

In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful.

Question regarding the Vanilla Extract as an ingredient in food substances

With regards to the question about Vanilla? Is it Halal or Haram?

Vanilla, as such, is extracted from the vanilla bean which is a plant. This in itself is halal; as it is a plant source.

The problem arises in the fact that for the vanilla to be extracted and used it needs to be dissolved in a substance. In the modern world today, the manufacturing industry uses alcohol as the solvent for the vanilla.

This gives rise to the next question: what is the source of the alcohol?

Because not all alcohol is haram. Although scholars differ on this. Some scholars are of the opinion that the haram alcohol is that which is made as an intoxicant like beer, lager, cider, wine, spirits and so on.

Meaning that the haram and najis alcohol is that which is fermented sugar to be used for drinking. This is because this is how the shariah defined the word "khamr". The shariah doesn't talk about "alcohol". The term "alcohol" was later coined to describe the set of hydrocarbon chemicals.

So, we can understand that there are two alcohols: manufactured and fermented. Fermented is what is haram and najis. And we mentioned the examples: wine, cider, beer, lager, and so on.

According to my opinion, manufactured Alcohol isn't *najis*; and that is what is used for antibacterial wipes, for certain sprays, in perfumes, and in some foods.

The scholars differ about this. This is why they differ about Vanilla.

Some are of the opinion that vanilla dissolved in manufactured alcohol is not haram and not najis; because the alcohol is manufactured; not fermented.

Others are of the opinion that vanilla is haram, because it contains alcohol; and they don't make the distinction between manufactured and fermented.

What should one do?

There are some people who mention there is a type of vanilla which is extracted without alcohol. If one has an option, then it is best to use that one.

If one wants to safeguard himself; then he should keep away from vanilla as it is a doubtful matter.

But if one wants to consume food containing vanilla; then it is permissible; as there is leeway in the deen for this.