



268: The Colour of Faith – Navigating Halaal Food Colouring

Description

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Food is a fundamental aspect of human life, providing sustenance and nourishment. Beyond its nutritional value, food is also an experience that engages all our senses. The colour of food sets expectations up even before you've had the chance to bring it to your mouth. It is the first sensory cue one comes across which influences appetite and gives an expectation regarding taste and flavour.

90% of buyers make a decision to purchase a product after seeing its colour and creating a perception about its taste.

We eat with our eyes first. We are colour conditioned from childhood that chocolate is brown, mustard is yellow as would be banana and lemon, strawberries and tomato sauce is red and so on.

Experiments have shown that foods in unnatural colours are rejected outright. After all, who would want to have a breakfast of purple scrambled eggs, green baked beans, black potato chips, yellow polony slices and blue toasted bread, no matter how nutritious and safe it may be.

Many foods appear colourless or have a muted, less vibrant hue before colourants are added. Some examples are;

Tomato juice that is often clear or slightly pale before the addition of lycopene, a natural pigment, that gives it the characteristic red colour.

Turmeric, used for yellow colouring, is initially a pale beige or off-white colour before being added to food.

Caramel colour is used to give a brown colour to foods like cola and some baked goods, is made from heated sugar. In its initial state, before heating, sugar is white or colourless.

Annatto, a natural orange-red food colouring, comes from the seeds of the achiote tree. These seeds are initially pale beige or tan.

Red velvet cake. The vibrant red colour of red velvet cake comes from red food colouring. Without it, the cake would be a light brown or beige colour, due to the cocoa powder.

Certain salad dressings. Many salad dressings, particularly those with artificial colours for visual appeal, would be much lighter or translucent without them.

Artificial colour enhancement of products has been with Mankind for centuries with evidence of use by Egyptians as far back as 1500 BC.

Food colouring is derived from both synthetic and natural sources, including plants, animals and minerals. It comes in many forms consisting of liquids, powders, gels and pastes. Chemical colours are often coal or petroleum based and are mixed in laboratories using artificial processes. Both synthetic and natural colours and their production process may also contain Haraam ingredients or by-products.

The Challenge of Halaal Compliance

Consuming Halaal (permissible) and avoiding Haraam (forbidden) foods is a mandatory obligation of our Deen (faith). However, navigating the complex world of food production and labelling can be challenging. Food products often contain a multitude of ingredients, some of which may not be clearly identified on labels. For instance, E120, a natural colour derived from the Cochineal beetle insect, is not accepted as Halaal by SANHA which may not be immediately obvious.

This complexity is further compounded by the fact that ingredient manufacturers protect their proprietary formulations and processes. While they fulfil legal labelling requirements, full disclosure of every single detail necessary for consumers to make fully informed decisions about the Halaal status of a product, is not a categorical requirement.

Food colour regulations vary from country to country. Different countries have different labelling, naming and identification requirements, which makes it hard to know how to classify certain colouring agents. Certain colours are banned in some countries while still in use in others. These bans emphasize the importance of local Halaal certification to ensure compliance with regional regulations and consumer safety. Click here for further reading on this : <https://sanha.org.za/2022/12/01/215-halaal-here-and-haraam-there/>

Health Hazards and Faith Transgressions

Food colouring, whether natural or synthetic, can pose health risks, particularly for individuals with allergies. Some food dyes have been linked to allergic reactions and other health issues such as asthma, hypersensitivity etc. For Muslims, consuming Haraam substances inadvertently due to unclear labelling or undisclosed ingredients is not only a health risk but also a compromise of one's faith.

Peace of Mind for Body and Soul

To ensure the Halaal status of food products, the safest option for the Muslim consumer is to rely on independent third-party certification from reliable competent authorities accredited by international governments. The importance of this cannot be understated due to the ever growing and burgeoning Halaal global market.

Our 30-year track record of service and expertise in Halaal certification provides assurance that certified products meet the highest standards of Halaal integrity.

Embracing Science in Halaal Certification

SANHA utilizes accredited scientific laboratories for testing when required.

Its membership of SAAFFI (The South African Association of the Flavour & Fragrance Industry) demonstrates SANHA's commitment to staying up-to-date with industry developments and best practices.

SANHA's participation in SAAFFI programs and talks to its members highlights the organization's expertise and thought leadership in Halaal certification. Many SAAFFI members are certified by SANHA, underscoring the organization's credibility and mutual assistance on certification.

Don't See Red – Get the green light on Halaal compliance