Harry Franklin from Los Gatos asked:

Can I invite my friends for a Shabbat meal, knowing that they are going to drive on Shabbat?

Dear Harry,

Your question has to be answered in light of several prohibitions:

- “Lifnei iver” — “Don’t put a stumbling block in front of a blind person,” meaning that you should not provide the means for others to violate the Torah.
- “Meisit” — encouraging someone to transgress.
- “Mesayyo Ovrei Aveirah” — assisting in a transgression.

Does inviting someone to your house on Shabbat violate any of these prohibitions?

Regarding someone who wanted to organize a Shabbat-minyan for children where the children would arrive by car, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zatzal, ruled that it is forbidden: “Is teaching them about prayer more important than teaching them about Shabbat? This isn’t mitzvah-education, it’s the opposite, G-d forbid.” In a similar case Rabbi Feinstein writes that if it is impossible for the children to come on foot, besides lifnei iver there is the additional prohibition of meisit.

If your question is to be compared to this case of the Shabbat-minyan for children, then no, you could not invite your friends.

On the other hand, we have the ruling of Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, shilita, about a son inviting his parents for Shabbat. Rabbi Sternbuch suggests that lifnei iver depends on intentions. Just as a doctor performing an operation isn’t violating the commandment against damaging others, here too the son isn’t making his parents “stumble.” On the contrary, he wants to draw them closer to the Torah. The son isn’t telling them to drive, and if possible he should make arrangements so they won’t have to drive. But if that’s impossible and he feels this will bring them closer to Torah observance, lifnei iver wouldn’t seem to apply. By letting them know the importance of Shabbat and the sweetness of keeping it, he will succeed in bringing his parents back to the right path — which is the greatest way to honor them.

Sources:
- T’shuvot V’hanagot, Rav Moshe Sternbuch, Orach Chaim 1:358.

Richard Alan from Chicago wrote:

I was a guest at the home of a religious family this past Shabbat, and they served the tastiest delicacy into which I’ve ever sunk my teeth. Before it was even served, the intoxicating aroma wafted in from the kitchen, exciting our taste buds to unprecedented levels of anticipation. At last we dined on the molasses-colored potpourri. I believe they called it “jolt.” What is the significance of this tasty tradition?

Dear Richard,

You mean “Cholent.” I once read that the word Cholent comes from the French “Chaud-Lent” meaning “Hot-Slow.” This aptly describes Cholent. The Ba’al HaMeor cites authorities who say that it is a Rabbinical enactment to eat hot food on Shabbat. Aside from the mitzvah of Oneg Shabbat (enjoyment of Shabbat), eating hot food demonstrates our belief in the Oral Law. How? The Written Law states, “Do not kindle a fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day.” Some misguided sects said that all fires had to be extinguished prior to Shabbat. To negate this idea, the Sages instituted that on Shabbat we eat delicious food kept hot by a fire.

The Ba’al HaMeor concludes with the following poem in praise of eating hot food on Shabbat:

Who prepares cooked foods
And wraps them ‘round
Delights in Shabbat...Gains a pound...
He’s the one who’s faith is sound;
When Mashiach comes He’ll be around.

Sources:
- Ba’al HaMeor, Masechet Shabbat Perek Kirah.