

419293 - Ruling On Vanilla Essence

the question

It's a synthetic substance that absorbs water & is classified as an alcohol. It's used in a great amount of food products. It's generally considered safe, with the FDA saying an average intake of 23 mg/kg of body weight is safe for people that are 2-65. My immediate concern in this regard has resulted from my use of vanilla essence. Propylene Glycol is used I believe as a substitute for ethanol which is why its called essence not extract & is what's commonly sold in mine & I assume other Muslim countries. The package says it's halal but glycol is a primary ingredient that may make up more than even half of the bottle. However even though from what I've read saying it's safe, non-toxic (not sure what that means) & ok in controlled amounts but I read in a Forbes article that it too is inebriating . It was said that it was a third as much inebriating as regular alcohol so now I'm quite confused. Because wouldn't this still make it a type of Khamr if it does intoxicate & it is of course a primary ingredient in vanilla essence. Also it's recommended to double the amount of vanilla essence if a recipe calls for extract since its less powerful. However the overall content of the liquid would be quite insignificant in a general recipe. So for example for frosting let's say ½ cup milk, 1.5 cups of butter, 5 cups of sugar & only 4 teaspoons of essence so to argue the end product even in large amounts is intoxicating would probably be very unrealistic. Sol'd like to know the ruling since it's so com

Detailed answer

Firstly:

Propylene Glycol: A thick, almost colorless and odorless liquid with a variety of uses that extend beyond being a food additive. It is used in many products because it helps maintain their consistency, moisture, and texture.

Additionally, it can dissolve some substances better than water, making it very useful as a food additive. Therefore, it can be found in a variety of processed foods and beverages.

It is a synthetic organic compound with the chemical formula $C_3H_8O_2$. It is a viscous, almost colorless, and odorless liquid with a slightly sweet taste. Chemically, it is classified as a diol (meaning it contains two hydroxyl groups) and is miscible with a wide range of solvents such as water, acetone, and chloroform.

According to the Arab World Encyclopedia: "Glycol is an organic compound sometimes called a diol. Glycols are a class of alcohol, with the simplest type being ethylene glycol, which is a poisonous, colorless, thick liquid with the chemical formula $CH_2OH.CH_2OH$.

Glycol boils at $197.6^{\circ}C$ and is highly soluble in water.

It is used in the composition of hydraulic brake fluid and as an antifreeze in vehicles.

It is used as a humectant and solvent in paint and plastic products, and as a chemical intermediate in the production of alkyd resins, synthetic fibers, and dyes.

Non-toxic propylene glycol is used in pharmaceutical products, cosmetics, and foods." End quote.

This indicates that this substance is not intoxicating and is not used for intoxication.

Secondly:

There is no harm in consuming "vanilla extract or essence," even if its extraction involves immersion in alcohol, for two reasons:

The first: Alcohol has no effect on "vanilla"; it does not intoxicate the consumer, nor does the effect of alcohol appear when consumed. What is estimated to cling to the seeds during preparation is a consumed proportion that evaporates, leaving no trace in the seed itself, and what is so is not prohibited to consume.

The second: The strong difference of opinion regarding the impurity of alcohol. We have mentioned the ruling on alcohol and that it is pure, and we have mentioned the ruling on foods and medicines to which a proportion of alcohol is added in the answers to questions:

(59899) and (146710). We have also conveyed in the answer to question number: (33763) from Sheikh Ibn `Uthaymin – may Allah have mercy on him – his statement:

"Do not think that any alcoholic content in a thing makes it haram, rather if something contains a percentage of alcohol which will make a person intoxicated if he drinks it, then it is haram. But if the amount is miniscule and does not have any effect, then it is halal." End quote.

The Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences has researched the topic of "Prohibited Substances in Food and Medicine," and among its conclusions:

"- Alcohol is not impure according to Shari`ah; based on what has been previously established that the default state of things is purity, whether the alcohol is pure or diluted with water, favoring the opinion that the impurity of wine and all intoxicants is metaphorical, not physical (in a real sense), considering it filth from the work of Satan.

- Food substances that use a small percentage of alcohol in their manufacture to dissolve some substances that do not dissolve in water, such as colorants, preservatives, etc.: it is permissible to consume them due to the prevalence of the issue and because most of the added alcohol evaporates during the food manufacturing process." End quote from:

"Recommendations of the Eighth Symposium of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences,". See the full text in the book "Islamic Jurisprudence and Its Proofs" (7/209-211) by Sheikh Wahbah Az-Zuhayli.

And Allah knows best.