

Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch - Kosher in Center City 2021 – Kashrut of Wine Vinegar

1. These are items that belong to gentiles and are prohibited to Jews, and their prohibition is that of an item from which deriving benefit is prohibited: Wine, and vinegar belonging to gentiles that was originally wine... (Avoda Zara 29b)
2. The Mishna teaches: And vinegar belonging to gentiles that was originally wine is prohibited. The Gemara asks: Isn't this obvious? Just because the wine has soured, should its prohibition lapse? (ibid)
3. ...if the rabbinic injunction on bread, oil, and wine of a non-Jew was on the object (the food), once it becomes prohibited, the prohibition can never be removed. However, if the Sages did not prohibit the object (the food), rather they [prohibited] the person from eating the bread and wine of non-Jews because of intermarriage... **if it became vinegar, it would eliminate the problem of intermarriage, and become permitted.** However, since [the fact is that] the object is prohibited, the prohibition would not be removed [even if it turns into vinegar]. Therefore, there is a prohibition of [not just drinking, but even] benefiting from non-Jewish wine [as the Talmud says the prohibition on the wine is inherent (on the object)]. But according to those who say that it is uncommon for non-Jews to worship idols with wine nowadays, and therefore permit benefitting from the wine, theoretically, if it turned to vinegar, **the prohibition would be lifted...** (Chidushei Chatam Sofer, Avoda Zara 29b)
4. [The wine of a] non-Jew who is not an idol worshipper is prohibited to drink and permissible to derive benefit from. (S" A Yoreh Deah (YD) 124:6)
5. It is prohibited to [even] benefit from ordinary wine produced by non-Jews... Rama: because of a rabbinic injunction that perhaps the wine was used for libations in the service of idolatry. Nowadays, when it is uncommon for non-Jews to perform wine libations in the service of idolatry, some say... that it is not prohibited to benefit from [this wine]. (S" A & Rama YD 123:1)
6. The Sages prohibited drinking non-Jewish wine because of intermarriage, and prohibited benefitting from non-Jewish wine because of the injunction that it might have been used for idolatry. According to this logic, there is a leniency nowadays [to benefit from non-Jewish wine] since genuine idolatry is uncommon, and that reason no longer exists. (Taz YD 123:1, see Taz YD 124:4)
7. No blessing is made on vinegar because it is harmful [to one's health]. (Shulchan Aruch (S" A) Orach Chaim (OC) 204:2)
8. If someone drinks nonpotable liquid like...undiluted vinegar on Yom Kippur they are exempt, but [if they drink] diluted (drinkable) vinegar they are liable. (Rama OC 612:9)
9. We do not make *Hagafen* on wine that everybody avoids on account of its vinegariness [rather, we make *shehakol*]. (Rama OC 204:4)

10. There are those that are accustomed not to eat meat nor drink wine the week [that Tisha B'Av falls within it]. Rama: But it is allowed to use wine vinegar. (S"A & Rama OC 551:9)
11. From the words of the Talmud, it would seem that vinegar is permissible if a non-Jew touched it (because vinegar is not used for idolatry), and this is how Rabbeinu Meshulam ruled. But Rabbeinu Tam vehemently opposed his position and said that we are not experts about when wine becomes vinegar, as it is very common to have differing opinions about whether vinegar is called wine or vinegar. (Tosefot Avoda Zara 29b)
12. The be'al peh teshuva I received was from Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi Doron when he visited Bogota in 1997. I heard the same thing [in the name of] the Rebbe of Tzehelim, who [gave the hechsher] for Kedem that grape juice and vinegar do not need a hechsher because they were never intended to become wine. (Email received from a Rabbinic colleague)
13. In our territory, we use vinegar made from diluted alcohol...we need not be concerned over the kashrut of the vinegar we purchase since surely they will not mix more than one part of wine into six parts of our alcohol vinegar." (Tiferet Yisrael Avoda Zara 35b)
14. Achiezer 11 [and] Mishkenot Yaakov 36... permit cognac on the grounds that it is not wine but only a distillate thereof. (Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler, "The Kashrut of Vinegar Produced from Wine Alcohol", *Tradition*, Winter 1987, Issue 22.4)