

Factsheet

Synthetic Colours



SYNTHETIC COLOURS (DYES)

According to the Food and Drug Regulations, synthetic colours (artificial colours) are NOT permitted for use in standardized alcoholic beverages including beer, wine, cider, and spirits (except for liqueurs). This is to maintain the product standard of identity and quality.

A synthetic colour is defined as the following:

- Any organic food colour, other than caramel, that is produced by chemical synthesis and that has no counterpart in nature.

Maximum allowable limits for synthetic colours in ready to drink (unstandardized alcoholic products) and liqueurs have been established. The main reason for establishing limits is due to consumer health concerns based on how the synthetic colours are sourced and produced.

WHAT ARE THE SYNTHETIC COLOURS?

- Allura Red – also known as FD&C Red 40
- Amaranth – also known as FD&C Red 2
- Erythrosine – also known as Red No. 3
- Tartrazine – also known as FD&C Yellow 5
- Sunset Yellow FCF – also known as Orange Yellow S or FD&C Yellow 6
- Indigo Carmine (Indigotine)
- Fast Green FCF – also known as FD&C Green No. 3
- Brilliant Blue FCF – also known as FD&C Blue No. 1

NOTE: These are the only synthetic colours that are allowed in beverages

SYNTHETIC COLOUR LIMITS

The following are NSLC established limits for synthetic colours in Liqueurs and Ready to Drink (Unstandardized Alcoholic Beverages) products:

GROUP	COLOUR (DYE) NAME	MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LIMIT
Group A	Allura Red	300 mg/L
	Amaranth	
	Erythrosine	
	Tartrazine	
	Sunset Yellow FCF	
	Indigo Carmine (Indigotine)	
Group B	Fast Green FCF	100 mg/L
	Brilliant Blue FCF	
Group C	Any combination of colours named in group A or B above	300 mg/L Individual colours shall not exceed maximum allowable limit stated for the named colours

CONTROLLING SYNTHETIC COLOUR LEVELS

If a producer is looking to add colour to a permitted product, it is important to investigate all options thoroughly to see what works best for the product. If synthetic colours are used, ensure they are used properly to prevent exceeding the limits in place.

To ensure that synthetic colours are not in the final product for products in which they are not permitted, a review of all ingredients should be completed. Talk to suppliers and ask for product specification sheets to make sure none of the synthetic colours are present. A key place to look for synthetic colours is in flavours that are used. Ensure these are not coloured and if they are, determine what colouring agent was used.

There are many other natural options for colours available to producers today. Perennia's specialists are well versed in sourcing and formulating beverages using a range of colours that meet all the regulatory parameters.

REFERENCES

Food and Drug Regulations, CRC, c. 870.

Health Canada. (2021, February 8). List of Permitted Colouring Agents.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions about the information found in this factsheet, please contact one of Perennia's specialist at:

Quality and Food Safety

Phone: **902-896-0277**

Email: [**foodsafety@perennia.ca**](mailto:foodsafety@perennia.ca)

or

Food and Beverage Innovation Centre

Phone: **902-896-8782**

Email: [**innovation@perennia.ca**](mailto:innovation@perennia.ca)

If you have questions regarding the established limits or product testing, please contact the NSLC at [**product.testing@mynslc.com**](mailto:product.testing@mynslc.com)