vinetur

TTB Issues New Guidance on Formula Approval for Wine and Cider

The bureau’s decision tool helps producers determine whether products need formula review before label approval and U.S. market entry.

Monday, June 29, 2026

The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau has published guidance aimed at helping wine and cider producers determine whether a product needs formula approval before it can enter the U.S. market, a step that can also trigger laboratory analysis before a label application is filed.

The agency says certain alcoholic beverages must receive formula approval before they are introduced into commerce. In the case of wine, that can include grape wine, juice wine and wines made with artificial flavoring or processing materials. The requirement generally applies when a product includes additives that are not customary to its production or uses certain nonstandard ingredients.

According to the TTB, formulas are especially required for beverages that depart from traditional production methods or contain ingredients that could affect safety, quality or labeling. The bureau reviews submissions to check compliance with federal laws and regulations and says approval is required before the product can be marketed or sold.

The guidance is presented as a decision tool for wine and cider products, allowing producers to assess whether they need formula approval and, in some cases, laboratory testing before moving on to a Certificate of Label Approval, or COLA. That

sequence matters because label approval is often one of the final regulatory steps before a new beverage reaches wholesalers, retailers and consumers.

For wineries, cider makers and companies developing flavored or otherwise unconventional products, the clarification could help reduce mistakes early in product development. In practice, uncertainty over whether a formula is required can lead to rejected filings, revised recipes, delayed packaging decisions and slower market entry. Clearer direction from the regulator may help producers avoid spending time and money on labels or production plans that do not match federal requirements.

The issue is particularly relevant for beverage companies working in categories where innovation has outpaced older assumptions about what counts as standard wine or cider. Products made with added flavors, unusual ingredients or novel processing methods can raise questions not only about formulation but also about classification and labeling. A producer that misjudges those rules may face delays in launching a product even if the beverage itself is otherwise ready for sale.

The TTB’s broader position is that formula review serves both compliance and consumer protection purposes. By examining ingredients and production details before a product reaches the market, the agency seeks to make sure beverages are labeled properly and meet applicable standards. That review can be important when ingredients or processes change how a product should be described to buyers.

The bureau encourages producers to consult its formula regulations and guidance materials to determine whether their products require approval and to understand the submission process. For businesses in wine and cider, especially smaller operators without large compliance teams, that kind of step-by-step guidance may help limit avoidable setbacks as they prepare new products for distribution in the United States.