

Get Your Freekeh On!
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Diabetes P11

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Spring 2014

28

Halal Consumer

A Publication of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America | **magazine**



Explore
PROBING
PROBIOTICS P8



J&M® halal certified meals use only wholesome ingredients and have **NO MSG, NO SOY, and NO ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS OR COLORS**. Six varieties are gluten-free. Each meal is fully cooked and is conveniently packaged in either 10 oz. (283 g) microwaveable serving dishes or 8 oz. (227 g) travel and camping pouches. Reheat to eat in minutes.

LAMB & BARLEY STEW: Tender lamb, combined with barley, eggplant, red and green sweet peppers, zucchini and onions, create a true culinary delight! A scrumptious meal with a variety of textures, it is deliciously seasoned with herbs and spices of the Middle East.

CHICKEN MEDITERRANEAN: A hearty chicken meal with the flavors of the Mediterranean. Chunks of light and dark chicken with tomatoes, potatoes, chick peas and black olives in a tangy sauce.

CHICKEN & NOODLES: Chunks of light and dark chicken with Kluski noodles, peas, corn and carrots in a light sauce. A winning combination!

BEEF STEW: This satisfying stew is absolutely delicious. It has chunks of beef with chunks of potatoes, sweet peppers, tomatoes, cabbage, zucchini, chick peas and carrots in a flavorful sauce.

CHEESE TORTELLINI: Cheese-filled tortellini in a well-seasoned tomato sauce with the added protein of pinto beans. Excellent texture and flavor!

VEGETARIAN STEW: A meal perfect for vegetarian and hearty eaters alike! With macaroni, vegetables, potatoes, barley, lentils, peanuts and seasonings, this meal has great taste and a variety of textures.

LAMB & LENTIL STEW: Tender lamb joins a medley of tomatoes, lentils, onions, chickpeas, zucchini and red and green sweet peppers. Aromatic herbs and spices invite all to taste and enjoy this truly delicious meal.

MY KIND OF CHICKEN: A favorite combination! Chunks of light and dark chicken with brown rice, peas and carrots in a mild sauce.

CHICKEN & BLACK BEANS: A flavor from the southwestern states, this meal has chunks of light and dark chicken with delicious and nutritious black beans, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet peppers, corn and kidney beans. Simple seasoning brings out its full flavor.

OLD WORLD STEW: Chunks of beef, with brown rice, tomatoes, zucchini and pinto beans. The sauce is seasoned with the aromatic flavors of the Middle East.

FLORENTINE LASAGNA: This meal has small lasagna noodles mixed with a deliciously seasoned tomato sauce. In the sauce is Ricotta cheese, Parmesan cheese, spinach and pinto bean pieces to add more protein without meat. A meal influenced by the tastes of Florence.

PASTA WITH GARDEN VEGETABLES: This delicious and robust meal has rotini pasta with a pepper, mushroom, zucchini and tomato medley. It's perfectly flavored with traditional Italian seasonings.

DHABIHA HALAL حلال



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Tel: 847-948-1290 • Fax: 847-948-0468 • e-mail: halalcertified@sbcglobal.net



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CORRECTION: On page 11 of the Winter 2013 issue (issue 27), we stated that Rachid Belbachir's wife's name is Nancy and that she was born and raised in the United States. The article should have said her name is Norma and that she was born in Mexico and raised in the United States.



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HALAL CONSUMER EDITORIAL STAFF

Publisher | M. Munir Chaudry
Editor in Chief | Roger Othman
Content Manager | Alia Shalabi

HEAD OFFICE

777 Busse Hwy.
Park Ridge, IL 60068-2470 USA
+1.847.993.0034
+1.847.993.0038 | fax
halalaifanca.org
halalconsumer@ifanca.org

REGIONAL OFFICES

IFANCA - CALIFORNIA

Walnut, California
Dr. Ahmad H. Sakr
drahmadak@hotmail.com

IFANCA - CANADA

MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO
Haider Khattak
h.khattak@ifanca.org

IFANCA - ASIA PACIFIC

SINGAPORE
Shahlan Hairalah
shahlan.hairalah@gmail.com

IFANCA - CHINA

BEIJING, CHINA
Charles Wenchuan Yu
ifanca.halalayahoo.com.cn
WUHAN, CHINA
Daud WenTao Wang
ifancahalalayahoo.cn
TIANJIN, CHINA
Lan (Ibraheem) Zhen Qiang
cinb2b@hotmail.com

IFANCA - PAKISTAN

FAISALABAD, PAKISTAN
Prof. Dr. Javaid A. Awan
ifancapk@gmail.com

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ABOUT HALAL CONSUMER

Halal Consumer is a publication of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA). IFANCA is a non-profit Islamic organization with the mission to promote halal food and the institution of halal. IFANCA objectives include making halal foods conveniently available, introducing halal to food companies and institutions, creating awareness of halal among consumers and providing halal solutions to consumer needs.

Editor's Note

Assalamu Alaikum

As we begin a new year, we are introducing some new segments to the magazine. In the past, the issues focused on a major theme. That worked well and you, the readers, seemed to enjoy the articles. This year, we want to bring you a greater variety of helpful information so we are introducing segments on food trends; health and nutrition; and product labels, as well as select feature articles. We think you will enjoy this even more! Be sure to tell us. You can email us at halalconsumer@ifanca.org.

In food trends, you will get information on what's hot and where consumers are heading. As for me, I'm a 'stick to the basics' cook — meat, chicken, or fish with basic frozen vegetables prepared in the microwave. Not too trendy, but you never know...I can change.

In health and nutrition, we will look at foods, nutrients, and services to help plan a healthy and nutritious diet. Can smartphones really help us do that?

In product labels, we will delve into some of the intricacies of ingredients and nutrition information. Years ago, ingredient labels used to be shorter. Disclosure wasn't as big a deal back then. While we may not have known everything a product contained, it was certainly easier to read the labels. Nowadays they read like short stories. Seeing a Crescent-M on the label makes it easier to select, but what if it's not there? This will help you decipher the contents of the product.

And in features, we will have a variety of stimulating and thought provoking topics — some real food for thought.

We hope you enjoy the changes and please do let us know what you think.

Sincerely,

Roger M. Othman managing editor

From the Publisher's Desk

Assalamu Alaikum

Thirty years ago, IFANCA published its first book about halal: *Islamic Dietary Laws and Practices*. That same year we also published a list of halal/haram ingredients to help Muslim consumers decipher product labels and select halal products. At that time, pretty much everything from bread to French fries was made with animal shortening or a mixture of animal and vegetable shortening. Most cheese was made with animal enzymes. Life for halal-observing Muslims was tough in the United States.

Ten years later, two simultaneous trends emerged: halal and health. People became increasingly health conscious and the manufacturing industry responded by replacing animal fats with vegetable oils. The trend became a movement, and it continues to push the industry towards making more healthy and nutritional products.

While two million American Muslims were butchering their own animals on farms or settling for kosher meat, the American food franchising industry took to the streets of Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Dubai, and Jeddah.

A trend of eating at restaurants like McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken evolved in the Islamic countries. With that came the push to make those restaurants comply with halal requirements. Over

the next twenty years, a huge halal products export business developed from the United States, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand to the Muslim countries. The food industry tasted success as never before.

In the United States, the Muslim population grew to over eight million and was no longer invisible to the industry. Small to large companies have started to produce and market halal products, not just through ethnic stores, but also at major supermarkets. For these past thirty years, IFANCA has been a part of the halal trend and, now, the halal movements. Thousands of halal-certified products ranging from meat and poultry to frozen meals, baked goods, meals for soldiers, ice cream, baby food, nutritional products, dairy products, beverages, and chocolates bearing the Crescent-M Mark of Halal Quality are now available throughout the United States and Canada.

Look for those products at your supermarket and buy them with the satisfaction that IFANCA has taken the doubt out of the products, so you no longer have to read those labels to determine if the product is halal. Call the company or send them an email to say thank you for making our lives easier. Appreciation promotes encouragement which leads to excitement by the companies to make more products halal. Scan the chart beginning on page 34 to see where some of the halal-certified products are available.

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry *president*

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★ GET YOUR ★
FREEKEEN ON!
By Ronia Abdelrahman



What's all this talk about trendy grains lately? Over the last couple of years, we've seen a surge in the popularity of quinoa, a nutty, protein-rich grain indigenous to South and Central America. Foodies and non-foodies alike have embraced this grain into their homes and bellies. But nowadays, quinoa is old news. There are other grains in town, ready to take over your supermarkets and dinner tables...and judging by the healthy punch these little guys are packing, you should definitely welcome them with open arms.



First up on the list of suspects is bulgur. Bulgur, a Middle Eastern grain that is high in fiber and protein, is the result of steaming, drying, and crushing wheat kernels. It is available as a coarse, medium, or fine grind and, depending

on the grind chosen, is often used as replacement for rice, meat, or corn. Its popularity derives from the fact that it takes mere minutes to cook and offers up a plethora of health benefits without the high calorie and fat content of more typical protein sources like meat, making it a great staple in a vegan or vegetarian diet as well.

In addition to fiber and protein, bulgur is also packed with b-vitamin and iron and has very minimal processing, making it an attractive grain for those who still want to enjoy the pleasures of pilafs, stuffings, and burgers, but without the guilt. Registered Dietitian and nutritionist Wendy Jo Peterson says she regularly recommends her clients use these grains, stating “I often encourage clients to mix their grain and seed choices up to reap the benefits of the variety versus more typical starches like rice, potatoes, bread, and pasta,” reiterating that bulgur is a good substitute for these starches because it provides a healthier source of fiber and protein.

Another new grain to begin hitting the markets is freekeh! Despite how it sounds, that is not an insult. Freekeh is wheat that has been harvested while the grains are still young and green, and are then roasted and rubbed together. Popular in Middle Eastern cuisine, freekeh has been called a “superfood” because, in addition to its high protein and fiber content (boasting 3 times more fiber than brown rice and twice more than quinoa), it has a low reading on the glycemic index,

making it a food that is useful in the prevention and management of type 2 diabetes, as noted by the findings of CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization) in their Greenwheat Freekeh report of 2003. Research further shows that, unlike other wheats that are harvested when they are mature, freekeh is harvested young, allowing the grain to retain more of its nutrients.

Peterson, co-author of *Mediterranean Diet Cookbook for Dummies*, says that freekeh is newer to the markets than bulgur and not quite as mainstream, but because she often eats and shops in Mediterranean/Middle Eastern markets, she herself uses and sees these grains often and recommends them when she can.

Personally being of Palestinian descent, both bulgur and freekeh were staples in my household. I grew up on cuisines like

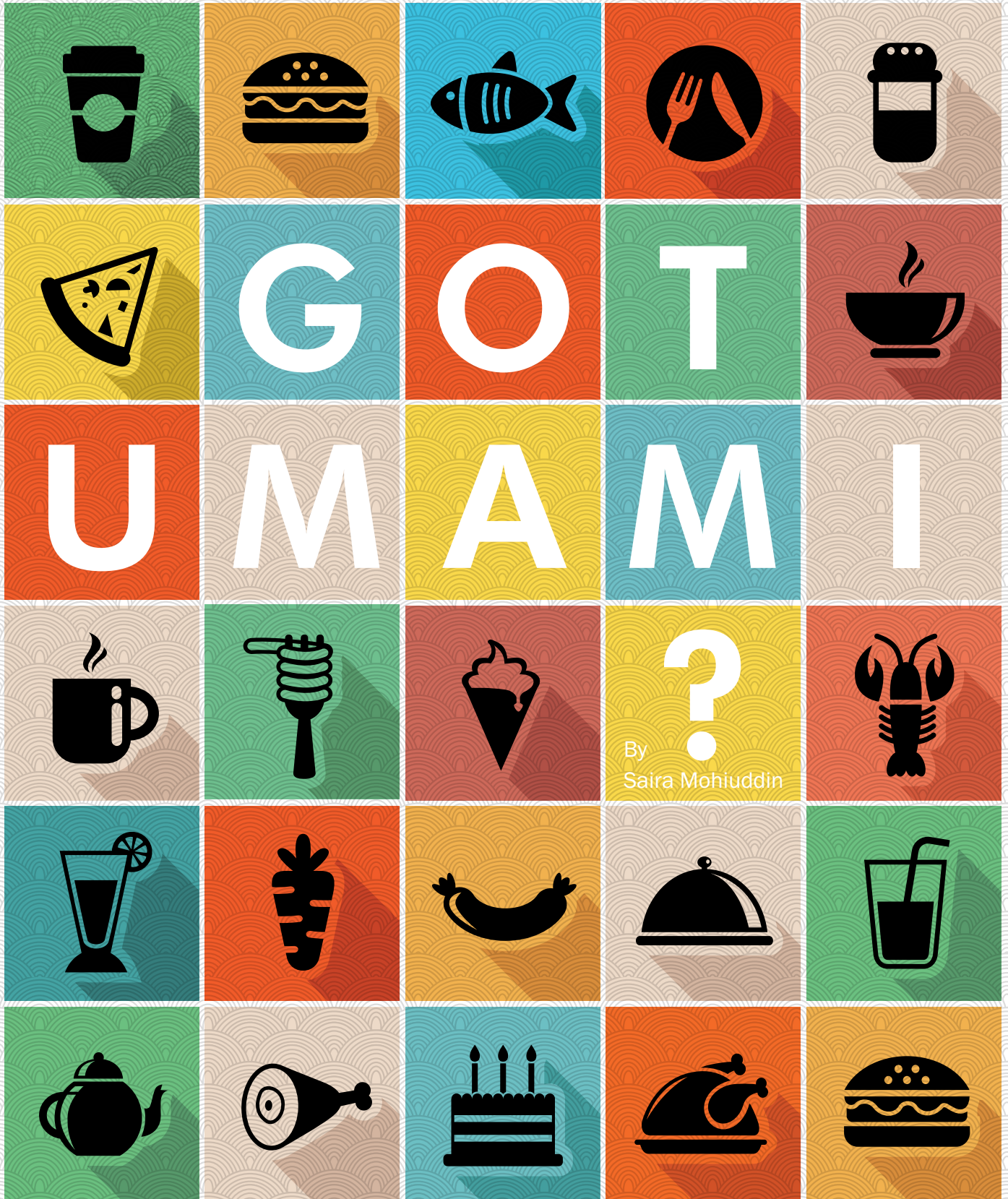
tabbouleh, (a salad made with bulgur, fresh lime juice, cucumbers, tomatoes, and onions), *freekeh soup* (a soup consisting of freekeh and chicken broth), and *kanabeet* (collard greens stuffed with bulgur and chickpeas). Having eaten these grains my whole life, it is exciting to see them gaining mass appeal and slowly becoming more readily available in mainstream markets. These new grains, dubbed by Peterson as the “new quinoa of 2014,” offer fulfilling and healthy substitutes for typical starches and proteins, without a side of fat and guilt. So go ahead, get your freekeh on! Your body will thank you for it. ☺

RONIA ABDELRAHMAN loves trying new restaurants around Chicago. She is a big fan of coffee, T-shirts with witty sayings, and sad songs. She also falls down a lot. It's best to pretend you didn't notice.



These new grains, dubbed by Peterson as the "new quinoa of 2014," offer fulfilling and healthy substitutes for typical starches and proteins, without a side of fat and guilt.





Since the beginning of time, we have based the human sense of taste upon four basic flavor profiles: sweet, salty, sour, and bitter. When cooking, we often ask ourselves, “Is this too salty?” or “Do I need to add sugar?” How often do we find ourselves asking if our meal is rich in umami? What is umami?

Umami is the fifth taste, which had remained unnamed until the early 1900s when Kikunae Ikeda, a chemistry professor at the Imperial University of Tokyo, discovered it. A Japanese-coined phrase, umami can be defined as a “pleasant savory taste” or “yummy.” Ikeda found a distinct taste in dashi, a cooking stock used in Japanese cuisine. Its taste did not fit in with the other four basic tastes, and his research led him to find that there was a fifth basic taste that needed to be recognized.

When foods ferment, like cheese, or when meat begins to cook under the heat of an open flame, the proteins undergo a molecular change. The proteins are then completely broken apart into various units, one of which is a molecule called L-glutamate. Glutamate is the singular molecule responsible for umami. Similar to the other four basic tastes, umami is sensed when L-glutamate binds to specific receptors on your tongue, causing a chain reaction of chemical processes resulting in taste.

From an anatomical standpoint, the tongue map suggests that receptors for the other four primary taste buds have boundaries that separate them. However, umami receptors are said to be found all over the tongue. Basically, umami has broken through all of the boundaries which restrict the other four basic tastes. Umami, you little rebel.

Umami has found a very comfortable home in the culinary world. Cutting edge chefs are using multiple umami ingredients to create dishes that can be considered umami bombs, or dishes rich in umami. Umami bombs can be found in various cuisines. Many classical food pairing phenomena, such as the cheeseburger, can be explained by the interaction of umami-rich ingredients. The cheeseburger made its mark long ago in the United States’ fast food industry. However, restaurateurs have managed to reinvent this classic American fare by focusing on using umami-rich ingredients. Popular California and New York food chain, Umami Burger, is dedicated to creating the “perfect mouthful” for patrons. Their signature burger, the “Umami Burger,” is served with shitake mushrooms, roasted tomatoes, caramelized onions, parmesan crisp, and umami ketchup.

Other popular American fare, such as pizza and submarine sandwiches, are rich in umami. Perhaps these foods have become iconic in America due to their umami-rich ingredients.

Traditional Asian foods rich in umami are fish paste, soy sauce, miso paste, and bonito flakes. Other umami-filled foods include ketchup, cured meats, fish, shellfish, tomatoes, spinach, aged cheese, and even green tea. Even potatoes have a degree of umami. Although umami is not palatable by itself, it is enhanced by the proper use of salt. Perhaps that is why “you can’t eat just one” potato chip.

Umami has been secretly enhancing food experiences for hundreds of centuries. Caesar salad is a classic dish bursting with umami. Anchovies and parmesan are considered a rich and classic umami pairing.

Interestingly, breast milk is also noted to be rich in umami. It is said to contain the same amount of umami that is found in broths such as miso or dashi. Looks like infants may have one leg up on foodies across globe. Got umami?

Experienced food scientist, Zeinab Ali, sheds an entirely different light on the subject. She explains, “Expectations for foods [one] can reference from memory, and with pleasant experiences, heighten umami levels.” When one can relate a particular food to a pleasing memory, the food itself conjures up the feelings associated with that memory as well. As umami is often referred to as “pleasant,” this also directly implies that umami affects the way the mind retrieves memories. In other words, umami can also be defined as the “comfort” in comfort foods.

An example of this notion can be taken from the Disney Pixar film *Ratatouille*. In the final scenes of the movie, a harsh food critic is brought back to his childhood by eating the ratatouille. He recalls coming home from a rough day at school and his mother placing a dish of ratatouille in front of him, which, in turn, gives him comfort and ease. This recollection causes him to feel contentment and joy. He has developed a cognitive relationship with the peasant dish, ratatouille, a dish filled with umami ingredients such as ripened tomatoes, eggplant, and caramelized onions.

The pressures of cooking for family and guests can get to all of us at times. When planning your next dinner at home, consider using umami-rich ingredients and pairings. Remember to keep it simple, fresh, and most importantly, keep it umami. 🍴

SAIRA MOHIUDDIN is the chef-owner of *Spicy Haute Chefing Co.* (spicy-hautecatering@gmail.com) in Lake in the Hills, Illinois. She offers in-home halal fine-dining experiences and group cooking classes. Find her on Facebook at *Spicy Haute Chefing Co.*

PROBING PROBIOTICS

By Zaira Ahmad, MS, RD

WHAT ARE PROBIOTICS?

Probiotics are living microorganisms that, when ingested in adequate amounts, can provide health benefits to the host. More simply, a probiotic is a good bacterium that promotes and helps restore microbial balance in your body. Bacteria are commonly associated with all things unclean, but the good bacteria in your body help protect you against illnesses and aid in your digestive health!

The human gut, or gastrointestinal (GI) tract, is home to diverse microbial communities, which include over 500 types of bacteria. These communities are also referred to as GI flora. The most common group of bacteria found in the intestine is lactic acid bacteria. The relationship between you and your GI flora is symbiotic; both you and the microorganisms you host are benefiting one another. Along your gut, bacteria have a nice, warm, safe place to live and grow. In return they act as a HAZMAT regulator for your body. Normal GI flora helps prevent infections and pathogen (harmful bacteria) overgrowth. They improve intestinal function and maintain the strength of intestinal lining. Probiotics also help fight the bacteria that causes diarrhea. The GI flora plays a significant role in production of vitamin K and certain B vitamins, synthesis of amino acids, and bile transformation (a process in the metabolism of glucose and cholesterol). Probiotics also have a direct impact on immunological health.

WHERE ARE PROBIOTICS FOUND?

Probiotics are available in foods and dietary supplements. The most well known bacteria of the gut are *Lactobacilli* and *Bifidobacteria*, making them the most widely available probiotics for consumption. You can enjoy probiotics in fermented dairy foods such as yogurt, kefir, and aged cheeses. Look for food labels that read, “contains active cultures” or “contains live cultures.” More detailed labels will even list the type and name of the probiotic. Some non-dairy foods that contain probiotics are kimchi, sauerkraut, miso, tempeh, and soy beverages. However, be careful of how these foods are prepared. When live cultures are exposed to high temperatures (like baking a pizza with fermented cheeses) the bacteria you are trying to eat is killed!

Interest in probiotics is growing and more dietary supplements are emerging. Dr. Javeria Chishty, PharmD of East Windsor, New Jersey, works as a retail pharmacist. She advises, “Probiotics supplements are beneficial in some cases but, as with all dietary supplements, they are not FDA [Food and Drug Administration] approved and should be used with caution.

There’s no guarantee they’ll be effective.” Dr. Chishty observes customers most often seek probiotic supplements “when they are on antibiotics, to regulate their digestive system, or to combat irregularities such as excess gas or diarrhea.”

FOOD OR SUPPLEMENTS – HOW TO DECIDE

You may be wondering, which is better: probiotics from foods or from supplements? That depends on your specific needs. If you are a healthy individual looking to maintain healthy digestive function, obtaining probiotics from food sources is always the best choice. When consumed as food, the intestines better absorb them. However, in treating specific ailments or symptoms a supplement may be more helpful and convenient. For example, if you are suffering from diarrhea, you may not want to eat large amounts of foods. Halal certified supplements such as Forever Active Probiotic by Forever Living or Probiotics by 4Life might be a better option. For better absorption, the probiotic supplements should not be taken on an empty stomach. As with any dietary supplement, herbal remedy, or vitamin, if you take probiotic supplements you should inform your physician.

WHEN ARE PROBIOTICS NEEDED?

Recall that your gut maintains a natural flora. If this flora is disrupted in some way, increasing the probiotics in your regular diet can help restore your good bacteria. The natural GI floral can be thrown off by the use of antibiotics and some medications, abrupt diet changes, use of laxatives, or *C. difficile*-associated diarrhea. For the healthy individual, there is no need to seek out excess probiotics, assuming he or she has a balanced diet that includes the foods containing them.

Dr. Umair Ahmad, MD, a family medicine physician from Columbus, Ohio, says, “When I have patients with Irritable Bowel Syndrome [IBS]; symptoms associated with IBS such as gas and bloating; and viral or bacterial GI infections, I include probiotics as part of their treatment.” Dr. Ahmad continues, “I always suggest probiotics to a patient on antibiotics. It doesn’t hurt to



TOP TO BOTTOM: Kimchi, blue cheese, tempeh, miso.

be proactive about maintaining gut health when someone is at risk of disrupting his or her normal GI balance.”



THE OTHER “BIOTICS”

You may have heard these words that sound like probiotics before: *antibiotics* and *prebiotics*. Both of these terms interact with probiotics in different ways.

Antibiotics are powerful prescriptive medicines that fight bacterial infections. They work to either kill or stop further growth of dangerous bacteria in your system. When it comes to antibiotics and probiotics, Dr. Chishty explains, “Antibiotics aim to kill the pathogenic bacteria causing an illness or infection, but since they don’t differentiate against bacteria they also tend to kill off the good bacteria along with the bad.” She continues, “Probiotics can help restore and regulate the natural flora.”

Prebiotics are natural, non-digestible food ingredients that promote the growth of good bacteria in your GI tract. Prebiotics can be found in bananas, onions, garlic, leeks, asparagus, artichokes, soybeans, and whole-wheat foods. Prebiotics and probiotics work together synergistically. Jointly they are referred to as *synbiotics*. You can think of prebiotics as food for probiotics. Enjoying synbiotic dishes is easy. It’s as simple as adding sliced bananas to yogurt!



EMERGING RESEARCH

Since the probiotic concept was first introduced in 1908, the scientific community has been working to define probiotics and their uses. Most research on the topic, however, has been conducted within the past decade.

Improving, restoring, and maintaining GI health is well established concerning probiotics. Additional research shows that there are immunological benefits from probiotics, including reducing eczema. Probiotics can also improve lactose malabsorption by improving digestion and reducing symptoms of lactose intolerance. The use of synbiotics has been shown to reduce the risk of colon cancer.

Much of the research is applicable to infants and children, as their GI flora is relatively new and more easily manipulated. In societies with strict hygiene, infants are exposed to fewer bacteria. As a result, they are more sensitive to illnesses and allergies as adults. Introducing probiotics through formulas such as Similac Advance STEP 2 GOS w/Probiotics can influence their GI flora and build stronger immune systems. Consult your infant/child’s pediatrician before supplementing your infant/child with probiotics.

The use of probiotics is more effective when “strain specific.” This means that a bacterium may be useless if it is the correct species but not the same strain as what your GI tract needs for balance. Although all people harbor a GI flora, not all are exactly the same as one another. Further research on probiotics is necessary before establishing additional benefits, further uses, and insight on strain specificity.



ARE THERE RISKS?

Though probiotics generally pose no harm, there are some risks to individuals. For those allergic to yeast, it is important to note that some probiotic mixtures contain yeast cultures. There are potential interactions with other medications, making it necessary to mention probiotic supplement use to your doctor. There is also the possibility for an increase in antibiotic-resistance.

It is important to read labels and know what you are putting into your body. Tahira Randhawa, MPH, a resident of Burlington, New Jersey, with a Master’s in Public Health, has a strong passion for health literacy and urges consumers to read food and supplement labels. The Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) states, “It’s common knowledge that probiotics help with digestion, but what specific bacteria are you putting into your system? Read the label, find the exact names, and then do the research. You can avoid any possible risks by taking an active role in understanding labels.” Randhawa suggests interested readers visit www.pubmed.gov for information on specific probiotics noted on food labels. When purchasing at your local pharmacy, Dr. Chishty adds that, when in doubt, “using standardized supplements labeled ‘USP [United States Pharmacopeia] verified’ tend to be a safer choice.”

Maintaining a healthy, balanced diet ensures a balanced GI flora as well. Keep your body on track by including foods rich in probiotics. You can find them in a variety of foods you most likely already enjoy. Remember to read labels and look for products that include “active” or “live” cultures. Keep in mind that probiotic supplements are most useful to those who are at risk of disrupting, or already have disrupted, the good bacteria in their GI tracts. Consult your physician if you are unsure about whether a probiotic supplement is right for you. 🍌



ZAIRA AHMAD is a Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist from Somerset, New Jersey. She also has her Master’s in Nutrition & Food Science with experience in clinical dietetics, nutrition education, and nutrition counseling.



Pregnancy and Diabetes

By Tayyaba Syed

The nurse was just doing her job. She was simply teaching me how to prick my finger and test my sugar with a glucose monitor. In actuality, she was giving me a rude awakening as to what my future may look like. Diabetes runs in my DNA, but I was not ready to let it run my life just yet. Having recently been diagnosed with gestational diabetes, I am at a higher risk, up to 50 percent higher, of developing Type 2 diabetes later in life. As if seeing both my parents' health suffer for many years with diabetes was not enough, this was the warning sign I needed to put things in proper perspective for me. Diabetes is that slow, torturous disease that can do major damage if it is not properly controlled. By

being proactive now, I plan on fighting my stubborn genes and having a better quality of life.

Gestational diabetes, one of the most common health problems in pregnancy, is a specific form of diabetes that only occurs during pregnancy and requires special care and monitoring. Between 2 and 10 percent of expectant mothers develop it. The healthy body is designed to turn digested food into a sugar called glucose. With the help of insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas, cells use the glucose as fuel. Hormonal changes that occur in the body during pregnancy can make the cells less responsive to insulin. This is not a problem for most pregnant women because, when the body needs more insulin, the pancreas secretes more of it. However, in a case like mine, when the pancreas is not able to keep up with the increased insulin demand, blood glucose levels rise too high, resulting in gestational diabetes.

Since gestational diabetes usually has no symptoms, almost all pregnant women have a glucose screening between 24 and 28 weeks of pregnancy. The test is safe and simple.

Samples of blood are taken after consumption of a sugary solution. If the results show a high blood sugar level, a diagnostic test will be given to check glucose tolerance. This test measures the amount of time it takes for sugar to leave the blood. A blood sugar level that is too high can cause problems for mom and baby and, therefore, needs to be properly controlled and monitored.

First time mom Ida Moretti of Oak Lawn, Illinois, was not expecting to fail her glucose screening. The full-time pharmacist was regularly exercising throughout her pregnancy and was not overweight prior to expecting. However, diabetes does run in her family, so she was definitely at risk of developing gestational diabetes. "I was very surprised and disappointed when I found out that my blood sugars were so high in my pregnancy," shares Moretti, the youngest of seven siblings. "I wanted to get my glucose levels regulated right away for the sake of my baby, so I got on medication and changed my diet accordingly."

Sometimes dietary changes and exercise are enough to keep blood sugar levels under control; other times, as in Moretti's case, medication may be needed as well. About 15 percent of women with gestational diabetes need medication. Most patients start with oral medication instead of injections.

According to nutritionthatfits.com dietitian and diabetes educator Hannah El-Amin, feeling disappointed or blaming oneself are common reactions amongst women who are diagnosed with gestational diabetes. About a third of the patients she sees in her Chicago practice come in with gestational diabetes. "These women are very concerned about the well-being of their babies, some even scared and confused about how they will manage their health and eating with the diabetes," says mom of two El-Amin. "They feel like they have done something wrong, and I reassure them it is not their fault. The reality is some people have a genetic predisposition to it, but the thing is to put a positive spin on things. A majority of the time, gestational diabetes goes away right after delivery, and it can be easily managed if patient is well-informed and willing to make the necessary lifestyle changes," she concludes.

As expected, Moretti's diabetes disappeared post delivery. She gave birth to a healthy baby girl named Milayna who is 16 months old now and thriving.

"Most women who develop diabetes during pregnancy go on to have healthy babies," states Dr. Rima Makhawala, who specializes in obstetrics and gynecology in Livingston County, Michigan. "Yes, the effects of gestational diabetes can be issues like having potentially larger babies, tougher deliveries, or a higher chance of Cesarean delivery, but the sooner we know the patient has high glucose levels, the sooner we can start helping her," she says.

Like most prenatal care facilities, Dr. Makhawala's practice requires all its expecting patients to be screened for gestational diabetes. "In the past, only those pregnant women who were considered being at high risk for diabetes used to be screened," tells Dr. Makhawala. "Women of Hispanic, African American, Native American, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islander ethnicity, or overweight patients, or those with diabetes in their family and/or over the age of 25 were tested more regularly for high blood sugars. However," she continues, "now we have to test all our patients as part of their prenatal care. Even the patient with no apparent risk factors may end up being diagnosed with gestational diabetes."

Once diagnosed, there is a usual protocol taken to help patients manage their glucose levels. Some obstetricians may refer these individuals to specialists in maternal fetal medicine. Patients may also consult with registered dietitians to educate them on diabetes and learn how to adjust their diets to regulate their sugars. They will also receive training from their health-care provider on how to keep diligent track of their glucose levels using a home glucose monitor. Most insurance plans cover treatment for gestational diabetes so women have adequate access to information and resources.

"At a first-time consultation with me, I give the patient a very detailed questionnaire about her diet and lifestyle including what foods she eats and how much sleep she gets regularly," says El-Amin. "I also inquire about the level of stress she deals with on a daily basis, because it all impacts diabetes. We talk about carbohydrate counting and derive a customized meal plan based



on her height and weight and what her daily routine is to schedule proper meal timings. As for exercise, I may suggest walking after meals but it depends on the patient's pregnancy health and what her doctor prefers."

The principles of the diabetic diet are good for everyone in general to follow. It is an opportunity to create healthier eating habits for oneself and one's entire family. El-Amin highly emphasizes the importance of pregnancy nutrition right from the start. "It is so often overlooked until there is a problem," she says.

So what about those women who are already diabetic before pregnancy? According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, in the past, women with diabetes were advised not to become pregnant. The health risks to both mother and baby were too high. Today, there is a better understanding of diabetes and improved prenatal care making it easier for women with diabetes to have successful pregnancies and healthy babies.

Dr. Saadia Mian, an endocrinologist from Saline, Michigan, shares that many of her patients suffer from diabetes. "For women with diabetes who want to get pregnant, first and foremost, they need to have their diabetes under proper control," says Dr. Mian. "Pregnancy can wreak havoc on blood sugars, and poor control of diabetes may be harmful to the baby and the mother." Dr. Mian notes that those women who develop Type 2 diabetes along with a history of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) find it difficult to get pregnant and to maintain pregnancy. "PCOS Interferes with the growth and release of eggs from the ovaries when a woman's body overproduces hormones called androgens causing anovulatory cycles, which leads to difficulty in conceiving," she says. "Even after conception, the risk of miscarriage is high."


Once her patients do happen to conceive, Dr. Mian refers them to an obstetrician/gynecologist who specializes in high-risk pregnancies to follow them through to delivery.

Sakina Syeda of Chicago, Illinois, was monitored very closely by both an endocrinologist and an obstetrician during her pregnancy. She was diagnosed with PCOS at the age of 17. In March of 2011, she was told she also has Type 2 diabetes. "I was taking medicine and insulin injections to regulate my sugars during pregnancy," shares Syeda, a

teacher for the Zainab Center. "I was on a very restricted diet and checking my glucose levels up to 6 times a day. My fingers developed little, tiny black scabs from being pricked so much," she recalls.

Despite the many prenatal appointments and ultrasounds, and even some emergency hospital runs, Syeda says it was all worth it in the end when she held her healthy baby Safiyyah Kotelensky in her arms. "I was given ample care and support throughout my pregnancy, and by the will of God, was blessed with a healthy, beautiful baby," gushes the first-time mom. "It was not an easy journey, but your baby is a great motivator to take your health seriously. I did not want anything happening to my baby so I was extra careful and learned so much along the way about eating better and healthier."

Syeda states that a baby is a trust from God and so are our bodies, so our health cannot be taken lightly. Having diabetes should not hinder anyone from trying to reach motherhood. It is doable with sincere commitment and diligence and faith. She has continued many of the lifestyle changes she made during her pregnancy into her postnatal care as well. "Diabetes has helped me portion my food intake. I plan out my meals weekly and have reduced my intake quite a bit," she says. "Even now I will eat smaller meals throughout the day and carry a water bottle and healthy snacks wherever I go. I also want to set a proper example for my daughter and have reduced refined sugars from my diet drastically."

Nobody imagines being put on a diet during pregnancy. It is definitely not something I preferred doing. However, gestational diabetes has been a blessing in disguise. I am eating lighter and healthier, have learned how to increase my quality of life, and am no longer giving into my cravings. I plan on sustaining these healthy habits post delivery as well. I want to minimize my risk of developing diabetes in the future to the best of my ability. Chances reduce dramatically by keeping one's weight down, making healthy food choices, controlling portions, and exercising regularly. All of this can help ward off the disease. 

TAYYABA SYED has written for numerous publications and been featured on NPR and Radio Islam. She teaches and volunteers with the youth in various communities. Tayyaba lives in Illinois with her husband and two kids.

Health and Halal?

There's an App for That

By Nadirah D. Muhammad



Advancements in technology have significantly impacted the way we eat. Today, we have easier access to food and a multitude of options, unlike our ancestors. Though the agricultural revolution is seen as a top advancement of our time, because of it our thought process regarding food has changed. No longer do we eat to live; we are now living to eat. And often times what we love to eat is unhealthy. This has created a huge problem. According to the World Health Organization, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity are key risk factors for the major non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes. Additionally, poor eating habits and a sedentary lifestyle has contributed to the expansion of many Americans' waistlines. The latest data from the National Center for Health Statistics shows that more than one third of adults in the United States are considered obese. Conversely, maintaining a healthy diet and exercising regularly can help prevent these same diseases and help us lose or maintain a healthy weight. With the many unwholesome options that conveniently surround us, eating healthily and exercising is not always the easiest choice. But there is hope for those of us who struggle with this.

A study published in the August 2008 edition of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, which included 1,685 overweight or obese American adults aged 25 and older, found that recording your food intake in a food journal makes you more likely to drop the excess pounds. Megrette Fletcher, MEd, RD, executive director of The Center for Mindful Eating, says keeping a journal instantly increases your awareness of what, how much, and why you are eating. This helps you cut down on mindless munching. With the technological advances of mobile devices, such as smart phones and tablets, today there is literally an app for everything. Physical food journals are now a thing of the past, having been succeeded by nutrition apps, which makes recording food intake much simpler by putting the control right in the palm of your hands.

There are many options when it comes to nutrition apps (many of which are free), as a search with the key words "nutrition app" on Apple's App Store yields over 2,000 results. That same search on Android's Play Store yields over 400 results. These apps can be split into two main categories: weight management and dietary restrictions (e.g. halal, gluten free, and diabetic friendly), with the former being the most popular.

The nutrition apps in the first category essentially perform all the same functions and, simply put, are like pocket nutritionists. Because everyone's dietary needs vary depending on age, weight, height, and gender, these apps allow users to personalize settings, in addition to exercise and weight management goals.

After inputting personal information, the apps let its users know their healthy weight range and recommended daily caloric intake in order to lose, gain, or maintain weight. Amani Jabbar, a certified group exercise/Insanity instructor, says, "I think nutrition and weight management apps are great tools to use for weight loss and also to keep track

of the nutritional balance of one's diet. I personally have used apps to lose and maintain weight loss, and I now refer them to my clients."

Sarene Alsharif, MPH, nutritionist and public health educator insists, "My favorite eating/exercise app, hands down, is MyFitnessPal." She has personally been using the app for over three years and says, "The database is the widest I have seen and I have tried almost every app there is." MyFitnessPal's pie chart illustrating macronutrients, together with the large selection of workouts and ability to sync between devices, are some additional features that make it her app of choice.

In addition to calorie counting, most of these apps recommend and track daily nutrient values such as fat, sodium, potassium, fiber, etc. Jabbar informs, "Those watching their sodium intake can log their foods and get a visual of how much sodium they're consuming. This can also be done for other macro and micronutrients as well. I have used the apps to monitor my iron and calcium intake." Jabbar's top three weight management nutrition apps are SparkPeople, MyFitnessPal, and Lose It!. She says that all three apps can also be used to monitor special diets.

Included in many of these apps, is the ability to scan the barcode of a food item, making the process of recording food intake that much easier, as the barcode contains all the nutrient data for the food. Additionally, the barcode scanner can also be used while shopping. Users can scan potential food options and have nutrient data displayed on their mobile screens, which gives a clearer picture of what the product contains and can thus aid in filling shopping carts with more wholesome foods. Alsharif recommends Fooducate because it gives food items a healthfulness grade along with an explanation why. The app also takes a step further by recommending healthier options. Alsharif states, "This app is useful for individuals looking to clean up their diet and make healthier choices."

Nutrition apps in the category of dietary restrictions can be incredibly valuable, especially for halal consumers. In

Jabbar suggests Halal Scanner and said that this app is "exciting because it's a one-of-a-kind app that can scan a food product's ingredient label and instantly let you know the halal status of any additives contained within the product."

addition to eating healthily, Muslims must consume food that is halal. Though halal may seem easy, it can get pretty tricky these days with unknown additives often hiding in foods. If you want to quickly ensure that the food you are purchasing or eating is halal, a halal app might be just what you

need. These apps allow you to scan the barcode of a food item, tell you whether specific ingredients are halal or not, and/or simply supply you with an extensive list of halal and non-halal food items.

On Apple's App Store, a search with the key word "halal" yields over 100 results. That same search on Android's Play Store yields only ten. After browsing and downloading some of these apps, many turned out to be unrelated to food. Others were based in foreign countries or simply did not work. There were, however, a select few that did pertain to food and function properly.

Jabbar suggests Halal Scanner and said that this app is "exciting because it's a one-of-a-kind app that can scan a food product's ingredient label and instantly let you know the halal status of any additives contained within the product."

Alsharif, on the other hand, personally uses and recommends Zabihah. She says it's great for getting reviews on halal markets and restaurants, allowing halal consumers to "dine with more confidence."

With so many nutrition app options to choose from, there's bound to be one that suits your particular needs. Why not take advantage of technology to improve your health and make more informed decisions when it comes to halal consumption? No matter what app(s) you decide to use, the fact that you have decided to means you are taking a step in the right direction to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. (M)

NADIRAH D. MUHAMMAD recently received her B.A. from Mount Saint Mary College, where she concentrated in Journalism. She is currently a freelance blogger, writer, and photographer based in New York.

Qur'anic & Prophetic Foods





Olives & Olive Oil

Fad or Fab?

By Humaira Khan

JUST A FAD?

If you have ever watched Rachael Ray, the popular TV chef on Food Network, you are, in all likelihood, already familiar with EVOO (extra virgin olive oil), a term she has successfully turned into a fad. But it is not just she and other chefs who are raving about olive oil; for decades, scientists, researchers, and nutritionists have been, too. In fact, the history of olive oil is so ancient that the English word “oil” has roots in the Latin word “oleum” (oil/olive oil) and the Greek “elaoin” (olive tree).

Which begs the question: are olives and olive oil more than just a fad?

PRAISED IN THE QURAN AND HADITH

According to Islamic scholars, one of the reasons God swears by one of His creations in the Quran is because that creation has a special significance.

It is thus interesting to note that God begins *Surah* (Chapter) *Tin* (The Fig) by taking an oath in the name of the fig, the olive, and by Mount Sinai, where the olive tree grows (95:1-3).

The olive is also mentioned in the *ayah* (verse) of Noor (24:35), where God calls the olive tree “blessed,” and also by name in several other places in the Quran as one of His Signs (16:11 and 6:99).

In *Surah Muminoon* (The Believers), God says, “And [We brought forth] a tree issuing from Mount Sinai which produces oil and food for those who eat” (Quran 23:20).

Ibn Umar narrates that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him, [PBUH]) said, “Eat olive oil and anoint yourself with it, for it comes from a blessed tree” (Tirmidhi 4221).

In As-Suyuti’s *Medicine of the Prophet*, we know that the Prophet (PBUH) also used to say that olive oil is the medicine of the poor.

So the Quran and Hadith point to at least three different uses of olives/olive oil: as food, as lotion, and as medicine.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when nutrition research pioneer, Ancel Keys, carried out the Seven Countries Study, he noticed that people in Crete, Greece, and southern Italy lived longer than others in the study. These people also had lower rates of heart disease and even some cancers, like those of the breast, colon, and skin. Keys firmly believed that the diet of these Mediterranean people explained, in large part, the low disease rates.

Since then, interest in the Mediterranean diet and olive oil in particular, has deepened, especially since more and more studies yield data supporting the oil’s role in maintaining health and preventing disease.

The latest, and perhaps the strongest, evidence has come from the recent PREDIMED trial in Spain. This nearly five-year study determined that there had been significantly fewer heart attacks, strokes, and deaths from cardiovascular disease in the groups that were adhering to a Mediterranean diet rich in either olive oil or nuts than in the low-fat diet group. Moreover, the olive oil group had the best outcomes.

The Mediterranean diet is rich not only in olive oil but also in fiber, fish, fruits, nuts, and vegetables. But what is interesting is that, compared to diets of other countries, the Mediterranean diet actually has a relatively high fat content. Not only that, but about 20 percent of the total calories in this diet come from olive oil alone, making it the diet's major fat source.

BUT ISN'T FAT BAD FOR YOU?

Not necessarily.

The American Heart Association (AHA) and National Cholesterol Education Program recommend 25 to 35 percent of your daily calories come from fat. According to the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, achieving intake of total fat within the recommended range (20 to 35 percent) is an important goal, but the quality of fat in the diet is equally important. Altering fat consumption, instead of reducing total fat, might be more advantageous to health and chronic-disease risk reduction.

GOOD FAT VS BAD FAT

Oils are made up of three kinds of fatty acids: monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA), polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA), and saturated fatty acids (SFA). The difference lies in the percentages of each fatty acid found in an oil.

The problem with SFAs is that they increase the bad cholesterol, LDL, in the blood. MUFAs, on the other hand, can have the opposite effect, increasing good cholesterol levels and lowering bad.

One tablespoon of olive oil, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Nutrient Database, is composed of over 72 percent MUFA, over 10 percent PUFA (both good fats), and about 13 percent SFA (the bad fats). Conversely, palm kernel oil is 81 percent SFA!

VARIETIES

"*Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)* is the oil obtained from olives that have been cold-pressed once," explains Suha Najjar, a registered and licensed dietitian/nutritionist. "Since this is

a physical process, it is the best method of extraction and allows the nutrients in olive oil to be preserved. Heating would denature (cause degradation of) the nutrients."

"*Virgin olive oil* is obtained from olives that have been cold-pressed twice," Najjar continued. "This oil is lighter in color than EVOO and has a lower level of polyphenols, which are the healthful components of the oil."

The remaining paste (pomace) still contains a small quantity, about 5 to 10 percent, of oil that cannot be extracted by further pressing, but only with chemical solvents. Najjar says this is what is called "*light*" olive oil and is the cheapest olive oil available in the market. "To obtain this oil, both heat and chemical extraction is used, which leads to a significant reduction in the nutrient-content of the oil," says the 2013-14 chair of the Muslims in Dietetics and Nutrition (MIDAN).

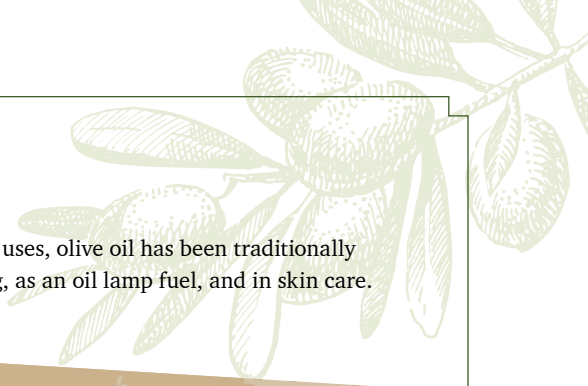
In general, the physical methods used to produce olive oil preserve many of its health-promoting constituents. This is not seen with other vegetable and seed oils, which tend to be more refined.

THE IMPORTANT CONSTITUENTS

Olive oil is high in oleic acid (an MUFA), which is the component that contributes not just to the antioxidant properties of the oil but also its stability and shelf-life. Depending on a number of factors, including the type of olives used, the soil used to grow them, the extraction process, and even the time of harvest, the level of oleic acid in the oil varies between 55 and 83 percent.

The oil is also rich in antioxidants (phenols, tocopherols) and Vitamin E, all of which protect the cells of our body from free radical damage. Extra virgin olive oil has the highest concentration of phenolic compounds and, therefore, has the highest anti-oxidant activity. The phenolic component also prevents cellular DNA damage.

Olive oil also has squalene (an organic compound that is a metabolic precursor of steroids) in many times the concentrations seen in other foods and oils. Also, its levels are not significantly different in extra virgin versus virgin olive oil. Although this component of olive oil gets distributed throughout the body, the majority is transported to the skin. Exposure to high levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation causes the formation of carcinogenic singlet oxygen species within the skin, and the high concentration of squalene is thought to play a role in scavenging them.



Another bonus is that olive oil does not have trans fats (TFA). TFAs are known to increase heart disease and diabetes risk. They are usually produced as part of industrial hydrogenation processes, so the more refined the oil is, the more likely it is to have TFAs.

COOKING WITH OLIVE OIL

Television chefs are often seen cooking with olive oil. Is there any advantage in doing so?

“Olive oil should not be used for cooking or frying,” says Najjar, “especially at high temperatures, which causes nutrients in the oil to be lost.”

Cooking with olive oil beyond its smoke point (the point at which a gaseous vapor becomes visible) causes its chemical structure to change. This process can produce the unhealthy trans fats.

Also, the purer the olive oil, the lower its smoke point. This makes extra virgin olive oil the least beneficial for cooking.

Olive oil is thus best used in its raw form, in salads and hummus, for example.

GREEN VS BLACK

Olives are usually classified as green or black. Color aside, what’s the difference?

“Typically, the unripe olives are green and the ripe ones are black,” says Najjar.

Canned olives, which have usually been cured or pickled, contain a great deal of sodium. The curing process also removes much of the polyphenols in the fruit. However, Najjar clarifies, “[After curing,] the green ones are [still relatively] rich in polyphenols, the component that has the maximum health benefits. But it is the black olives that are best for harvesting olive oil.”

DISEASE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Recent research has focused on the contribution the various components of olive oil individually make to its reported health benefits. These have been studied in great detail and have been found to have a beneficial effect in either the prevention or treatment of a variety of diseases including hypertension; coronary artery disease; rheumatoid arthritis; cancers of the breast, colon, and skin; and even intestinal and respiratory infections.

OTHER USES

Apart from its culinary uses, olive oil has been traditionally utilized in soap-making, as an oil lamp fuel, and in skin care.

Take Home Message for the Consumer

1. Follow the *sunnah* (way of the Prophet [PBUH]): this means that, yes, olive oil is highly beneficial, but also keep in mind moderation food consumption is another important *sunnah*.
2. If you are using unhealthy saturated fats in your diet, it is better to replace them with olive oil, instead of simply adding olive oil to your existing diet. If, however, your diet contains PUFAs (e.g. canola oil), the benefit of adding or replacing with olive oil is not that clear cut.
3. It is better to use olive oil in its raw form, for instance in salads and hummus. Cooking, especially at high heat, reduces its heart-healthy and anti-oxidant properties and may also lead to production of the unhealthy trans fats.
4. Olive oil-containing soaps and skin care products, or even the oil itself, can be used on the skin as a cleanser and moisturizer, although there is conflicting evidence of its benefits in skin conditions such as atopic dermatitis.
5. Research has focused on the effects of olive oil rather than whole olives because it is easier to analyze, extract, and administer individual compounds or fractions from the oil. However, it seems safe to assume the benefits of olive oil also apply to consumption of whole olives because the therapeutic components of the oil are also found in the whole olive.
6. Olive oil should be stored in a cool, dark place for up to 6 months. It can be refrigerated, in which case it will last up to a year. After this time, its health benefits and taste both dramatically decrease. At the grocery store, look for dark glass bottles (typically green) that protect the olive oil from light.
7. Know that the United States does not regulate the production, quality, and authenticity of olive oil in the same strict way as Europe does. However, the USDA has recently established new standards for labeling that closely parallel those in Europe. (M)

A Closer Look at Labels



Do You Always Know What You're Eating?

In this section, we'll explore some of the *mashbooh* (doubtful) ingredients you may never have placed any doubt in. Food product labels are growing and, let's face it, you may not be able to pronounce many of the ingredients, let alone know what they all are. Some may look familiar, while others may look like they belong in a science textbook. Here we'll detail what the ingredients are, what they are made of, where they come from, and why they may not be permissible.

Halal Consumer



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We hope you'll use this section as a guide to verifying the acceptability of the products you buy. The ingredients we'll feature may be derived from non-halal sources, thus that product may not be halal. If you see any of these ingredients on the label of your favorite item, contact the manufacturer to find the source of the ingredients. Of course, there is no substitute for authentic, halal-certified products. Look for the Crescent-M logo, , on the package to be sure.

Come on and take a closer look at labels...coming Summer 2014.

PRODUCT	EXAMPLES OF MASHBOOH (DOUBTFUL) INGREDIENTS
 Bread	Lecithin, Mono/Di-glycerides, Folic Acid, Riboflavin
 Bagels	Cysteine Hydrochloride, Enzymes, Folic Acid, Niacin
 Candy	Glycerin, Gelatin, Mono/Di-glycerides, Whey, Natural & Artificial Flavors, Stearic Acid, Magnesium Stearate
 Cereal	Natural & Artificial Flavors, Vitamins A, B2, C, D & E
 Chips	Enzymes
 Cookies	Folic Acid, Thiamine
 Granola Bars	Natural & Artificial Flavors, Riboflavin, Folic Acid
 Coffee Creamer	Natural & Artificial Flavors, Mono/Di-glycerides
 Cake	Natural & Artificial Flavors, Mono/Di-glycerides
 Donuts/Pastries	Natural & Artificial Flavors, Mono/Di-glycerides
 Ice Cream	Whey, Natural & Artificial Flavors, Mono/Di-glycerides
 Jello/Pudding	Gelatin, Natural & Artificial Flavors

PRODUCT	EXAMPLES OF MASHBOOH (DOUBTFUL) INGREDIENTS
 Cheese	Enzymes
 Shortening	Animal Fat, Mono/Di-glycerides
 Peanut Butter	Mono/Di-glycerides
 Soda	Natural Flavors
 Ketchup	Natural Flavors
 Yogurt	Natural & Artificial Flavors, Gelatin, Whey
 Gum	Glycerin, Stearic Acid
 Mouth Wash	Alcohol, Natural & Artificial Flavors, Glycerin
 Nutritional Supplements	Gelatin, Magnesium Stearate
 Soap	Sodium Tallowate, Glycerin
 Toothpaste	Sodium Lauryl Sulfate

Spotlight on an IFANCA Halal-Certified Company



Spotlight on Cabot Creamery Cooperative

“Cheese, please?” The answer is “Yes!” with halal-certified Cabot Creamery cheeses!

Vermont-based Cabot Creamery Cooperative’s cheeses have been halal-certified for more than a decade. In 2003, Cabot recognized the need for and benefit of carrying halal certification on their products. According to Bob Schiers, Public Relations Manager at Cabot Creamery, “Brands that make a commitment to halal certification have an inherent advantage over those that don’t because halal certification opens up the door to a vast and growing consumer base in the United States.” Cabot turned to IFANCA for their halal certification needs because, as Schiers explains, “Cabot believes that IFANCA is the leading authority on halal certification.”

By the end of 2003, many Cabot products bore IFANCA’s Crescent-M logo signifying halal compliance. The certification process required a few minor modifications to their product handling, but no major changes were necessary. The results, however, have been significant.

“Since first receiving our halal certification, Cabot has seen a double-digit increase in the sales of our core, branded cheeses,” says Roberta MacDonald, Senior Vice President of Marketing at Cabot Creamery. “Of course, we can’t attribute all of that increase to our IFANCA certification, but we do know that consumers are noticing that all our cheddar products made and packaged in Vermont are halal-certified.” MacDonald continues, “In fact, we’ve received numerous thank-you notes and calls from consumers who are thrilled to know that the ‘World’s Best Cheddar’ is halal-certified.”

The future of halal certification at Cabot looks bright. Among the variety of cheddar cheeses, Cabot’s pepper jack, Muenster, and havarti are also halal-certified. Schiers asserts, “We’re constantly monitoring consumer demand for halal-certified products and committed to continuing our halal certification program as we roll out new products in the future.”

Of Cabot, Schiers affirms, “It’s all about being attuned and sensitive to the needs of our consumers.” So remember that, as a halal consumer, your opinion matters.



All of Cabot's halal-certified products carry the Crescent-M logo on the packaging and are available in most major supermarkets, as well as Walmart and Costco stores, in the United States.

Cabot Creamery Cooperative is owned by 1,200 dairy farm families located throughout New England and upstate New York. To learn more and for a coupon, visit www.cabotcheese.coop.

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.....
**Vegetable, Egg &
Cheddar Strata**
.....

COURTESY: WWW.CABOTCHEESE.COOP

SERVINGS: 8

INGREDIENTS

- cooking spray
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup red onion, diced
- 1 cup mushrooms, sliced
- 1 cup red bell pepper, diced
- 1 large bunch kale, washed, de-stemmed, and torn into pieces (about 3 cups)
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- ½ teaspoon salt, plus ½ teaspoon ground black pepper, divided
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 8 cups 1-inch cubes of bakery-style whole grain bread (about 1 large loaf)
- 6 ounces Cabot Seriously Sharp Cheddar, grated (about 1 ½ cups), divided
- 3 cups skim milk
- 6 large eggs

DIRECTIONS

1. Coat 9 x 13-inch baking dish with cooking spray and set aside.
2. Heat oil in large skillet over medium heat; add onions, mushrooms, and red peppers and cook, stirring often, until soft, about 5 minutes. Add kale and cook until wilted, about 5 minutes longer. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in thyme, ¼ teaspoon each of salt and pepper, and nutmeg; remove from heat and set aside.
3. Place half of bread cubes in even layer in baking dish, then top with half of vegetable mixture and half of cheese. Add remaining bread cubes, then remaining vegetables and cheese.
4. In large bowl, whisk together milk, eggs, and remaining ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Pour egg mixture evenly over bread, vegetables, and cheese in baking dish. Cover with foil and press down slightly to help egg mixture soak into bread. Refrigerate for several hours or overnight.
5. When ready to bake, preheat oven to 350°F. Bake uncovered for 45 to 60 minutes or until golden brown on top and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. 🍴



Homemade Yogurt

By Suzann Audi

SERVINGS: 8

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups Organic Valley whole milk
- ¼ cup halal plain yogurt, room temperature

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat milk over high heat in a heavy-bottomed pot. Watch the milk. They say a watched pot does not boil, but a pot of milk will boil over as soon as you look away! You want your milk to rise and lightly simmer, then let it cool until you can bear to hold the tip of your little finger in the milk for 10 seconds. The temperature will be about 110°F. You can keep a thermometer clipped to the pot so you are not constantly dipping your finger in the milk.
2. Once the milk is the correct temperature, ladle out about ½ cup into a small bowl. Add the yogurt to the milk and whisk until smooth.
3. Then pour the yogurt mixture into the hot milk, stir slowly 2 to 3 times, then cover. Set the pot in a place where it will not be disturbed, and wrap well with a couple of thick towels. You want the fermenting milk to stay as warm as possible.
4. Leave the pot undisturbed for at least 7 hours, and as long as an entire day, then refrigerate and enjoy! 🍴



Kibbeh Batata ***(Lebanese Mashed Potatoes with Bulgur)***

By Suzann Audi

SERVINGS: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large baking potato
- ½ cup red bulgur, size #1 fine
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon dried chives
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon 7-spice mix (available at Middle Eastern markets; cinnamon or allspice can be substituted)

DIRECTIONS

1. Boil the potato until very soft throughout; then cool, peel, and mash well. Meanwhile, soak the bulgur in ¾ cup hot water. After the bulgur soaks up most of the water, bite to ensure it is soft. If firm to the bite, allow to sit longer with additional hot water, if needed.
2. After the bulgur is fully soaked, you should now have slightly more bulgur than mashed potato. Combine mashed potatoes with bulgur and the spices. Mix well and add additional hot water if desired. The consistency should be similar to that of American-style mashed potatoes.
3. Spread the *kibbeh batata* on a plate, drizzle with a couple tablespoons of olive oil, and serve at room temperature, or slightly warm, with pita bread and salad. *Kibbeh batata* is eaten by scooping up bite-sized amounts with pita bread. It is a perfect picnic food or working lunch. My version is vegan, though you can top it with fried ground beef or lamb for a heartier meal. Enjoy! 🍴



Umami Bomb Burger

By Saira Mohiuddin

SERVINGS: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds halal ground beef
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 large Vidalia onion, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 10 ounces shitake mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
- 6 drops Sriracha
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 4 brioche buns
- 4 slices ripened tomato
- 4 slices aged cheddar cheese
- vegetable oil
- sea salt
- cracked black pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix ground beef with salt, pepper, garlic powder, and olive oil. Form 4 patties. Set aside.
2. Heat a heavy-bottomed pan over a medium flame. Add butter, onions, and garlic to the pan. Cook for 4 minutes. Add mushrooms and cook for 4 minutes on high. Remove from heat and set aside.
3. Mix mayo and Sriracha; set aside.
4. Heat a heavy-bottomed skillet over a medium high flame. Add vegetable oil. Press a light thumbprint in the center of each patty. This prevents the burger from rounding out. Place beef patties in pan and cook 4 minutes on each side. Remove from heat and top with cheddar cheese.
5. Toast brioche buns.
6. Assemble. Spread spicy mayo over toasted brioche bun. Place burger patty on bun and top with sautéed shitake mushrooms and onions. Add slice of tomato. Top with bun. Serve immediately. 🍴



Vegetable Freekeh Pilaf


By YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RDN, LD

SERVINGS: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups green freekeh
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 medium red onion, chopped
- ½ cup green bell peppers, chopped
- ¼ cup red bell peppers, chopped
- ½ cup yellow bell peppers, chopped
- ½ cup chopped cauliflower
- ½ cup garbanzo beans
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 pinch turmeric
- 2 teaspoons fresh squeezed lemon juice
- ¼ cup cilantro and parsley, chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. Soak the freekeh in cold water for 15 to 20 minutes; then drain.
2. In a large saucepan with a tight lid, place vegetable broth and soaked freekeh. Add salt and 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil.
3. Cover and bring to boil on medium heat, stirring occasionally.
4. Lower heat and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes until all water is absorbed.
5. In a cast-iron skillet over medium flame, heat remaining tablespoon olive oil, then add onion and sauté for a couple minutes. Add garlic, spices, vegetables and season with salt, to taste.
6. Cook until vegetables are tender.
7. Add cooked freekeh to vegetables and combine well.
8. Stir in lemon juice and serve topped with cilantro and parsley. 

CHILDHOOD HUNGER: FROM DIRT PATHS TO SCHOOL HALLWAYS

By Taskeen Khan



Imagine going to bed every night with a deep gnawing feeling in your stomach. An emptiness so strong that it will not let you sleep, concentrate in school, focus at work, or think about anything else. An emptiness that you know will be back tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after.

In an October 2013 interview with Melissa Harris-Perry, Tulane political science reporter and MSNBC commentator, twelve-year-old Jahzaire Sutton described how hunger affected him at school. Sutton recalls, "I wasn't able to focus on my schoolwork . . . and it was very frustrating, because it's all I could think of, food, when I went to school, because I wasn't able to eat breakfast at home."

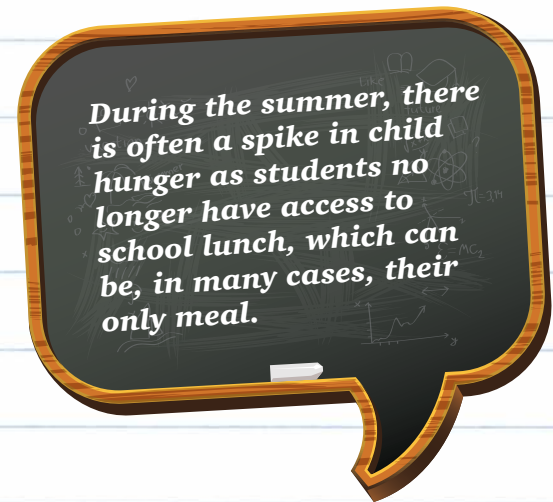
Sutton's mother, like many parents of hungry children, ate less to provide her children with more. Sutton relates, "She would sacrifice for me and my little brother. And sometimes I would . . . try to make something to eat for her, so she could still have something to eat. It kind of affected me, because also, food is on my mind, but my mom is on my mind, because she's not really eating as much as I am."

While at school, twelve-year-olds should be concentrating on their classes, not worrying about their families' next meal. During the summer, there is often a spike in child hunger as students no longer have access to school lunch, which can be, in many cases, their only meal.

This is childhood hunger, a reality for nearly 16 million children in America, according to the US Department of Agriculture. Though childhood hunger in our nation is often pushed to the side or simply not recognized, it is an increasing issue with many causes, debilitating effects, and, thankfully, solutions that we can contribute to.

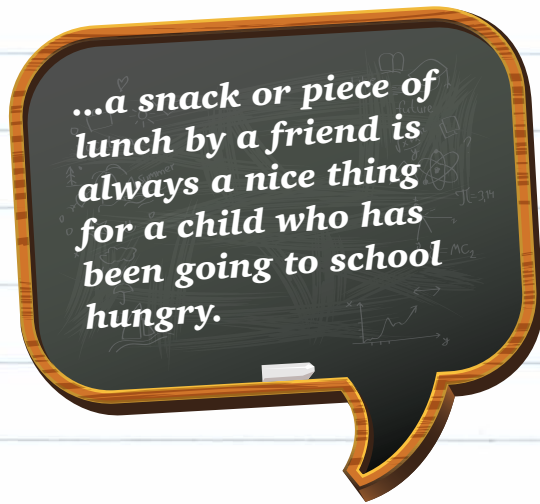
NOT IN MY BACKYARD

Childhood hunger is a problem most of us expect to find in developing countries. We see it as a dark figure, crouched in the paths between blackened dust-coated buildings, preying on innocent children who walk miles on a dirt road to get to school, a reality distant from the immense food production, successful transportation systems, and strong infrastructure of America. However, this is not true; sadly, childhood hunger has a strong grip on our nation of abundance.



The root cause of childhood hunger's death grip is economics. Often, families with food insecurities are forced to choose between paying the bills and buying food. Inevitably, food is the one to go. Many of these families are barely holding their heads above the poverty line, and an unexpected death or illness is what dunks them under. When faced with the additional costs sustained from hospital or funeral bills, they simply do not have the means to feed themselves sufficiently. Additionally, many children who live in poverty stricken areas do not have access to the foods they need to live healthy lives. The shelves of their local grocery stores are stocked with inexpensive processed, packaged, premade meals, while the produce section is a motley collection of bruised fruits and wilting vegetables. Their families are forced to turn to fast food because they cannot afford the basic elements of home cooked meals. Though these children may have access to food, they lack access to the fruits and vegetables that will provide nutrition and allow them to grow, a key factor in childhood hunger.

Unfortunately, this famine is not fading away; it is actually increasing. Feeding America, the nation's leading



domestic hunger-relief charity, reported providing food for 14 million children in 2010, a drastic increase from the 9 million children they were feeding only four years prior. This increase has been blamed on a volatile economy and job loss that is notably hurting families. Whatever the causes are, childhood hunger needs to be stopped, as its effects do not end with grumbling stomachs.

Food insecurities can affect children birth to eight years old far into their future, according to the World Food Bank. Hunger hurts a child's academics by making them unable to concentrate in class, more likely to act out, and slower to develop socialization skills.

BEYOND THE CHILDHOOD YEARS

Children's nourishment in their first years of life impacts their ability to learn, think analytically, communicate, and fight diseases. Nutrients are first given to ensure survival, then growth, and lastly learning. When the body does not have enough food in the early years, it has to choose how to use the limited nutrition it does have available. The consequences of this, according to Dr. Reynaldo Martorell, Robert W. Woodruff Professor of International Nutrition and chair of the Hubert Department of Global Health at the Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH) at Emory University, include delayed motor and physical development, lower IQ, decreased attention, and lower educational achievement. If ignored, these affects will not only hurt the victims of childhood hunger in their youth, but also as they grow older. Being unable to communicate as effectively as their peers makes it harder to succeed in school, and, later, in job interviews. Decreased attention affects one's ability to pursue long term goals while reduced IQs make standardized testing more of a challenge. These factors create a recipe for rejection when it comes to college

admittance, thereby threatening the chances of a bright and successful future.

But if those who have been affected by this endemic are helped, particularly early on, their situation can be reversed. According to Dr. Martorell, "Considerable evidence indicates that substantial improvements can be achieved, even in severely malnourished children, if appropriate steps are taken at a young age to satisfy nutritional and psychosocial needs."

A COMMON ENEMY

Childhood hunger is an enemy of every nation, every religion, every ethnicity, and every person. It does not discriminate. Luckily, this enemy has more than one kryptonite we can use to conquer it.

Throughout the United States, there are many groups that work incessantly to end this epidemic. Feed My Starving Children, Muslims Against Hunger, and Stop Hunger Now are just a few organizations that welcome volunteers. Whether packing boxes or distributing food, these volunteer opportunities afford you and your friends the chance to meet up and make the world a little bit better in the process. These groups always appreciate donations, whether of time or money, and many are tax deductible.

This is a battle even those of us still in school can help fight. Sutton says being offered a snack or piece of lunch by a friend is always a nice thing for a child who has been going to school hungry. If your kids have a friend who isn't getting the food he or she needs, pack an extra sandwich or bowl of pasta for them to share. For older kids, bake sales and run-athons are a fun, easy way to raise money for the cause. Schools are usually eager to help and sometimes will even provide a loan to jump start your efforts.

Childhood hunger is a fierce enemy – one who lurks not only in far away indigent countries, but also in the empty shelves of our neighbor's pantry and at our children's schools. But it is an enemy that can be vanquished. It is a foe that can be slain with one weapon whose power should not be underestimated. And that weapon is our humanity. ☞

TASKEEN KHAN is an award-winning author based in the Chicago area. She also writes for *The Glenbard* and *Islamic Horizons*.

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Make Room for a Fresh Spring

By Asma Jarad

The time of year has arrived for us to shed our winter coats and prepare for the warmer weather and longer days of spring. It is a time to plant the seeds of summer both inside and out. While many of us take advantage of this time by reviving our lawns and planting outdoor gardens, refreshing the inside of our homes should not be overlooked. But we're not talking about cleaning out closets. Take spring cleaning a step further...into the kitchen by replacing your packaged foods for the healthy, fresh selections of spring and summer.



The spring time is an opportune time to take a refreshed look in our kitchens by clearing out the processed food we have been gathering and storing in our pantries and cabinets over the past few months. By the time spring comes around, we may discover foods hidden in our kitchens that we intended to use but never got the chance. With the freshness of spring in mind, it is a good opportunity to replace these foods and reinvigorate our resolutions to make healthier food choices. After all, March is National Nutrition Month.

Every March, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics sponsors the National Nutrition Month. According to their website, “The campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical habits.” Indeed this is a way of life encouraged by the Quran and the beloved Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]). In the Quran, God informs us, “O children of Adam! Look to your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but be not wasteful. Lo! He loveth not those who waste” (7:31).

Packing our kitchens with food we don’t use is an example of waste. Another example is overeating. To avoid wasting, we can follow the eating habit of the Prophet (PBUH), who according to a Tirmidhi hadith said, “Nothing is worse than a person who fills his stomach. It should be enough for the son of Adam

to have a few bites to satisfy his hunger. If he wishes more, it should be: one-third for food, one-third for liquids, and one-third for breath.”

For that one-third of food, we can satisfy our hunger by eating fresh vegetables and fruits that will soon crowd the fields and local markets. Make room in your kitchen for your seasonal favorites by cleaning out your pantry, one shelf at a time. Rather than tossing away your storage of winter foods, make sure the expiration dates have not passed and then donate them to your local food pantry, or ask your local Mosque or shelter for a list of needy families who would appreciate the donation. Once each shelf is clear, sanitize and dry off. Do not forget to check your refrigerator and freezer, which may be filled with half used bags of frozen vegetables and expired condiments. Some fruits, like berries, are only available fresh for a short time of the year, so prepare your freezer for storing them for later use. Frozen berries are the perfect addition to a cool smoothie on a hot summer day.



Packing our kitchens with food we don’t use is an example of waste. Another example is overeating.



Remember, fresh fruits and vegetables are halal foods, and several of them are in fact mentioned in the Quran and Hadith for their nutritional benefits contributing to a healthy, Islamic lifestyle. From the Quran we know, “He sends down water from the sky from which We bring forth growth of every kind. And from that We bring forth the green shoots and from them We bring forth close-packed seeds, and from the spades of the date-palm, date clusters hanging down, and gardens of grapes and olives and pomegranates, both similar and dissimilar. Look as they bear fruit and ripen. There are signs in that for people who believe” (6:99).

May God make us among those who are true believers. ﴿

ASMA JARAD holds an M.A. in English Language and Literature and a B.A. in Liberal Arts. She was born and raised in Chicago. She is a freelance writer and editor.

HALAL-CERTIFIED PRODUCT LOCATOR

Brand	Product Type	Company Name	Available At
Abbott	Nutritional Products	Abbott Nutrition	Supermarkets and drugstores throughout the United States and Canada
	Infant/Baby Food Products		
Nutrilite	Nutritional Supplements	Access Business Group, LLC	Visit their website for distributors: www.nutrilite.com
Lawash	Bread	American Bakery Products, Inc.	Kroger and Meijer stores in Michigan
Saffron Road	Food Products	American Halal Co., Inc.	Target, Whole Foods, Kroger, Publix, HEB and various markets throughout the United States Visit their website to locate a store near you: www.saffronroadfood.com
	Snack Food		
	Appetizers		
Amara	Cosmetics	Baqi Inc.	Visit their website: www.amaracosmetics.com
Baskin Robbins	Dairy Products	Baskin Robbins	Baskin Robbins stores throughout the United States
Cabot	Cheese	Cabot Creamery	Supermarkets throughout the United States
Campbell	Food Products	Campbell Company of Canada	Supermarkets throughout Canada
Carole's Cheesecake	Bakery Item	Carole's Cheesecake Company Ltd.	Select markets, restaurants, and bakeries throughout Canada Visit their website for a complete list of locations: www.carolescheesecake.com
Organic Valley	Dairy Products	Cropp Cooperative/Organic Valley	Supermarkets throughout the United States

Brand	Product Type	Company Name	Available At
English Biscuits	Bakery Items	English Biscuit Manufacturers (Pvt.) Ltd.	Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States and Canada
Godiva	Candy / Chocolate	Godiva Chocolatier	Company stores, department stores, supermarkets, gift shops, and drugstores throughout the United States
Kontos	Bakery Items, Bread	Kontos Foods, Inc.	Ethnic (Arab, Indo-Pak) stores and fruit & vegetable markets throughout the United States
Love & Quiches	Brownies and Cakes	Love and Quiches Desserts	Visit their website for outlets: www.loveandquiches.com
Mead Johnson	Infant/Baby Food Products	Mead Johnson Nutritionals	Department stores, supermarkets, and drugstores throughout the United States
Melaleuca	Personal Care Products	Melaleuca, Inc.	Visit their website for distributors: www.melaleuca.com
	Nutritional Supplements		
National	Food Products	National Foods Limited	Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States and Canada
	Sauces & Dressings, Condiments		
	Dessert Mixes		
	Spices & Seasonings		
Nestle	Food Products	Nestle Pakistan Ltd.	Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States
	Beverages / Beverage Concentrates		
	Dairy Products		
	Drink Mixes, Dessert Mixes		

Halal-Certified Product Locator

Brand	Product Type	Company Name	Available At
Olympia	Gyros, Flat Bread	Olympia Food Industries, Inc.	Ethnic (Arab, Indo/Pak) stores and restaurants throughout the United States and Canada
Wonderful	Pistachios and Almonds	Setton Pistachio	Supermarkets and drugstores throughout the United States
Sunrider	Personal Care Products	Sunrider International	Visit their website for distributors: www.sunrider.com
	Cosmetics		
	Food Products		
	Nutritional Supplements		
Toms of Maine	Personal Care Products	Toms of Maine, Inc.	Department stores, supermarkets, and drugstores throughout the United States



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