Can Cream Cheese And Lox Go Together?

The Laws Of Mixing Milk And Fish

After I wrote a series of articles regarding the prohibition of mixing milk and meat, I received the following letter: “Hello Rav Moskowitz. We would like to express our gratitude to you for your delightful articles that open up our eyes to many aspects of the world of kashrus that were previously unknown to us. I had one question that we wanted to ask you. In our home, we prepare a dish every year for Shavuos that is made by frying fish that is coated in batter that includes Parmesan cheese. I heard from someone that mixing fish and milk products is halachically questionable. Should we stop eating this dish?”

This question would equally apply to the commonly consumed meal of a bagel with cream cheese and lox.

**Fish N’ Milk:**

Chazal tell us (Chulin 103B): “All meat is forbidden to be cooked in milk, with the exception of the meat of fish or grasshoppers. And all meat is forbidden to be placed on the table together with cheese, with the exception of the meat of fish and grasshoppers.” Thus, we see that the Gemara clearly states that fish does not fall under the prohibition of mixing meat and fish, and may be cooked with dairy products.

The Ran adds that not only may fish be cooked together with milk, it may even be eaten together with milk. (The Gemara only mentions cooking because that is the only thing mentioned explicitly in the verse in the Torah. However, the same rules apply to eating.) The Bais Yosef (Yoreh Deah 87), however, after citing the words of the Gemara and the Ran, states: “In any case, one should not eat fish with milk because of the danger, as explained in Orech Chaim, Siman 173.”

The Rema, in his Darchei Moshe, comments: “I never saw anyone acting stringently regarding this.” The Rema adds that, in fact, the Siman in Orech Chaim cited by the Bais Yosef makes no mention that one should refrain from eating fish with milk – it only speaks about meat and milk. He ends with a unique quip that, “it seems like the Bais Yosef mixed his milk with meat”, meaning that there is no such prohibition and one may eat fish mixed with milk with no concerns whatsoever.

Some Acharonim are of the opinion that this Bais Yosef is actually simply a printing mistake! They believe that the Bais Yosef never wrote that fish should not be eaten with milk. Rather, he wrote that fish should not be eaten **with meat**, which is prohibited because it is considered dangerous to mix the two. However, the simple reading of the Bais Yosef is that he actually warned against eating fish with milk.

The Sefer Pachad Yitzchok, written by Rav Yitzchok Chizkiya son of Rav Shmuel Lompronti, has an interesting take on this matter. This sefer was the first classical Jewish work written in the form of an encyclopedia on the Torah and all areas of halacha in the order of the Hebrew alphabet. Rav Lompronti served as Rosh Yeshiva in the Yeshiva of Ferrara, Italy, and also was a practicing doctor. He therefore has a unique view of this halacha, as it touches both on the halachic aspect and the medical (as the Bais Yosef seems to say it is forbidden to mix fish and milk because it is physically dangerous).

Amongst his words, Rav Lompronti writes: “My entire life I grew up between the knees of the wise men and senior doctors and have never found any inkling of confirmation of the words of our teacher the Bais Yosef…for what danger is there to eat fish with butter or cheese? ...Still and all, since these words came out of the mouth of the king, the Bais Yosef, in my house I refrain from eating fish with butter or cheese.”

The Pischei Teshuva (87:9) quotes the Teshuvas Adnai Paz, who quotes the Rabenu Bechaya who says that it is dangerous to eat fish with cheese. This Rabenu Bechaya is in Parshas Mishpatim (Shemos 23), where he says, “The opinion of the doctors is that mixing fish and milk and cooking them together causes ‘bad weight’ and the disease of leprosy.” The Pischei Teshuva concludes, however, that nowadays, when the population at large cooks and eats milk and fish together without experiencing ill effects, it is permitted to eat milk and fish together.

Most communities today – especially most Ashkenazic communities – do eat fish together with milk products. These communities have no problem eating a cream cheese and lox sandwich. There are some Sefardic communities that continue to follow the ruling of the Bais Yosef and refrain from eating fish with milk. It should be noted that even some communities that do not eat fish with milk do ear fish together with butter. This is because many Acharonim write that even those who believed that eating fish together with raw milk is dangerous agreed that eating fish together with butter is not.