

Factsheet Sugar



SUGAR

Sugar limits are imposed on beer, vodka, dry gin products, and ice wine. The main reason for these limits is based on the standard of identity outlined in the Food and Drug Regulations for these products.

In the case of beer, residual sugars are being tested. Residual sugars are what remain in the product post-fermentation. The limit that was established is to accommodate all styles of beer and help distinguish beer from malt-based beverage products.

For vodka and dry gin, as mentioned previously, the limits are in place to ensure the standard of identity is met. No additional sugars or sweetening agents can be added to the product. Only residual sugars can remain at the limits stated. This is to protect against product adulteration and ensure the best quality products are being produced.

For Nova Scotia icewine, the limit of residual sugar is set out in the [Nova Scotia Farm Winery Policy](#) and is for protecting the identity of the product and ensuring the specific production methods are in place. According to this regulation, icewines must be made only by grapes naturally frozen on the vine. This ensures the quality profile of the product and that only the natural sugars of the grapes are contributing to the residual sugar and actual alcohol of icewines. Icewines made outside of Nova Scotia, mainly British Columbia and Ontario, follow standards determined by the Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA). The main difference with these standards are that sugars have to be greater than 125 g/L.

CONTROLLING SUGAR LEVELS

To adjust the remaining residual sugars in products it comes down to formulations and efficient fermentation.

- Formulations – Ensure that the raw materials used are going to yield the proper amount of sugar needed for the fermentation to occur to obtain the target alcohol by volume (ABV) without having excess residual sugar.
- Efficient fermentation – Ensure that the fermentation conditions are optimal for the fermentation process to occur at the efficiency needed to obtain the target ABV without having excess residual sugar.
- If sugars are added to products, where permitted, one must calculate properly to ensure sugar levels are not exceeded. If the product is over the limit, then it could be classified as an unstandardized alcoholic beverage and all labelling and regulations that are required for an unstandardized alcoholic beverage must be followed.

SUGAR LIMITS

The following sugar limits have been established by the NSLC:

PRODUCT TYPE		SUGAR ALLOWANCE (g/L)		
		ADHERENCE	MINOR VARIANCE	MAJOR VARIANCE
Beer		Less than or equal to 40	N/A	Greater than 40
Cider		N/A	N/A	N/A
Ready to Drink		N/A	N/A	N/A
Spirits	Vodka/Dry Gin	Less than or equal to 2	N/A	Greater than 2
Wine	Icewine	Greater than or equal to 125	N/A	Less than 125
	Nova Scotia Icewine	Greater than or equal to 110	N/A	Less than 110

REFERENCES

[Bell, R. A. \(2021\). Wines of Canada - Icewine Standards.](#)

[Farm Winery Industry Development Board. \(April 2007\). Nova Scotia Farm Winery.](#)

[Food and Drug Act: Regulations Amending the Food and Drug Regulations \(Beer\). \(2019\). Canada Gazette Part II, 153\(9\).](#)

[Food and Drug Act: Regulations Amending the Food and Drug Regulations \(Vodka\). \(2019\). Canada Gazette Part II, 153\(13\).](#)

[Government of Canada. \(2020, January 29\). Labelling Requirements for Alcoholic Beverages: Product specific information for vodka.](#)

[Government of Canada. \(2020, January 29\). Labelling Requirements for Alcoholic Beverages: Product specific information for gin.](#)

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

or

Food and Beverage Innovation Centre

Phone: **902-896-8782**

Email: innovation@perennia.ca

If you have questions regarding the established limits or product testing, please contact the NSLC at product.testing@mynslc.com