201520 - Is Alcohol in Food Haram?

the question

I read in your fatwas something that seems to me to be contradictory when applied. In fatwa no. 33763 you said:

“We 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.” But in fatwa no. 103881 you said, when discussing the use of alcohol: “This prohibition is general and applies to all manners of using alcohol, whether in food or in drink. It is not permissible to use it in food or drink in any way whatsoever…. The one who cooks meat with alcohol and consumes the juice is to be subjected to the hadd punishment, because the essence of the alcohol is still present.”

However in the fatwa no. 1814 you said:

“It is not permissible to eat dishes cooked with alcohol, as ALL the alcohol is not evaporated with cooking or heat.”

In the first fatwa, you focused on the possibility of intoxication as a definitive factor in the issue of prohibition, whereas in the other two fatwas you indicated that the mere presence of a percentage of alcohol, no matter what that percentage is, is sufficient cause for prohibition. I hope that you can explain.

Summary of answer

If alcohol is fully absorbed into the food or drink and has disappeared in it, there is nothing wrong with eating or drinking such things at all. If the essence of the alcohol remains present or its traces may be detected in the mixture, it is haram to consume this food or drink.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Explaining fatwas regarding alcohol in food and drinks

There is no contradiction between these fatwas, praise be to Allah. What is referred to in the first fatwa is alcohol that is mixed with other things, whereby the alcohol is fully absorbed into the mixture and no trace of it is left. In that case, it is permissible to eat and drink that in which it has been fully absorbed.

As for the other fatwas , they are speaking of cooking food with alcohol. In that case, the essence of the alcohol is still present and has not been fully absorbed into the food with which it is mixed , and its effect on the food remains apparent. In that case, it is haram to eat the food even if the amount of alcohol that is present is very little and drinking it would not cause intoxication, because “that which intoxicates in large amounts, a small amount of it is haram.”

Is alcohol in food and drinks haram?

To sum up the issue, with regard to foods and drinks that are mixed with alcohol, there are two scenarios:

The first is where the alcohol is fully absorbed into the food or drink and has disappeared in it, in such a way that its essence is no longer present and no trace of it can be detected in the drink (or food) in terms of colour, taste or odour. There is nothing wrong with eating or drinking such things at all.

Shaykh al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyah] (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“If alcohol falls into water and is completely absorbed in it, then someone drinks it, he is not regarded as drinking alcohol and the hadd punishment for drinking alcohol is not to be carried out on him, because nothing of its taste, colour or odour remained.” (Al-Mustadrak ‘ala Majmu‘ al-

Fatawa, 3/12)

The second scenario is where the essence of the alcohol remains present or its traces may be detected in the mixture, in terms of taste, colour, odour or flavour. In this case, it is haram to consume this food or drink, because of the presence in its ingredients of a percentage of alcohol that has not been fully absorbed.

The presence of alcohol in this food or drink makes it prohibited, even if the percentage of alcohol is very small.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-'Uthaymin said:

"If this alcohol is mixed with something and is not fully absorbed into what it is mixed with, and does not disappear into it, then that thing becomes haram, because this mixture is affected by it.

But if the alcohol has been fully absorbed into what it has been mixed with, and no trace of it can be detected, then it does not become haram thereby." (Fatawa Nur 'ala ad-Darb)

Is it haram to mix things with alcohol?

Even though we say that it is permissible to eat and drink things that are mixed with alcohol if the alcohol is fully absorbed, this does not mean that it is permissible to mix things with alcohol.

So, it is not permissible to put any nabidh (fermented drink made from dates), alcohol or any other intoxicating substance into drinks, foods or anything else, because every intoxicant is khamr, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Every intoxicant is khamr and every khamr is haram." (Narrated by Muslim, 2003)

What some people claim of there being some medicinal benefits in alcohol does not justify adding it to food and drink or anything else, because Allah has commanded us to avoid khamr completely, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), gambling, Al-Ansab (stone altars for

sacrifices to idols etc), and AlAzlam (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Shaitan's (Satan) handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful." [al-Maidah 5:90].

Al-Qurtubi said:

"The words "So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination)" imply complete avoidance, so that it cannot be used in any way whatsoever, whether it is drinking, selling, turning it into vinegar, using it for medicinal purposes, etc." (Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Quran, 6/289)

It says in Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Daimah (22/124):

"It is not permissible to put anything that causes intoxication into anything that is intended to be used as medicine, food or drink, or anything from which food, drink or condiments are to be extracted, whether that intoxicant is nabidh, beer or anything else."

And Allah knows best.