

Bs"d


 Monday, Aug 09, 2004

### SNS EXCLUSIVE: Benedictine – Muttar or Assur...

By Rabbi Moshe D. Gutnick

As everyone knows some years ago Benedictine was taken off the Rebbe's table at Farbrengen. However, many said that Benedictine still remained in the Rebbe's home. The main irur was that it contained wine or cognac. In those days there was an aura about Benedictine and clear and precise information was never available. For example people thought it was made by Benedictine monks – well it hasn't been made by them for 400 years!

Last week a "mekushar" who always drank Benedictine ( like Rabbi Marlow who always did ) bought me a bottle. I was sorely tempted – but was there a cshash? After all it went off the Rebbe's table – but l'idoch the Rebbe drank it before ! To say it always had cognac or wine is to say the Rebbe drank cognac or wine - very very unlikely wouldn't you say?

So being involved in kashrus I tried to find out some more information and lo and behold found the Benedictine internet site .. [www.benedictine.fr](http://www.benedictine.fr).

I would like at this point to strongly emphasise that via a website is NOT the way to find out normally whether something is kosher and what I am about to write is absolutely not a hechsher. It is a discussion using halachic principles to ascertain whether something is permitted to be drunk. Let no one be moreh heter from this for other things without proper guidance and I am not saying kablu daati - this is for those with the "emotional attachment" to the Rebbeim's Benedictine .....Al derech kiven d'nofik mipoomei d'rav kahana... and if you are unsure ask your Rov!

Today in the kashrus world we are becoming more and more machmir – eg chodosh--- the whole world is now into chodosh and yoshon ... yet we know that in Lubavitch they were bichlal not nizhar in chodosh – and the Rebbe said he himself wasn't! So for us Lubavitchers if the Rebbe ate it then ess gezunterheit U'Poshut!

I am not saying it is Chas V'Sholom bad to be machmir- Aderaba- but let us not lose sight of basic halachic principles - let us remember what is a chumra and what is a din... remember what it says in Maaneh Loshon that we pray not to be oser es hamutar as much as not to be matir es ho-ossur.

From the website alone it seemed already pretty clear that there was no wine but I wrote to the company via email saying that I had an allergy to grapes and wine and grape alcohol – and does Benedictine DOM have these in it ? The company responded unequivocally that there are no grape derived ingredients or wine in Benedictine DOM.! Allergy concerns makes the answer of the company even stronger than masiach lefi tumo.

Benedictine B&B definitely does have cognac/brandy and is not kosher – and that is also clear on the website and probably how the original mix up occurred ... but could it ever really be imagined that treife wine or cognac entered the Rebbe's mouth? Especially if one believes the stories that Benedictine was in the Rebbes home all the years!

Now there may be other shaalois such as keilim, etc – but in that regard there is in my opinion now no difference between Benedictine and any other alcohol such as whiskey that almost everyone drinks including yereyim ushlemim- that may be aged in oak sherry casks etc etc about which there are heteirim from Reb Moshe , the Minchas Yitzchok etc etc .vhanoch l'yisroel. ( See also the Mashke teshuva of the Noda B'Yehuda YD MH" T 56 and the Tzemach Tzedek YD 67 and 68). But with one major difference – as far as I know no one ever saw the Rebbe drink Black Label Scotch– but everyone saw him drink Benedictine!!!

The answer I got we should have known all the time – if the Rebbe drank it there couldn't possibly be any wine ... and if the Rebbe drank it - then there wasn't any other cshash and even if there was and he relied on the halachic klolim lhatir Benedictine so without doubt can we rely on them too - kiven dnofik mipoomei d'rav kahana!!!!

Bottom line is as follows: Does anyone honestly think that treife wine ever went into the Rebbes mouth??? Kol zman people thought there was wine or Cognac in it - they could not fathom how it could be mutter ( although there is an Achiezer that brings down a heter for cognac - but no one else agrees) so we were torn between "lo yeone ltsadik kol oven" and what people thought were the facts.....

However if we now know that there is no wine and cognac ... and I believe that to definitely be the case...then even us kalamutnikes should be able to drink it freilicher heit!

In truth how could we ever have doubted it or thought otherwise!

L'Chaim Vlivrocho !

*Rabbi Moshe D Gutnick*