sugars, salts, vitamins and other elements cells need to grow. After about three weeks, the cells have proliferated and become sheets or masses of poultry cells that are removed from the tanks and formed into the shapes resembling traditional pieces of chicken.

This process of creating cultured chicken is nearly identical to the one used to create cultured meat.⁵ Both processes involve collecting a sample of stem cells⁶ from a living animal, manipulating the cells in a lab to induce proliferation, then coaxing the cells to aggregate into a tissue mass whose form can be molded to mimic cuts of meat with which we are familiar. The similarities between the processes might lead one to conclude that the halakhah of cultured chicken ought to be identical to that of lab-grown meat that was so well explained by Rabbi Daniel Nevins in his paper in 2017.⁷ Given this, it is important to ascertain that the growth medium and any additives used are certified kosher (and are not dairy).

Rabbi Nevins' conclusions that harvesting cells does not transgress *eiver min hahai* because the cells harvested neither constitute a limb nor are even necessarily present in the final product hold true for cultured chicken just as they do for lab-grown meat. Similarly, Rabbi Nevins' explanation regarding any possible issues with the kashrut of the growth medium apply to cultured chicken, too. Therefore, it would be reasonable to conclude that like lab-grown meat of a kosher animal, cultured chicken is kosher.

⁴ It has also been claimed that somatic chicken cells can be obtained from a fresh piece of meat, a cell bank, or the root of a feather. Recent research purports that once harvested, chicken cells can be immortalized, thereby lessening the need for direct harvest from an animal (see [Hebrew University breakthrough advances cultivated beef | The Jerusalem Post](#)). None of these sources have any impact on the halakhah discussed here.

⁵ Lab-grown (also called cultivated or cultured) meat utilizes the technique of in vitro muscle tissue growth. Eric Schuzle, the vice-president of product and regulation at UPSIDE Foods, explains that “The process of making cultivated meat is similar to brewing beer.” Instead of growing yeast or bacteria in a vat, producers of cultured meat grow animal cells. They start by taking a small amount of cells from high-quality livestock animals, put the cells in a clean-and-controlled environment, then provide them with the essential nutrients they need to naturally replicate and mature. Once the meat is ready, it is harvested and processed like conventional meat products.

⁶ Stem cells are used due to their pluripotency, though other cells may be used in the future with the same caveats as those presented here.

⁷ R' Daniel Nevins, *The Kashrut of Cultured Meat*, Approved, November 14, 2017

Chicken⁸ and Meat

There are some noteworthy differences between meat (from animals such as cows or goats) and chicken. The laws surrounding the cooking and consumption of meat trace their origin to the phrase “do not boil a kid in its mother’s milk”⁹. As fowl, chickens do not produce milk to nurture their young. Historically, this led to much debate as to whether or not chicken can be cooked or eaten with dairy or not. In the Talmud¹⁰, Rabbi Yoshaya used the three-fold repetition of the command “do not boil a kid in its mother’s milk” as a compulsion to include fowl in the prohibition of mixing milk and meat. However, both Rabbi Akiva and the Sages clearly classified fowl as something separate from meat, as both excluded fowl from being subject to this prohibition. As the latter explains, fowl do not produce milk. Therefore, it is impossible to boil a chicken in its mother’s milk.¹¹ Furthermore, in Mishnah Ḥullin,¹² only fish and locusts are specified as being exceptions to the prohibitions of being cooked in milk. In addition, while both Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel were against eating fowl with milk, they differ on whether they can be on the same table together. Bet Shammai contend that fowl may be placed upon the table together with cheese but may not be eaten with it, while Beit Hillel is against this practice.

Unlike the prohibition against combining meat and milk, which is a d’oraita prohibition, the extension of this prohibition to chicken is a d’rabbanan addition. While the separation of fowl and dairy was prevalent even in the first few centuries, it remained an area of some debate. The distinction between the rules for meat and chicken are spelled out in the Shulhan Arukh (Yoreh Deah 87:3). Unlike meat, when it comes to fowl, there is no prohibition against cooking or benefiting from the mixture of poultry and dairy. Even the prohibition against eating such a mixture is rabbinic, not from the Torah. In fact, when Ethiopian Jews began to arrive in Israel, a few of them opened a restaurant near Machane Yehudah and were shocked that one of their beloved dishes (which involves cooking chicken in butter) could not be certified as kosher, as

⁸ While we specifically focus on chicken, the arguments presented here apply equally to other kosher fowl, such as turkey

⁹ Exodus 23:19, Exodus 34:26, Deut. 14:21

¹⁰ Ḥullin 115b

¹¹ *Mekhilta deRabbi Yishmael*, Mishpatim, Massekhta dekaspa, Parasha 20 in re: “do not boil a kid in its mother’s milk.”

¹² Mishnah Ḥullin ch 8

Ethiopian Jews had no stricture against combining milk and poultry.¹³ Rambam points out that the real concern with permitting chicken and milk is that doing so could initiate a series of reasoning which would end in transgression of the actual prohibition against consuming dairy and meat together.¹⁴

Professor David Kraemer of the Jewish Theological Seminary, argues that the rabbis decided to classify fowl as meat because of the sociology of the times. He has been quoted as saying, “In the ancient world, meat was eaten with relative rarity, primarily for special occasions. For more common special occasions, such as the Sabbath, ‘smaller’ meat would have been most common, and that was typically fowl. So people simply thought of and spoke of fowl as meat. Since this is the way people thought of it, this is the way the rabbis categorized it.”¹⁵ Whether this was the rationale for considering fowl to be meat or whether it was that, like mammals, fowl need to undergo ritual slaughter to be kosher, unanimity on the idea of chicken as meat became the norm.

Whatever the reasoning, the fact of the matter is that the same prohibition against mixing with dairy has applied to both meat and to fowl (including chicken) for centuries.

One might say that given the historical uncertainty regarding the “meatiness” of chicken, it would not be unreasonable to argue that cultured chicken, which is a step removed even from chicken, ought to be considered pareve. This is particularly true given the evolving technology and the apparent conclusions that Rabbi David Lau draws on the topic. He states that lab-grown meat is pareve. However, a closer read of the paper reveals the fact that lab-grown meat whose status Rabbis Lau is discussing is produced using a different process than the one presented in this paper. The lab-grown chicken to which he refers is derived from a pluripotent stem cell, which Rabbi Lau refers to as a “pre-embryo” (a cell that does not yet have its own identity) and their process for other types of meat originates with embryonic cells that are flushed from the

¹³ Personal communication from Rabbi Amy Levin, also referred to in [The Jewish Palate: Beta Israel- The Jews of Ethiopia | The Jerusalem Post](#)

¹⁴ Mishneh Torah, Rebels 2:9; But if it was stated that: chicken [in milk] was permitted Biblically, but we [the rabbis] shall prohibit it, and inform the people that this is a decree to prevent problems; as people may say "chicken is okay because the Torah didn't literally say *chicken*, so it didn't say *wild-animal* either"; and the next person will say "any domesticated mammal is fine too except for goats", and the next person will say "goat meat is acceptable in the milk of cows or sheep, as it said *its mother's*, meaning that same species"; and the next person will say "I can cook a goat in goat's milk, as long as it wasn't this particular goat's mother" ... *therefore*, we shall prohibit all meat in milk, even chicken. This is not *adding*, it is creating a protective fence around the Torah. And so too all similar matters.

¹⁵ Ask the Expert: Pareve Poultry | My Jewish Learning, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ask-the-expert-pareve-poultry/>

cow's womb before they can attach to the uterine wall.¹⁶ In contrast, the process examined in both Rabbi Nevins' paper and this paper is one which begins with a *fully differentiated somatic cell*. In the process examined here, cultured chicken, unlike many of the plant-based chicken substitutes, originates from a cell taken from an actual chicken. Thus, the same fears that caused rabbis in prior centuries to classify chicken as meat, hold true for cultured chicken as well. "As long as cultured meat is defined and marketed as a vegetable product [that is] similar to meat, and there is supervision over the rest of its ingredients, then the Halacha would categorize it as kosher parve; as a vegetable product," Rabbi Nevins wrote. If the cultured meat is marketed as a meat product, however, "and in particular if its shape will be similar to meat in taste and smell," there is room to "treat this cultured meat as stricter and define it as kosher, but not parve, for the purpose of mixing it, cooking it and eating it with dairy products," he added¹⁷. Therefore, given that the particular technologies discussed here rely on somatic cells taken from the actual bird, to avoid confusion or possible transgression, cultured kosher fowl should also be treated as meat. As technologies evolve, however, it may become necessary to revisit this designation should it be possible to culture fowl without using a cell from an actual bird.

Conclusion

Cultured chicken is made in the laboratory, and relies on using cells taken from the chicken as a starting point. In this regard, the process used is similar to that used in creating lab-grown meat. Despite the earlier debates regarding whether or not chicken could be combined with dairy, for hundreds of years, the rabbis have treated chicken as meat, and we believe that we should do the same with cultured chicken.

פסקי דין (Piskei Din)

- 1) Cultured chicken derived from cells taken from a chicken are kosher as long as the broth mixture used as a growth medium contains only kosher, non-dairy components.
- 2) Even though there is no need for kosher slaughter, inspection for injury, soaking or salting to remove blood, cultured chicken should be considered meat.

¹⁶ Rabbi David Lau, letter to Mr. Didier "Halakhic opinion regarding cultured meat produced in your factory" 17 January 2023;

¹⁷ Just as companies have begun to identify the source of rennet used in producing cheese (e.g bacterial, vegetable, animal), in as long as there are multiple ways of cultivating cultured chicken, packaging should indicate the source of the initial cells used in their process.