

# Cooking or Reheating Food on the Weekly Sabbath?

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All Scriptures are from the New King James translation unless otherwise noted.

It is evident that many who claim to honor the Sabbath think there are a number of activities God prohibited in the past, but are no longer forbidden today. For example, because of numerous modern conveniences, many believe that we can cook just about anything we want, whenever we want, and the activity no longer violates the sanctity of the seventh day. Their reasoning is that it takes comparatively little effort to prepare a variety of hot meals today as opposed to the work necessary to cook food in the past. The labor previously involved in building a fire, cooking, and serving meals, has been so greatly reduced that scores think that God's instructions for preparing for the Sabbath does not apply at this time.

However, when it comes to the principles involved in keeping the fourth commandment, the Eternal Church of God believes that God's word is final no matter how easy or difficult it may be to apply at any given time. With this in mind, consider some of His instructions regarding the proper way to prepare for, and observe, His Sabbath:

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare *that* which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily (Exodus 16:4-5).

God related that this weekly process of preparation would be a test for the people of Israel to see if they were going to keep God's law or not. Which law was He talking about? It is clear that God was speaking of the fourth commandment. God then said that the people were to gather and prepare twice as much food on the sixth day. Notice the instructions and how it was applied:

And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, "This *is what* the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field" (Exodus 16:22-25).

God specifically said to "bake" and "boil" double portions of food the day before the Sabbath, and keep what is not eaten on the sixth day for meals on the Sabbath. The context of what food was to be prepared is clearly *manna*, but does that mean that we do not have to apply this precept to any other food that requires baking, broiling, frying, or boiling?

The instructions do not differentiate between what types of foods are to be included or excluded. Obviously it would only apply to food that is cooked, but if they had rice, beans, or potatoes would God have allowed them to cook such foods on the Sabbath? What about reheating food that was already prepared? Frankly, it doesn't say. Therefore, we must take His instructions at face value. If the preparation of food on the Sabbath involves cooking then we should not do it.

Reheating food is also a concern for some, but it is our opinion that reheating does not fall into the category of baking or boiling. The use of gas, wood, or electricity for heat is not the issue. For more on this, we recommend reading our article titled *Is Fire Prohibited on the Sabbath?* In addition, while stovetop kettles are widely used to bring water to a boiling point; drip coffee makers do not boil water. They heat the liquid 10 or more degrees below the boiling point. Some may say that this consideration is "straining at gnats," but what we are doing is simply striving to rightly apply God's written word (2Tim. 2:15).

While most of the world considers Saturday to be no different than any other day, Sabbath keepers must base their behaviors on the premise that the seventh day is holy time. While many think that the fourth commandment is primarily about how much work is done, there are many activities that should be avoided on the Sabbath that are not laborious. As the prophet Isaiah wrote:

If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *from* doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking *your own* words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isaiah 58:13-14).

This rebuke toward Israel can apply to a wide variety of behaviors that would be acceptable any other day of the week, but detract from the purpose of God's sanctification of the seventh day. The focal point of the Sabbath is to honor the Lord of the Sabbath, and His instructions for certain types of food preparation that should be avoided are clear. Thus, God forbade people from doing the work of gathering food or wood and cooking on the Sabbath.

When attempting to apply these standards in our age, many look to the degree in which a person prepares food. While cutting up lettuce for a salad, or making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich may be acceptable, modern conveniences have caused some to think that frying an egg or cooking a hamburger patty requires such minimal effort that it must be acceptable. But the Sabbath is not just about how much effort is involved. It was given as a test to see if they, and we, would keep God's law or not.

Therefore, the Sabbath serves as a sign between God and each of us personally—not that we merely remember which day is to be kept, but that we remember to keep it holy! It is not simply about avoiding work. It is about the degree to which we are devoted to obeying God. This is the premise to consider when making decisions. In the simplest of terms, God said to not do any cooking. It is presumptuous to think that some cooking is okay on the Sabbath simply because it does not require much effort.

Consider the fact that the Sabbath is prophetic. It portrays the future millennial Kingdom. Those who are called at this time are required to prepare:

I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed

to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order to prove by you what *is* that good and pleasing and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2)

We should not, and must not, make the mistake of thinking that we are preparing for the Kingdom, but not having enough self-discipline to prepare to keep the day that portrays the very Kingdom we hope to attain. Such thinking might actually disqualify us from being chosen. As Paul related:

But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27).