

FSSAI asks states to ensure food-grade silver leaf not of animal origin

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E-paper

Taking a cue from instances of unhygienic manufacturing of food-grade silver leaf (chandi ka warq), the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), through an order, has asked the states to ensure that the food-grade silver leaf used on sweets is not made using material of animal origin, in line with the country's apex food regulator's notification two years ago.

In 2016, FSSAI banned the use of materials of animal origin in the manufacturing of chandi ka warq (silver leaf), which is used to decorate sweets and pan. In Regulation 2.11.4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Food Product Standards and Food Additives), Regulations, 2011, pertaining to chandi ka warq, the regulator had prescribed the silver content and the form in which the leaf should be manufactured.



The regulation stated that, "It should be in the form of a sheet of uniform thickness, free from creases and folds. The weight of the silver leaf should be up to 2.8g/sq m, and silver content should be of minimum 999/1,000 fineness."

"It should not be manufactured using any material of animal origin at any stage and be in accordance with the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Regulations, 2011, and the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011.

However, it has come into the notice of FSSAI that some food business operators (FBOs) still indulge in the manufacturing of chandi ka warq by using materials of animal origin. Thus, FSSAI has directed that the commissioners of food safety from states and Union Territories to carry out surveillance and enforcement and further ensure compliance of regulations.

Further the order also instructed the state to submit the report of the action undertaken of the surveillance to FSSAI at earliest.

Giving the details on the same, H G Koshia, commissioner, Food and Drug Control Administration (FDCA), Gujarat, said, "In the state, we have developed an easy-to-use kit to check the quality of the silver coatings done on sweets. By just putting a single drop of the chemical on the taken sample, the result clarifies the quality of silver within a minute."

He added, "Due to strict surveillance in the state by our food safety officials, the cases of using aluminium foil and silver leaf having animal origin have reduced drastically. Continuous checks and drives are in place, due to which we find such case rarely." However, food safety officials from Assam, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh claimed that they did not receive any order from the apex regulator, but as and when they receive it, they will do as directed.

In 2017, the Delhi High Court stayed the July 2016 FSSAI notification on a petition from the traditional manufacturers of silver leaf, who claimed it would result in them losing their business and also render their workers jobless.

However, the court vacated the stay earlier this year after FSSAI mentioned alternative manufacturing processes that involve beating the sheets using specially-treated paper and polyester coated with food-grade calcium powder.