

Why Matza Bakeries Don't Have Windows

Source Sheet by David Katz

A quick scan of matza baking factories reveals an interesting phenomenon: matza factories do not have windows. Matzot are baked in factories without any sunlight at all. Let's explore why.

1. רמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה ה:י"ב

לא תשב אשה תחת השמש ותלוש. ולא תחת הרקיע ביום העבים אפלו במקום שאין השמש זורחת בו. ולא תניח את העסה ותתעסק בדבר אחר. ואם היתה לשה ואופה צריכה שני כלים של מים. אחד שמקטפת בו ואחד שמצננת בו גדיה.

A woman may not sit under the sun and knead; nor under the clouds on a cloudy day - even in a place upon which the sun is not shining. And she may not leave the dough and get involved in another matter. And if she was [both] kneading and baking, she needs two vessels of water - one with which she brushes [the surface of the matza] and one with which she cools down her hands (from being in contact with the oven).

- Why would the halacha be concerned with mixing matza dough outside?
- Why would a cloudy day be problematic?
- Why would the baker need two separate bowls of cold water?

Direct sunlight, or even the sun hiding behind the clouds, will heat the dough. The warmer the dough, the faster it can ferment and become Chametz. If the

baker is mixing, kneading and baking they will need one bowl of cold water to clean their hands from the sticky dough and another bowl to cool their hands that are working with the oven. This is all to ensure that the matza dough remains cool and chametz does not develop.

This is why matza bakeries don't have windows and today many even run the AC during baking.

1. רמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה ה: י"א

אין לְשִׁין בְּפֶסַח עֶסֶה גְדוֹלָה שְׁמָא תַחְמִיץ אֶלָּא כְּשֶׁעוֹר חֲלָה בְּלֶבֶד. וְאִין לְשִׁין לֹא בְּחֻמִּין וְלֹא בְּחֻמֵי חֻמָּה. וְלֹא בְּמִים שְׁנֵשְׂאָבוּ בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם אֶלָּא בְּמִים שְׁלֵנוּ. וְאִם עָבַר וְלֶשׁ בְּאֶחָד מִכָּל אֵלּוּ הָרִי הַפֶּת אֲסוּרָה

We may not knead a large dough on Passover, lest it become leavened - but rather only like the requisite amount for the *challah*-tithe. And we may not knead with heated water, nor with water heated by the sun nor with water that was drawn on the same day, but rather with water that rested overnight. But if one transgressed and kneaded with one of all of these, the bread (that he wants to consider matza) is surely forbidden bread (and not matza).

- Why is it safer to mix small and not large batches of matza dough?
- What is the concern with heated water?
- How does מים שלנו solve the problem of heated water?

The halacha puts a limit on the batch size of matza dough. This ensures that all the dough will be baked within the 18 minutes and no shaped matza will sit and wait for the oven. Cold water ensures a cold dough. Cold dough develops much slower than warmer doughs. Professional bakers call this DDT – or Desired Dough Temperature. מים שלנו is water that has literally “slept” overnight (sharing the same root “לן” as the word מלון “hotel”). This water holds the cooler temperature from the night air.

1. קיצור שולחן ערוך ק"ח:ה'

ביום שטחנו את הקמח, אסור לאפותו, מפני שאז הקמח הוא חם וממהר להחמיץ כשנותנים בו את המים, על כן ישקה אחר הטחינה לכל הפחות מעת לעת.

On the day the flour has been ground it is forbidden to be baked, (*If, however, it was already kneaded with water, it may be baked, but special care must be taken that it not be allowed to become chametz. This is done by speeding up the process and getting into the oven even quicker than other matzos.*) (*Mishnah Berurah 453:43*) because the flour is then warm and will quickly become *chametz* when water is poured on it. Therefore, you should postpone using it for at least twenty-four hours after the grinding.

- How is this Halacha connected to the first two sources?
- What state does the flour need to be in before using it?

It's eye opening to see how much care is put into the process of making matza. Many people appreciate the speed and cleanliness of baking matza. Here, we have learned that beyond the speed and cleanliness, the water, the flour and even where the dough is mixed are controlled in order to make kosher matzot. No sunlight in a Matza factory keeps the Matza out of direct heat.