

184243 - Ruling on drinking kefir

the question

There has become popular among people a substance that is called kefir. This refers to a group of bacteria and yeast that turn milk into something like yoghurt through the action of bacteria, and the yeasts produce carbon dioxide and ethanol. The alcohol concentration varies during the 16 hours from the beginning of the fermentation process, between 0.1 and 0.5% of the volume, and may reach as much as 3%. This varies according to the way in which it is prepared and the type of yeasts used.

Some people describe kefir as offering healing from every disease. I researched the matter and I found that it is a drink that is widely known in Europe. It originally comes from the Caucasus region. It is a food that is easy to digest, rich in vitamins, amino acids and nutrients, and has a calming effect, but it has not been proven that it can heal or prevent cancer.

My question is: is drinking kefir regarded as halaal, because people ferment the milk with these yeasts for twenty-four hours, and during this period the concentration of alcohol develops in the milk, that may reach 0.5% or more, resulting from the fermentation of the lactose. Is this small concentration of ethanol permissible in a way similar to what is allowed in the case of “halaal beer”?

Detailed answer

Drinks and foods that are fermented and contain some alcohol concentration are of two categories:

1.

Where the alcohol concentration in the drink is high, in such a way that drinking a lot of it will cause intoxication. This is khamr, no matter what it may be called, and it is prohibited to drink it in small or large quantities, even a single drop.

It was narrated that Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Every intoxicant is khamr and every intoxicant is haraam.” Narrated by Muslim (2003)

It was narrated from Jaabir ibn ‘Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whatever intoxicates in large amounts, a small amount of it is haraam.” Narrated by Abu Dawood (3681) and at-Tirmidhi (1865); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

2.

Where the concentration of alcohol in the drink is very small, in such a way that it will not cause intoxication no matter how much a person drinks of it. This concentration has no effect, and this drink is halaal, because the basic principle with regard to all drinks and foods is that they are halaal, except that which Islam prohibits. There is no evidence in Islam to suggest that the mere presence of a small concentration of alcohol in a drink – no matter how small it is – makes the drink haraam. Rather the hadith quoted above indicate that the reason for the prohibition is intoxication; therefore whatever drinks cause intoxication are haraam, and whatever does not cause intoxication is halaal.

Based on that, if this food asked about does not cause intoxication, no matter how much a person eats of it, then it is not haraam, and this is what appears to be the case, because the concentration of alcohol mentioned is small and does not make the drink cause intoxication.

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas were asked about selling vinegar that has an alcohol concentration of 6%. What is the Islamic ruling on that?

They replied:

It is proven from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he said: “Whatever intoxicates in large amounts, a small amount of it is haraam.” So if this vinegar would cause intoxication in large amounts, then a small amount of it is haraam, and it comes under the same ruling as khamr.

If a larger amount of it would not cause intoxication, as the alcohol concentration is diluted in the non-alcoholic substance, so that it has no effect, then there is nothing wrong with selling it, buying it and drinking it. End quote.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz, Shaykh ‘Abd ar-Razzaaq ‘Afeefi, Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Ghadyaan, Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Qa‘ood

Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa’imah (13/291)

With regard to the ruling on beer, it follows the same ruling. If it causes intoxication, then it is khamr and is haraam; if it does not cause intoxication, then it is halaal. This has been explained in fatwa no. [33763](#)

And Allah knows best.