39408 - Is Nutmeg Prohibited?

the question

What is the ruling on putting nutmeg in food? Is it permissible to sell it?

Summary of answer

The majority of scholars are of the view that it is prohibited to use nutmeg in small and large quantities. Others are of the view that it is permissible to use a little of it if it is mixed with other substances.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What is nutmeg?

The nutmeg tree is used as a kind of spice which gives food a fragrant smell and delicious taste. The ancient Egyptians used it as a medicine for stomach disease and to expel wind.

Its effects are like those of hashish. If it is consumed in large quantities, a person ringing in his ears, severe constipation, difficulty urinating, anxiety, stress, suppression of the central nervous system and possibly death.

Is nutmeg prohibited?

With regard to the rulings on it, the scholars differed and there are two opinions.

The majority of scholars are of the view that it is prohibited to use it in small and large quantities. Others are of the view that it is permissible to use a little of it if it is mixed with other substances.

Ibn Hajar Al-Haytami (d. 974 AH) (may Allah have mercy on him) said concerning nutmeg:

“When there was a dispute concerning it between the scholars of the Haramayn and Egypt, and there were differences of opinion as to whether it is permissible or prohibited, this question arose: Did any of the imams or their followers state that it is prohibited to eat nutmeg?

To sum up the answer – as was stated clearly by Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Daqeeq Al-Eid – it is an intoxicant. Ibn Al-`Imad went further and regarded hashish as comparable to it. The Malikis, Shafa’is and Hanbalis agreed that it is an intoxicant and comes under the general text: “Every intoxicant is Khamr and all Khamr is prohibited.” The Hanafis are of the view that it is either an intoxicant or a drug, either of which affects the mind, so it is prohibitedin either case.” (See: Az-Zawajir `an Iqtirab Al-Kaba’ir (1/212) and Al-Mukhaddirat by Muhammad `Abd Al-Maqsud (p. 90)

During the eighth conference of medical Fiqh – “The Islamic View on Some Health Problems – prohibited and Impure Substances in Food and Medicine” – which was held in Kuwait between 22-24 Dhul-Hijjah 1415 AH (22-24 May 1995), they said:

“Narcotic substances are prohibited, and it is not permissible to consume them unless that is for a specific medical purpose, and in the amount specified by doctors, but they are pure in and of themselves.

There is nothing wrong with using nutmeg to improve the flavour of food, in small amounts that do not cause listlessness or intoxication.”

Shaykh Dr. Wahbah Az-Zuhayli (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“There is no reason why a small amount of nutmeg should not be used to improve the flavour of food, cakes and the like, but a large amount is prohibited, because it is a narcotic.”

But to be on the safe side we should say that it is not allowed even if it is mixed with other things and there is only a small amount of it, because “that which intoxicates in large amounts, a small amount of it is prohibited.”

It should be noted that it is prohibited to import nutmeg – both seed and powder – into the Land of the Two Holy Mosques (i.e., Saudi Arabia) and it is permitted only to import it when it is mixed with

other spices in permitted proportions, which is no more than 20%.

For more details, please refer to the following answers: 82116 , 227982 , 125974 , 107381 , 114855 , and 111827 .

And Allah knows best.