

Eating in a Non-Kosher Restaurant

Are there foods that are permissible to eat in a non-kosher restaurant? Should a person who normally wears a head covering remove it in a non-kosher restaurant to avoid giving a bad appearance which may lead others to assume the restaurant is kosher and eat non-kosher food?

Rabbi Solomon Luria (as cited in TaZ on Shulhan Arukh, *Yoreh De'ah* 91, subparagraph 2) ruled that Jewish travelers who eat pickled herring on Gentile plates are acting improperly since the food touching those plates would require rinsing. Further, Jews who buy pickles from Gentiles and eat them on Gentile plates along with the pickle brine are also acting wrongly since even pickles would require rinsing once placed on a Gentile plate, and, since the pickles stand in the brine which cannot be rinsed, the pickles are forbidden. Rabbi Moses Isserles (*Torat Hataf*, Section 16) adds that in an emergency, for example, when a Jew is housed in a Gentile home, eating in this manner is permitted. Rabbi Yechiel Michal Epstein (Arukh haShulhan, *Yoreh De'ah* 91:2) points out that even though when Jews travel it is considered an emergency, nevertheless there is a simple remedy for the problem, namely a thorough rinsing of the Gentile plate before cold food or beverage is placed on it. Otherwise, the herring and pickles may be eaten on Gentile plates provided that they are not placed directly on the plate but on the fish skin or the vegetable peel.

While the specific foods mentioned by these authorities may be interesting from a cultural perspective, the fact that Jews ate in non-kosher homes or inns is historically quite important. The halakhic authorities do not address whether eating on Gentile plates and in Gentile homes is permitted but, rather, how and when a Jew could do so.

Today, when most metropolitan areas have a variety of kosher restaurants,

there are few compelling reasons for going elsewhere. Moreover, it is incumbent upon us to support by our patronage all kosher establishments. However, when one cannot possibly eat in a kosher restaurant, he or she may eat *uncooked pareve* or dairy foods which do not require rabbinic supervision (e.g., milk, butter, fruits and vegetables) in a non-kosher restaurant. Other pre-packaged, ready-to-eat foods (e.g., bread, tuna fish) may be eaten *only* when it can be ascertained that they were prepared under rabbinic supervision (*hashgahah*). One may also drink hot coffee or tea inasmuch as the cups in which they are served are used primarily—if not exclusively—for this purpose.

As for covering the head in such places, one should be careful to avoid creating any potential misconception (*mar'it ayin*) which might arise when a person with a *kippah* on his head eats in a non-kosher establishment. Therefore, one would be well-advised to keep available a hat or other type of head-covering for such situations. When no such head-covering is available, though, one should wear a *kippah* while reciting the requisite blessings.

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