Fruits, vegetables or berries that are expected to possibly contain insects must be checked prior to use. The minimum rate of infestation that requires checking is 10%.

Magnification is not required when checking, although it may be used as an aid for training purposes or to help check faster. Insects that cannot be properly identified whatsoever unless magnification is used, are permitted.

When checking is required, the entire vegetable, fruit, or berry must be checked. When checking large quantities, it may be permissible to check samples from a single batch. The minimum amount of sampling units is three.

Whole insects are not botel (nullified) in a food mixture. It is permissible to puree fruits, vegetables, or berries that only occasionally harbor insects, if pureeing is part of following a recipe and the intent is not to eliminate insects.

Insects that cannot be properly identified whatsoever unless magnification is used, are permitted.

The minimum rate of infestation that requires checking is 10%.

Magnification is not required when checking, although it may be used as an aid for training purposes or to help check faster. Insects that cannot be properly identified whatsoever unless magnification is used, are permitted.
THE RAN (Avoda Zara 12b) asks, “The Gemara teaches us that klei Midyan were kasheried when they were still ben yomo, with the understanding that the bliyos will be batel in the hagalath water. However, if bitul issur is a Torah prohibition, how did the Torah permit this?” The Ran answers that it is only forbidden to be mivatel issur if one intends to benefit from it, but if one’s intent is to kasher the kli, it is permitted. Poskim point out that both of these conditions are necessary. One must not intend to benefit, and one must have intent to remove the bliyos. One may not cook with a non-kosher utensil, even if the bliyos will be batel, even though they have no intention to benefit from those bliyos. It is only permitted when kasherling, because there is also a positive intent to get rid of the issur.

A similar ruling is brought in Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 84:13) regarding ants that fell into honey. Shulchan Aruch permits heating the honey in order to strain it, even though this will cause a bliyos of issur into the honey. This is permitted, since the kavana is not to benefit from the ants, but rather to remove them. Taz (Y.D. 99:7) adds that this is only permitted when there is no other choice. If one could remove the bugs without heating the honey then this would not be permitted. Pri Migadim (M.Z. 99:7) explains that if the other method would involve tircha (extra effort), then it is considered as though there is no other option.

REMOVING DROPLETS OF MILK FROM BUTTER

Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 115:3) writes that there are different minhagim regarding purchasing chemas akum (butter from non-Jews). Some communities permitted this, even though it is made from chalav akum. This is because butter is made from cream, and only milk from kosher animals separates into cream. However, some communities forbade this, since the butter might still contain tzich’tzuchei chalav (droplets of milk). Shulchan Aruch concludes that if one does not have a minhag, they may be lenient, provided that they cook the butter until the droplets are no longer visible. Although this would seem to be a violation of ain mivatli isur lichatchila, Beis Yosef explains it is permitted, because there are many sfeikos.

There might not have been any chalav tamei added to the milk.

The intent might have evaporated all the tzich’tzuchei chalav.

The intent is to remove the tzich’tzuchei chalav and not to dissolve them into the butter.

THREE BITULIM

In a related ruling, Beis Yosef (Y.D. 115:end) writes that if bi’dieved one was ma’amid a batch of milk using fermented chalav akum, although that batch of milk would be forbidden (davar ha’amid), if this milk was used to ferment a second batch of milk, and then some of the second batch was used to ferment a third batch of milk, the third batch of milk may be used lichatchila to ferment subsequent batches of milk. Beis Yosef rules that this is permitted, because after three dilutions in this manner, one may assume that none of the original chalav akum remains in the fourth batch. In order for a davar ha’amid to make something forbidden, some amount of the davar ha’assur must remain in the mixture. But since after 3 bitulim none of the issur remains, it is no longer considered ha’amad bi’issur. Just like chemas akum becomes permitted after the butter is cooked and the droplets of chalav akum are removed, so too the fourth batch of cultured milk is permitted, because three bitulim removes all the chalav akum. [There is also no issue of ChaNaN, since the original issur was batel b’lishishem.]

The Darchei Teshuva 115:49 brings a machlokes acharonim as to whether one is permitted lichatchila to arrange for three bitulim. However, the accepted custom of kosher agencies is to allow this lichatchila. Rav Schachter explained that this is not considered bitul issur lichatchila, since the chalav akum is completely removed from the final product, just like was previously explained regarding butter. (The halachos of 3 bitulim will be discussed at greater length at another time.)
Fruits, vegetables, and berries that are thoroughly dried in a hot oven do not require checking and are permitted. Fruits, vegetables, and berries that only occasionally harbor insects, which are cooked and cannot be checked afterward are permissible. Washing systems cannot be relied upon to reduce infestation, unless they are adequately proven to be effective. Raisins may be consumed without checking. It is permissible to place herbs in a garnet bag and cook them in soup, without checking. Worms found embedded in the flesh of fish are permitted. Worms found in the stomachs or head are prohibited.

Gelatin clarifiers

One of the best ways to remove the cloudy haze from apple juice is with gelatin. Gelatin binds to the particulates which allows for easy removal. This is an all cold process and the gelatin remains in the juice for less than 24 hours. Is this permitted, or must we be concerned that some miniscule amount of gelatin might remain behind in the juice?

Noda B’Yehuda (M’hadura Kama Y.D. 26) discusses this issue and is only concerned if the non-kosher becomes kavush in the liquid. Rav Belsky zt”l ruled that in this case, since there is no other reasonable option, the juice manufacturers may use gelatin. Even if some miniscule amount might remain, it is still considered ain kavanaso li’vatel, since the company does not want any gelatin to remain in their product, and an effort is made to remove as much as possible.

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GELATIN CLARIFIERS

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I HAVE HEARD THAT THERE IS A MAJOR DISPUTE ABOUT THE MEANING OF “PAS HABA’AH B’KISNIN.” WHAT DOES THIS TERM REFER TO?
The Gemara in Berachos (42a) establishes that the bracha for “pas haba’ah b’kisnin” is borei minai mezonos. The Rishonim (early deci-sors) offer different explanations for this term. The Shulchan Aruch (168:7) cites three opinions: Rabbenu Chananel says it refers to dough baked with a filling, such as a pie. Rambam maintains that it refers to dough made with a noticeable amount of honey, oil, milk or spices, such as cake. Rav Hai Gaon is of the opinion that it is an item with a cracker-like texture. The Shulchan Aruch rules that we follow all three opinions, and as such, we recite borei minai mezonos on pies, cake and crackers. In the Halachah Tomis for the next few days, we will discuss different applications of this halacha.

I HAVE SEEN SANDWICHES AND ROLLS LABELED “MEZONOS ROLLS.” IS THE BRACHA ON THESE ROLLS REALLY MEZONOS?
As noted in the previous Halachah Tomis, the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 168:7) rules that the bracha on baked dough made with honey, oil, milk or spices is borei minai mezonos. How much spice or flavor must be added to the dough to render the bracha mezonos and not hamotzi? The Shulchan Aruch rules that a discernable taste is sufficient, and this position is followed by Sephardic Jewry. In contrast, the Rama rules that the flavor must be predominant, and this ruling is followed by Ashkenazic Jewry. The OU poskim, as well as many oth-ers, understand the Rama to mean that the bracha is mezonos only if the final product tastes like cake, and not like bread.

“Mezonos Rolls” are generally kneaded with fruit juice and water. Typically, they taste almost exactly like regular rolls. Rav Belsky and Rav Schachter both held that they are without question hamotzi for Ashkenazim. Even for Sephardim, the bracha may be hamotzi, since the fruit juice is often not discernable.

DO YOU EVER RECITE BIRKAS HAMAZON ON CAKE OR CRACKERS?
The Gemara (Berachos 42) states, that if one eats an entire meal of an item that is considered “pas haba’ah b’kisnin” (see earlier Halachah Tomis for explanation of that term), the bracha on that food (e.g. crackers) would be Hamotzi and one would recite Birkas Hamazon. The Magen Avraham (O.C. 168:24) clarifies that one would say Hamotzi in the following two instances: 1) If one ate only crackers, and consumed an amount that would suffice as a main meal (such as dinner) for an average person. 2) Alternatively, if one ate other foods (for example, herring along with the crackers), and together these foods are a full meal, one would recite Birkas Hamazon. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe O.C. 3:32) states that in the latter case, one must consume the amount of crackers equivalent to the normal amount of bread eaten at a meal. According to Rav Belsky zt”l, this would be the equivalent of two slices of bread.

WHAT IS THE CORRECT BRACHA FOR PIZZA?
We learned previously that pies are one form of pas haba’ah b’kisnin, and the bracha is mezonos. Similarly, dough filled with jam (such as a hamentaschen) is a classic example of pas haba’ah b’kisnin. The bracha on calzones and the like, filled with cheese or meat (known as “pashtica” in the language of the poskim), is not as clear. A fruit pie is a mezonos because it is a dessert item, while calzones are often intended to be the main meal and not dessert. Although the Taz (168:20) rules that the bracha on calzones is mezonos, the Shulchan Aruch (168:17), and Mishna Berura (168:94) rule that the bracha is hamotzi. However, the Biur Halacha states that many Achronim agree with the Taz, and if the calzone is clearly not meant as a main-meal type of food, the bracha is definitely mezonos. Rav Belsky zt”l said that it is unclear whether pizza is a snack or meal food, but noted that the general custom is to say mezonos when eating a small amount.

It should be noted that if the pizza dough is fully baked prior to adding the cheese (as is the case with some frozen pizzas) the bracha would be hamotzi. When the dough is baked alone, its status at that time is hamotzi, and that does not change when a filling is added.

MELBA TOAST IS A TYPE OF CRACKER. AS PREVIOUSLY NOTED, CRACKERS ARE ONE FORM OF PAS HABA’AH B’KISNIN. SO THE BRACHA IS MEZONOS, RIGHT?
Melba toast is produced by first baking loaves of bread. After the bread is baked, it is left to sit for two days to dry out. It is then thinly sliced, and subsequently toasted. Rav Belsky zt”l ruled that since the Melba toast starts out as regular loaf of bread, it does not lose its hamotzi status by being baked into a cracker later on, even though the final product was intended to be a cracker from the outset.

WE LEARNED PREVIOUSLY THAT IF ONE EATS AN ENTIRE MEAL OF AN ITEM THAT IS CONSIDERED “PAS HABA’AH B’KISNIN”, THE BRACHAS RECITED WOULD BE HAMOTZI AND BIRKAS HAMAZON. IS THE AMOUNT OF PAS HABA’AH B’KISNIN THAT WOULD MANDATE HAMOTZI THE SAME FOR EVERYONE?
No. To require the bracha of hamotzi one must eat an amount, “she’achtirim kor’im alav” that other people normally eat for a main meal (Shulchan Aruch O.C. 168:6). The Biur Halacha (ibid) writes that “other people” refers to people of similar physical properties. Rabbi Belsky explains that this refers to people of the same age and build. While an adult might need to eat two or three slices of pizza in order to say hamotzi, a child might only need to eat one slice if that is a typical main-meal for a child that age.