



Bishul Akum and Fit for a King's Table

1. Chazal forbade eating food cooked by a non-Jew because of a concern of intermarriage. Anything which “isn't fit for a king's table” isn't included in the prohibition of Bishul Akum.¹
2. What is considered “fit for a king's table”? Some poskim hold that anything fit to honor an important minister or rabbi is considered fit for a “king's table”.² However, assuming that a king's table is literally the table of a king, queen, or president, there is another dispute whether we judge any food that the king would have for breakfast or only things that are served at a royal banquet. The OU is lenient on both of these disputes.³
3. There is a dispute if when considering whether something is fit for a “king's table” we judge the type of food or the specific dish the way it was produced. For example, potato chips aren't fit for a “king's table” but potatoes potentially are if made into fancy roasted potatoes. The OU and Star-K are lenient.⁴ Therefore, potato chips are not considered Bishul Akum.⁵

1. Avoda Zara 35b, Rambam (Maachalot Asurot 17:15), Shulchan Aruch YD 113:1

2. Rambam (Maachalot Asurot 17:15) writes that since Bishul Akum was instituted to avoid intermarriage it wouldn't apply to food that wouldn't be served at a king's table, as that food isn't the quality of food you would serve to an important guest. This is reiterated two halachot later (17:17). Taz 113:1 and Gra 113:6 cite this aspect of the Rambam. Chida (Shaarei Bracha 113:2) cites the Arizal who writes that a king isn't specific, even food that is fit for a minister's table is applicable to Bishul Akum. Ben Ish Chai (Chukat Shana Sheniya n. 9), Zivchei Tzedek 113:2, and Darkei Teshuva 113:11 agree. Kaf Hachaim 113:2 adds any important person. Pat bag Hamelech p. 81 agrees. Similarly, Avnei Derech 10:88 writes that food served at a table of rabbis is subject to Bishul Akum, symbolically drawing from the phrase “מאן מלכי רבנן”.

Interestingly, Rav Dovid Teherani (Ben Yisrael L'amim p. 47) writes that we can't judge by the ministers today since they weren't raised in royalty but were appointed to positions of importance in the middle of their lives. Therefore, they eat the same foods as everyone else for their regular meals.

However, [Rabbi Heinemann](#) uses the standard of the White House at an official state dinner.

3. Rav Genack ([Mesorah Issue 1 p. 86](#)) recounts that Rav Shimon Schwab once asked whether the Chazon Ish thought sardines were subject to Bishul Akum. He

answered that, in fact, they are because it was known that the Queen of England would eat them for breakfast. Rav Genack added that the other gedolim were lenient since sardines are a small fish and aren't fit for a royal banquet. [OU](#) and [Star-K](#) are lenient.

4. Tiferet Yisrael (Avoda Zara ch. 2:52) writes that when judging whether something is fit for a king we judge the type of food. Teshuvot Vhanagot 1:438 agrees and forbids potato chips.

One proof is that the Iser Vheter that is cited and accepted by the Shach (113:2) writes that intestines are forbidden because of Bishul Akum even though they aren't fit to serve a guest (S"A YD 101:5). Since meat is important we judge all meat as fit for a king's table even the parts which are very low quality. This is echoed by the Pri Chadash 113:2 and Aruch Hashulchan 113:10.

Rav Pesach Falk (author of Machazeh Eliyahu, in [Am Hatorah 5754 p. 75](#)) argues based on a number of proofs.

5. Another factor to use to permit potato chips is that usually they aren't eaten with bread and some poskim hold that any food which isn't eaten with bread isn't included in Bishul Akum. Pri Chadash 113:3 is lenient. See Darkei Teshuva 113:12 for those who are lenient. Chayei Adam 66:1 and Yechava Daat 4:42 don't hold of this Pri Chadash. Rav Heinemann is lenient for potato chips since they are not eaten for a meal at all. Rav Shlomo Machpud (Daat Kashrut 5762 p. 136) agrees.

This was reviewed by Rabbi Mordechai Willig shlit"a. For more on the topic see halachipedia.com.