



Permissible Ethanol Limitations

Version 2.1

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1. Introduction

Islam outlines comprehensive dietary laws, one of which pertains to the consumption of alcohol, commonly referred to as **Khamr**.

These laws categorize all intoxicating substances, irrespective of their origin or form, as Unclean (Najis in Arabic) and prohibit their consumption or use in any form. This principle extends to forbid the addition of any form of Khamr to food, drink, or food preparation, as it is seen as contaminating the substance with a forbidden item.

This document outlines the principles regarding the permissible alcohol limitations in foods, beverages, and non-foods, especially focusing on the substance ethanol, which is often present in small quantities in various products due to natural fermentation or usage in certain flavorings and concentrates.

2. References

1. Standard GSO 2538:2021 [Gulf Region]
2. Standard SMIIC 1: 2019 [OIC Region]
3. Standard SMIIC 24:2020 [OIC Region]
4. Irsyad Al-Fatwa Series 290 [Mufti of Federal Territory's Office, Malaysia]
5. Malaysia National Fatwa Council (issue of alcohol in food, beverages, fragrant, and medicines) [Malaysia] **See Appendix**
6. MUI fatwa on No. 10 years 2018 about Food and Beverage Products Containing Alcohol / Ethanol [Indonesia]
7. Office of the Mufti in Singapore issued Fatwa: "Natural Ethanol in Halal Food Flavoring"- muis.gov.sg [Singapore]
8. Review: "Ethanol and its Halal status in food industries" – November 2016
9. [HQC Halal Certification Scheme](#)
10. [HQC Halal Assurance Program Scheme](#)

3. Replaced Documents

This guideline replaces the previous HQC Ethanol Policy (version 2.0) starting 20 February 2025.

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4. Background Principles

The guidelines drawn from Islamic law make a distinction between **Khamr** [**non-permissible alcohol/ethanol**] and permissible ethanol. While ethanol is the intoxicating substance found in Khamr, not all ethanol is categorized as Khamr or **Unclean (Najis)**.

For instance, ethanol produced outside the Khamr industry is considered clean. Ethanol is commonly present in a range of foods due to natural fermentation or the use of flavourings and concentrates in food manufacturing. However, the presence of ethanol in food is a matter of religious concern in Islam and requires strict adherence to established guidelines.

Identifying specific percentages of ethanol presence in food is not a matter of product safety or quality but of adhering to the Halal requirements of Islamic law. The acceptable limits of ethanol resulting from natural fermentation are specified in Section 5. These limits determine the acceptance or rejection of ethanol during the manufacturing process.

Artificial and natural flavours, colours, and some meat or vegetable bases may contain alcohol products as flavour carriers. Similarly, cordials containing flavouring substances with a small amount of alcohol added as a stabilizer are allowed, provided the alcohol is not derived from Khamr [forbidden] production processes and the alcohol content does not exceed the limit in the finished product.

While alcohol is commonly used as a solvent or carrier for flavours, and in some cases as an irreplaceable solvent in manufacturing, alternatives like propylene glycol can be utilized. The amount of ethyl alcohol in the final product must not exceed the specified limits to be considered Halal. In some specific cases, the use of alcoholic by-products is acceptable if these materials/products have been chemically or biologically transformed to produce new compounds.

We refer to the [Halal Quality Control Schemes](#) for further information on certification requirements.

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5. Tables

5.1 – Table A1: Items classified as Fit for Consumption

Region: Gulf and the Middle East

Nr.	Item Classification	Permissible Limit
1.	Grape Vinegar	1%
2.	All Other Types of Vinegar	0.5%
3.	All Kinds of Pickles	0.5%
4.	Juices, including Nectars and Non-Alcoholic Cocktails of All Kinds	0.2%
5.	Fruit Drinks of All Kinds and Shapes	0.1%
6.	Soft Drinks and Energy Drinks.	0.05%
7.	Sauces and Ketchup (All Kinds), Ready-To-Eat Foods, and Foods Prepared from Vegetables and Fruits.	0.3%
8.	Ready-to-Drink Flavored Waters	0.1%
9.	All Kinds of Dairy Products	0.2%
10.	Processed Foods: Meats, Grains, Legumes, Fats and Oils, Egg Products, Seafood, or Spices	0.05%
11.	Raw Materials: Protein Concentrates, Sugars, Yeasts, Essential Oils, Raw Cocoa, and Relevant	0.5%
12.	Confectioneries	0.05%
13.	All Other Items Not Mentioned	0.2%

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HQC Alcohol/Ethanol Policy

Table A2: Items classified as Not Fit for Human Consumption

Region: Gulf and the Middle East

Nr.	Item Classification	Permissible Limit
1.	Flavours, Fragrances, Chemicals, Cleaning Materials, and Relevant	No Defined Limit**

**Permissible Alcohols are defined within the Halal Certification Scheme and the Halal Assurance Program Scheme.*

*** During operations in cases where ethanol is used as a solvent that cannot be completely dispensed within manufacturing, the amount of ethyl alcohol (ethanol) in the final product must not exceed the maximum limits mentioned in Table A1.*

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5.2 – Table B1: Items classified as Fit for Consumption

Region: Malaysia

Nr.	Item Classification	Permissible Limit
1.	Colouring	0.5%
2.	Flavouring	0.5%
3.	All Other Items	0.1%*

Table B2: Items classified as Not Fit for Human Consumption

Region: Malaysia

Nr.	Item Classification	Permissible Limit
1.	Flavours, Fragrances, Chemicals, Cleaning Materials, and Relevant	No Defined Limit**

**Permissible Alcohols are defined within the Halal Certification Scheme and the Halal Assurance Program Scheme.*

*** During operations in cases where ethanol is used as a solvent that cannot be completely dispensed within manufacturing, the amount of ethyl alcohol (ethanol) in the final product must not exceed the maximum limits mentioned in Table B1.*

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5.3 – Table C1: Items classified as Fit for Consumption

Region: Indonesia

Nr.	Item Classification	Permissible Limit
4.	Colouring	0.5%
5.	Flavouring	0.5%
6.	All Other Items	0.5%*

Table C2: Items classified as Not Fit for Human Consumption

Region: Indonesia

Nr.	Item Classification	Permissible Limit
2.	Flavours, Fragrances, Chemicals, Cleaning Materials, and Relevant	No Defined Limit**

**Permissible Alcohols are defined within the Halal Certification Scheme and the Halal Assurance Program Scheme. Please see the References Section for Indonesia.*

*** During operations in cases where ethanol is used as a solvent that cannot be completely dispensed within manufacturing, the amount of ethyl alcohol (ethanol) in the final product must not exceed the maximum limits mentioned in Table C1.*

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5.4 – Table D1: Items classified as Fit for Consumption

Region: Singapore

Nr.	Item Classification	Permissible Limit
7.	Colouring	0.5%
8.	Flavouring	0.5%
9.	All Other Items	0.1%*

Table D2: Items classified as Not Fit for Human Consumption

Region: Singapore

Nr.	Item Classification	Permissible Limit
3.	Flavours, Fragrances, Chemicals, Cleaning Materials, and Relevant	No Defined Limit**

**Permissible Alcohols are defined within the Halal Certification Scheme and the Halal Assurance Program Scheme. Please see the References Section for Singapore*

*** During operations in cases where ethanol is used as a solvent that cannot be completely dispensed within manufacturing, the amount of ethyl alcohol (ethanol) in the final product must not exceed the maximum limits mentioned in Table D1.*

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6. Appendices

Appendix A

Further explanations on Malaysia National Fatwa Council:

- a. All liquor beverages contain alcohol; however, not every alcoholic beverage qualifies as liquor. Alcohol derived from the liquor-making process is classified as **khamr**, explicitly prohibited (**haram**) and considered impure (**najs**).
- b. Alcohol not originating from liquor production is not classified as impure (**najs**); however, it remains prohibited due to its intoxicating nature and the associated health risks upon consumption.
- c. Soft drinks containing alcohol below 1% (v/v), not intentionally produced as liquor, are considered permissible (**mubah**).
- d. Soft drinks intentionally or technically processed to produce liquor, regardless of alcohol content or distillation process, are prohibited for consumption.
- e. Food or beverages naturally containing alcohol (such as fruits, legumes, cereals, and their juices), or those in which alcohol naturally forms during processing, are not considered impure (**najs**) and are permissible for consumption.
- f. Food or beverages containing flavorings or coloring agents stabilized with alcohol are permissible (**mubah**) provided the alcohol is not derived from liquor production, and the final alcohol content remains unintoxicating, not exceeding 0.5%.
- g. Medicines, perfumes, and fragrances containing alcohol as a solvent are considered hygienic (non-**najs**) and permissible for use, provided the alcohol used is not derived from the liquor production process.

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