

Practical cases of Borer

1. One may separate items from a mixture on Shabbat if one fulfills three conditions: It's done (1) with one's hands (2) for immediate consumption and (3) one takes the desired food from the waste or undesired.¹
2. It is permissible to remove chicken skin from chicken on Shabbat right before eating.² However, grilled chicken skin may be removed even not before eating.³
3. Regarding watermelon seeds, according to Ashkenazim one should eat the melon and spit out the seeds. If that's difficult, one may shake off the seeds right before eating and those that remain remove with one's hand right before eating. According to Sephardim, one may shake off the seeds and those that don't come off may be removed.⁴
4. If the tap water is drinkable without filtering it is permissible to filter it on Shabbat.⁵ Those who hold that one should not drink New York tap water because of copepods, according to many poskim, may filter the water on Shabbat.⁶

1. S"A 319:1-4, Mishna Brurah (intro to 319 and 319:12)

2. Rama 321:19 writes that one may only peel an onion right before eating it. Magen Avraham 321:30 writes that the same is true of peeling an apple because it is a form of Borer. Pri Megadim A"A 321:30 asks that peeling apples shouldn't be considered Borer because most people eat the peel. Therefore, Rav Ovadyah in Chazon Ovadyah (vol 4, pg 195) and Yalkut Yosef (Shabbat vol 3 pg 304) rules like the Magen Avraham and only permits removing chicken skin right before eating. Ayil Meshulash (6:17) quoting Rav Elyashiv, Sh"t Bear Moshe 6:47 and Sh"t Az Nidbaru 7:16(1) agree.

Igrot Moshe 4:74 (Borer #8) writes that the halacha follows the Magen Avraham and not the Pri Megadim, however, chicken skin is a part of the chicken completely and removing it is like cutting a piece of chicken which is permitted even not immediately prior to eating unlike apple peels. Sh"t Rivevot Efraim 5:267 agrees. Orchot Shabbat (vol 1, 3:93, pg 166) writes that Rav Moshe was writing in a place where everyone would eat chicken skin, however, in Israel it may only be removed right before the meal like fruit peels. The English translation of Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 3:30 adds that whether chicken skin is usually eaten depends on each locality. However, Chut Shani (vol 2, pg 81) writes it's possible to say since it's totally food and it's only because we're spoiled we don't eat it, it shouldn't be considered waste.

However, Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 3:30 (in new editions 3:34) writes that the Magen Avraham held most people don't eat apple peels but fundamentally he agrees with the Pri Megadim; thus, he rules, since most people eat chicken skin one may remove it even not right before the meal. However, he adds that some are strict based on the Magen Avraham.

Aruch HaShulchan 321:26 writes that it should only be removed right before eating because of Mafshit. 39 Melachos (vol 2, pg 431) writes that preferably one should be strict for this opinion.

3. Orchot Shabbat (chap 3 note 106) writes that everyone eats grilled chicken skin and can be removed even not right before eating. Korei Oneg (vol 3, pg 55) agrees.

4. Kaf HaChaim 319:47 writes that one doesn't have to eat the whole melon and spit out the seeds because that's not considered the normal way of eating; rather one should shake off the seeds and those that don't fall off remove with one's hand but it's preferable to do it with a shinui. Chazon Ovadyah (vol 4, pg 195) agrees.

Sh"t Igrot Moshe 4:74 (Borer #7) writes that one should eat the whole melon and spit out the seeds and if that's difficult one should shake off the seeds and those that remain remove with one's hand. Halachos of Shabbat (vol 3, pg 174), 39 Melachos (vol 2, pg 411), and Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 3:16 agree.

5. S"A 319:10, Mishna Brurah 319:34, Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 3:60, Chazon Ish 53 D"H VeIm

6. Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata 3:60 writes that if people don't drink the water in a certain place because of bugs one shouldn't use a filter, however, one may drink directly from the faucet without a cup.

However, Rav Hershel Schachter on "Kashrus of Bugs" on OU Kosher Tidbits (www.ouradio.org, min 39-45) permits using a filter for NY tap water on Shabbat based on 4 reasons: (1) The bugs might be considered kosher (see S"A YD 84:16) (2) The amount of bugs in the water varies at different times of the day and may not require checking (See RJJ vol 49, pg 34, by David Shabtai) (3) The bugs aren't necessarily waste since non-Jews eat it and it's only halacha that prevents us (Chaye Adam in Nishmat Adam 16:5) (4) The filter is built in and automatically filters all the water even that which is for non-drinking purposes (Minchat Yitzchak 7:23). Rav Doniel Nuestadt (Yeshurun vol 17, pg 535) discusses the last two reasons at length and argues that the third reason is a dispute in the rishonim. See Rav Belsky in Shulchan HaLevi 12 who writes that he holds the NY tap water is kosher, however, one who holds it needs filtering may not filter it on Shabbat and rejects the third argument.