

Simplifying Suhoor is as
Easy as A, B, C... P8

Fruit of Heaven P15

Crafty Fun While
Fasting! P28

Halal Consumer

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



Discover
THE ART OF CANNING
P6



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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.

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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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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

Summer is approaching and this is a time when schools are out, families plan vacations, and outdoor activities increase. It is a great time to get in shape and stay in shape. Healthy eating and ample outdoor activities are good ingredients to a healthy life. But there are some cautions we need to observe.

Vacations may be a time to take a break from reality, but it might be wiser to continue to watch what we eat and maintain that exercise regimen if we want to come back home in as good a condition as when we left. Some of us prefer to stay closer to home and enjoy “stay-cations.” Swimming, picnicking, and bike-riding are just a few activities the whole family can enjoy.

Gardening is another outdoor activity the entire family can share. It is good exercise and offers an opportunity to teach the young ones about where their food comes from. This year you might try planting something new, like an exotic vegetable. If you are blessed with a bumper harvest, share it with the neighbors or try canning.

While increased outdoor activity is great, we do need to protect ourselves from the sun, be cautious if we have allergies, and stretch those muscles before putting them to work. Sunscreen, antihistamines, and common sense will go a long way in avoiding uncomfortable situations that can waste part of our summer.

Summer is a great time of the year. Use it to improve your lifestyle and health and as a building block for the rest of the year.

As we welcome the blessed month of Ramadan, we look forward to the peace and tranquility that it brings and ask The Lord to enable us all to share in its blessings. From all of us at Halal Consumer and at IFANCA, we congratulate you on the blessed month of Ramadan and wish you an early Eid Mubarak and success in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Roger M. Othman managing editor

From the Publisher's Desk

Assalamu Alaikum

We are living in a world that is rapidly changing and is actually in a state of influx. For the past three decades the focus of halal certification, halal trade, and halal marketing has been on meat and poultry. With more awareness of goods crossing geographic boundaries, the requests to have food products certified halal became common. Consumers started to question anything containing gelatin; and nutritional supplements, capsules, and tablets received a lot of attention. Problems with cosmetics and personal care products were exposed with greater awareness through social media. Whereas consumers were not aware of any halal issues with vaccines, certain governments started questioning the halal status of these products as well because they were the customers of vaccine manufacturers. The focus is shifting to much greater awareness of halal, ingredients in various products, nutritional implications, and now healthcare and lifestyle. People are looking for holistic lifestyles. For Muslims, adhering to halal is a matter of faith, conviction, and religious preservation.

We are at a very important juncture in time, where the world has shrunk in the way that we can move products and people across the globe in less than 48 hours. There are opportunities for innovators, world-class manufacturers, and logistics gurus to capture and control the global supply chain. IFANCA, with 1,800 clients and over 4,000 production sites under its halal supervision, is going to be instrumental in developing global halal economies and servicing the markets. People may know us from our work in the food and meat halal-compliance area. However, we also have a very strong track record in servicing the nutritional and pharmaceutical industries. In fact, WE ARE BEST IN CLASS. Over the past two decades we have been sought to take halal compliance to the next level, addressing the health needs of the global Muslim population. Some examples of the extraordinary work we have done in the pharmaceutical industry include: UNICEF – micronutrient program, Pfizer – rotavirus vaccine, Merck – Gardasil vaccine, and Abbott Nutrition products. Working the back end of the supply chain, we are enabling the availability of halal foods and pharmaceuticals for the world by certifying some of the world's largest ingredient suppliers such as Cargill, DuPont, and DSM. The best way to sum up IFANCA's products and services would be our three Cs: compliance, consulting, and continuing education. With all bases in halal certification and consulting covered, we are developing programs to address lifestyle issues, including nutritional intervention.

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry president

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EXPLORING EXOTIC VEGETABLES

By Kelly Izdihar Crosby



ROMENSCO



KOHLRABI

Are you looking for the next hip and trendy superfood? Or are you looking for new foods to add to your health-conscious diet? You're about to be introduced to some interesting produce that are not only cool ways to spice up your dishes, but are also packed with the vitamins and minerals essential for healthy living.

You've heard of cabbage; you've heard of turnips. How about Kohlrabi? Known as a German cabbage turnip, kohlrabi is a perennial, cool-season vegetable. With its strange purple leaves and bulb-like appearance, it's known for its sweet, mild flavor and crisp and juicy texture. It is the latest popular superfood and is considered the "new kale." Full of vitamin C and potassium, this unique plant comes in two varieties, white and purple. Kohlrabi is also rich in dietary fiber with trace amounts of fat and zero cholesterol. Like cabbage and turnips, kohlrabi has phytochemicals known to protect against colon and prostate cancers. Eaten raw or cooked, kohlrabi is used for salads and soups, and the leaves can be fried to make delicious fritters.



DANDELIONS

Mizuna, known as Japanese mustard greens or California peppergrass, is mildly spicy and often used for Japanese stir fry dishes. Mizuna has been cultivated in Japan since ancient times, though its origins may be based in China. Like most mustard greens, mizuna is high in vitamins A and C and folic acid, plus cancer-fighting antioxidants. If you live in a colder climate, mizuna is an excellent leafy green to grow at home as it is very cold tolerant. Not sure what to do with it? YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad, a registered dietician at Veterans Health Administration, says, "Mizuna is a nice type of green leaf that can be used as an alternative to lettuce and spinach in salad."



PURPLE SWEET POTATO

Is your green lawn polka-dotted with yellow weeds? Some would never think of eating them but those "weeds," better known as dandelions, are not only edible, they are delicious! Most commonly eaten are the leafy greens of the plant, which have a hearty taste like chicory or endive, and are great sautéed, steamed, or eaten raw in salads. You can also eat the flower, which has a slight bittersweet taste, as well as the root, which can be used as a coffee substitute. The benefits of indulging in this versatile plant? Dandelion greens are good for digestion and for treating viruses, gout, eczema, and acne. Include them in your




MIZUNA

green smoothies as they are rich in calcium, iron, protein, and antioxidants.

Bored with broccoli? Craving more than cauliflower? Try adding Romanesco to your diet. Romanesco was first found in Italy and is unique for its strange appearance. It appeals to mathematicians because of its resemblance to a computer fractal. Really, Romanesco is quite a vegetable to behold. Think cauliflower, dyed light green, with spiky flowerets. And the taste? It has a slight nutty flavor and crunchy texture and is a great substitute for any cauliflower recipe. Its mild flavor is one that foodies claim you can enjoy once you get past its bizarre appearance. Perry VoScott, known as the Certifiable Foodie, says, "It's delicious, a cross between broccoli and cauliflower. It has all the best of both vegetables, and the texture is like nothing else you've ever consumed." Romanesco is also rich in Vitamins C and K, dietary fiber, and carotenoids — the fat soluble nutrients that give color to our fruits and vegetables.

Speaking of color...You've heard of sweet potatoes but have you ever seen a purple one? Purple sweet potatoes are known for their vibrant, bold hue. The purple sweet potato has only been commercially available since 2006. At your local farmers' market you can ask if they carry purple yams or Hawaiian sweet potatoes. It has a rich flavor but is known to be denser and drier than other sweet potatoes. The purple hue becomes more intense when cooked and, like their orange relative, they are packed with vitamins B6, C, D, iron, and magnesium. Muhammad raves, "They are awesome and can be used in several recipes." Add some pizzazz to your desserts by using it to make purple sweet potato ice cream, donuts, and sesame seed marble cake. Your family will marvel over the beautiful color, and be equally impressed by the delicious taste.

This summer, stop by your local farmers' market and see what exotic vegetables are available. Introduce yourself and your family to a unique culinary experience while supporting local growers and remaining health conscious. You don't need to be a chef to add these unique, nutritious items to your menu. 

KELLY IZDIHAR CROSBY is a writer and multidisciplinary artist living in Atlanta, Georgia. You can find out more about her and her work at www.kellycrosbydesign.com.



The Art of Canning

By Amani Jabbar, MA

Canning is the age old practice of preserving fresh food to be eaten later. It is a technique that helped previous generations survive long hard winters by preserving harvests that were reaped during the summer and autumn. In those times, preserving food through canning was a matter of survival.

In these days of easy access to food year-round, many turn to canning in order to maintain tradition. The unhurried process appeals to many canners as a respite from the chaos of modern life. Others seek to have more control over the way their food is prepared and also preserve fresh fruits and vegetables from home gardens.

When some hear the term “canned food,” they think of aluminum tins. The practice of home canning is actually done in glass jars. When food is prepared in jars at very high temperatures, between 180 and 250 degrees Fahrenheit, the heat is sufficient enough to kill off the bacteria, molds, and yeasts that cause food to become unsafe to eat or spoil. Canning kills these microorganisms and eliminates oxygen from the jars. When the jars cool, an air-tight seal is created. This process prevents air and germs from entering the jars and causing the food to spoil. The easiest method of canning simply requires heating the canning jars in a hot water bath for a specified time and allowing the jars

to cool, thus creating a vacuum seal that will lock air and bacteria out. This is the simple process of preserving food through canning. Perhaps it is the simplicity and sense of tradition that is attracting many modern home cooks to return to this technique.

Amy O'Brien is a special education teacher who resides in Mokena, Illinois, with her husband and three children. O'Brien has been canning for three years and began by taking a class at The University of Illinois Extension. O'Brien uses canning to preserve the fruits and vegetables that she grows in her 800-square-foot home garden. “I plant a variety of fruits and vegetables, including green beans, peppers, cucumbers, snap peas, carrots, broccoli, pumpkins, watermelon, and cantaloupes.”

Along with this abundance of produce, O'Brien's main crop is tomatoes, of which she grows 25 varieties. It is through her love of gardening that O'Brien began to investigate canning. “By canning, I could preserve fruits and vegetables at their peak freshness. I would not have to buy tasteless vegetables that were not in season,” she explains.

In these times of factory farming, large scale food production, and fast food consumption at an all-time high in the developed world, the Slow Food Movement calls us to take more

responsibility and play a greater role in the food that we eat, from farm to table. This desire for control and appreciation for real food has led many to go back to “old-fashioned” skills that kept our grandparents and great-grandparents nourished. Skills such as cheese making, bread baking, and canning have become more popular than ever amongst those who seek to have autonomy over what nourishes them.


Ameera Rahim, a wife and homeschooling mother of six in Lawrenceville, Georgia, feels that she was a part of the Slow Food Movement for a long time without even realizing it. “We are big on what we call ‘foundational cooking,’” Rahim, who blogs under the pseudonym Traditional Muslimah Homemaker (www.traditionalmuslimah.blogspot.com), states. “This is getting back to the foundations of making food for ourselves. This includes avoiding fast food and making more [food] at home,” she goes on to explain.

Rahim’s philosophy includes gardening, baking bread, and making yogurt, in addition to canning, which she has been doing for a year. She finds having more authority over what foods her family eats to be extremely rewarding. “That plays a part in it,” she insists, “having a control over healthy ingredients and seasonal availability. I also love creating a sense of tradition and teaching the children how to preserve food.”

Rahim also loves the fact that she can share the process and experience with her loved ones. “It’s an awesome feeling, doing it as a family — teaching the children how to can food, and picking out the fruits and vegetables ourselves. The children get to see the beginning and ending process. There is so much joy in sitting down as a family and opening a jar of homemade jam to go with fresh homemade bread.” She describes these times as, “Literally eating the fruits of our labor.”

Rahim has extended her love of canning outside of her family. She now sells her homemade strawberry jam and mango marmalade to grateful customers. She also recently took part in an Islamic Food Swap. “*Alhamdulillah* (all praises to God), we held the Islamic Food Swap to encourage families to make their own foods, try something different, and come together as a community,” Rahim explains. “Families swapped different items such as canned orange jam, homemade cornbread, and homemade muffins. We even did a drawing for natural and healthy pantry items.”

Similarly, O’Brien also enjoys using canning as a means to develop relationships and continue customs. “The process of canning is also fun for me,” she states. “I have a great time getting together for an evening with my girlfriends while we prep fruits and vegetables and can. It is a ton of work,” O’Brien admits, “but it also gives me a new appreciation for previous generations and the labor they endured to store and preserve food.”

Perhaps it is traditional settings such as this that have made Rahim, O’Brien, and many others fall in love with canning. In a fast-paced world, taking the time to grow, prepare, and preserve our own food gives many of us a sense of calm, accomplishment, and even community, allowing us to share our bounty and blessings with those around us. 

AMANI JABBAR is a writer, certified fitness instructor, and 2nd grade teacher. She holds an MA in English and enjoys coupling her love of writing with her passion for health and wellness through freelance writing and blogging.



Interested in taking up canning for yourself?

Rahim has some advice: “Canning is fun and easy. It’s enjoyable. No need to over think it. Your family will benefit from it, *alhamdulillah*.” O’Brien says, “I would tell a beginner to partner up with an experienced canner. I felt much more confident once I was able to can with someone who had done it before.”

The choice of recipes is also important. Rahim suggests perusing the Ball canning website, which can be found at www.freshpreserving.com. O’Brien also recommends using trusted sources. “It is very important when canning to find tried recipes that appropriately balance the acidity in the jars so that food is safe to eat.”

Happy canning!

SIMPLIFYING SUHOOR IS AS EASY AS A, B, C...

By Kiran Ansari

Say the word Ramadan and inadvertently you conjure up images of *iftar* (sunset meal at the time of breaking the fast) spreads, going to the *masjid* (mosque), giving charity, and reading the Quran. While the order of these images varies for every person, the emphasis is always on *iftar*. Poor ol' *suhoor* (pre-dawn meal before fasting begins) is left on the back burner and turns out to often be a last minute scramble rather than the more thought out meal it should have been. After all, *suhoor* is the meal that can determine the productivity of your fast.



It's not that we play favorites with *iftar*; it's just that, when it's a choice between more sleep and getting up at 3 a.m. to eat, sleep often wins. With hot, long, summer fasts, it's even more important to give *suhoor* its full rights in order to be able to have a meaningful Ramadan. Children that are used to balanced *suhors* will understand the value in getting up a little earlier to chow down on something nutritious when they are older and living on their own.

We spoke to nutritionists and moms to create a handy A-Z checklist for you so this Ramadan may be your most productive yet.

B

B: Bananas are great sources of potassium and zinc and something you can keep on your nightstand in case you oversleep and don't have time to prepare *suhoor*.



D

D: Dates are not an *iftar*-only power food. Incorporate these calorie boosters at *suhoor* too, like Sheeba Mohammadi Ali of Glendale Heights, Illinois, does for her daughter, Manaal, so that she can stay fuller longer. Manaal can choose between multi-grain cereal and waffles, but she has to have dates and a bowl of fresh fruit for *suhoor* every day.

G

G: Grab-n-go items are great for college students fasting in dorms or "married bachelors" whose wives and children are away from home for the summer. Fruit, yogurt, instant oatmeal, and cranberries and chopped dates on peanut butter sandwiches are just a few ideas for a quick but healthy *suhoor*. Sure beats a cold slice of pizza!

H

H: Honey in smoothies or on a whole-grain pita with peanut butter is an easy way to incorporate this *sun-nah* food in your diet. "And your Lord inspired to the bee, 'Take for yourself among the mountains, houses, and among the trees and [in] that which they construct. Then eat from all the fruits and follow the ways of your Lord laid down [for you].' There emerges from their bellies a drink, varying in colors, in which there is healing for people. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who give thought" (Quran 16:68-69).



A

A: Always eat *suhoor* because it is an important *sun-nah*, or tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]), with several benefits. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said, "The difference between our fasting and that of the people of the Book is eating shortly before dawn" (Sahih Muslim) and "Take *suhoor* as there is a blessing in it" (Sahih Bukhari).

C

C: Caffeine withdrawal is real. Ask Sher Masood of Dallas, Texas, who fasted for the first time last year after four years of expecting and nursing two toddlers. The first day she had a pounding headache. She suggests limiting your daily caffeine way before Ramadan begins. Having hot chocolate with fat-free milk at *suhoor* helped her get through the day.

E

E: Eggs provide a great protein fix and are time savers, too. Boil enough eggs for the whole family before you go to bed. Fried eggs and omelets, in comparison, may make you thirsty during the day.



F

F: Fiber is crucial to keep your plumbing in good working condition. Illinois nutritionist, Muna Siddiqi, suggests that two packs of instant oatmeal can give you around five grams of fiber. She encourages natural, real food as sources of fiber in contrast to fiber powders.

I: Iftar parties are not a free pass to overeating. Have a balanced *iftar* followed by a healthy snack and lots of water until *suhoor*. Overeating may cause indigestion and bloating that may lead you to skip *suhoor*, which is not a good idea.

J: Junk food may be calling out your name, but a bag of chips or a candy bar will not get you through the day. Nida Siddiqui of Elgin, Illinois, has a son, Sarim, 9, who will fast for the first time this year. She is lucky that he doesn't like junk food. He has asked his mom to make his favorite okra and chapattis (traditional Indian/Pakistani flat whole wheat bread) for *suhoor*. He can eat it every single day.

K: Keep a tall water bottle with you at *taraweeh* (nightly Ramadan prayers) and a mess-free healthy snack, like an IFANCA halal-certified ZonePerfect nutrition bar, if you plan to stay at the *masjid* until *suhoor*.

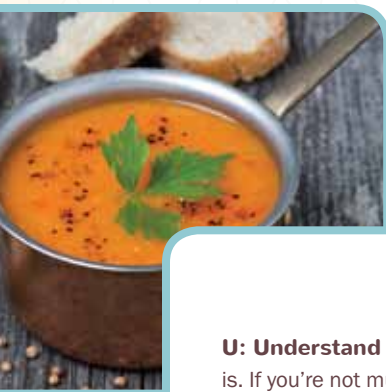
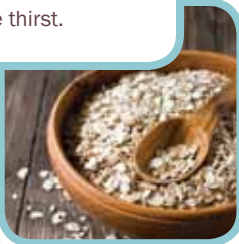
O: Oatmeal and other complex carbohydrates, such as fruit, are simple to prepare and nutritious. Since they release energy over a longer span of time, they keep you feeling fuller without excessive thirst.

P: Protein keeps you full much longer than carbs like white bread or sugar-laden pastries and muffins. Keep grilled chicken, fish, or beef ready in advance so a quick sandwich, taco, or salad is just minutes away. If you are not a meat eater, a healthy bean burrito will do the trick.

Q: Quiz your kids in a fun way by buying "healthy plates" or place mats (found online) that are marked with food groups and portion sizes that match the USDA's MyPlate guidelines so they can visualize how much of each food group they should be eating at *suhoor* and every meal. Visit www.choosemyplate.gov for free printables.

V: Variety in *suhoor* is good for maintaining interest level (especially for the younger ones), but meal planning and preparation should not take over your life. Make a calendar of five different *suhoors* and rotate them every week. Let the kids have what they want on the weekend (within reason, of course).

U: Understand how important staying hydrated is. If you're not much of a water-drinker, make a chicken broth. Masood cooks chicken pieces in a pot of water with onions, carrots, tomatoes, bulgur, salt, and pepper. Slurping up this broth soup helps her compensate for water.





L

L: Leftovers from *iftar* make a great *suhoor* if you dress them up differently. A roasted chicken from *iftar* can quickly be shredded and kept in the refrigerator for a quick sandwich at *suhoor*. Fruits can be blended with milk and ice for a refreshing smoothie. Sneak in some veggies for a nutrition boost while you're at it.

M

M: Milk in any form is not only a *sun-nah* but a great source of calcium and protein. Add some good quality hot chocolate or a heart-healthy cereal and gulp that deliciousness down.



N

N: Nut butters are quick and healthy, even kids can help themselves. Provide them with whole-grain flatbread and let them mix and match almond and peanut butter with banana slices.

R

R: Raisins and cranberries are Massachusetts nutritionist, Muzna Khimani's, favorite way to add some color and crunch to her oatmeal or parfait. You could also try walnuts or pecans as a fabulous finishing touch to your oatmeal or salad, or just as a nutritious snack when taking breaks from reading Quran before *suhoor*.



S

S: Smoothies are a great way to get kids to guzzle up some goodness. Siddiqi recommends strawberries in fat-free yogurt or her all time favorite lassi (yogurt drink). (Check out the recipe for mango lassi on page 12.)

T

T: Trial runs are great for those who are going to be fasting for the first time or after several years (due to illness, pregnancy, etc.). Khimani recommends fasting a few half days and then a few full ones in the months preceding Ramadan. Keep this in mind for next year!

Y

Y: Yogurt parfaits are a nourishing way to beat the summer heat and include dairy in your meals. Khimani adds granola and cranberries to her yogurt for that extra crunch. She loves Greek yogurt since it is higher in protein and more filling.

W

W: Water cannot be stressed enough; dehydration can be a serious issue. Count if you must, but make sure you are drinking half your body weight in ounces of water every day. If you feel there aren't enough post-*iftar* hours to have that much H₂O, include water-rich foods, like watermelons and cucumbers, in your meals. Also, as mentioned above, keep broth soups in mind.

X

X: Xtra worship is what Ramadan is about — not Xtra eating. While planning out nutritious meals for your family is important, you should focus on eating healthily to fast, not fasting to overeat. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said that a strong believer is better than a weak believer. Therefore we should eat right to have enough strength to fulfill all the rituals during Ramadan, including longer prayers, extra Quran reading, and increased charity to help those near and far.



Z

Z: Zip into Ramadan by prepping early with these handy tips and, before you know it, you'll be zooming out of this blessed month feeling lighter, healthier, and recharged for the rest of the year. ☺

KIRAN ANSARI is a writer who lives in the suburbs of Chicago with her husband and two children.



MOUTHWATERING MANGO LASSI

BY KIRAN ANSARI

SERVINGS: 2

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup chopped peeled mango
- 1 cup halal yogurt
- ½ cup pulp-free orange juice
- crushed ice

DIRECTIONS:

1. Spin ingredients in a blender.
2. Stir well and serve. ©



Halal Consumer



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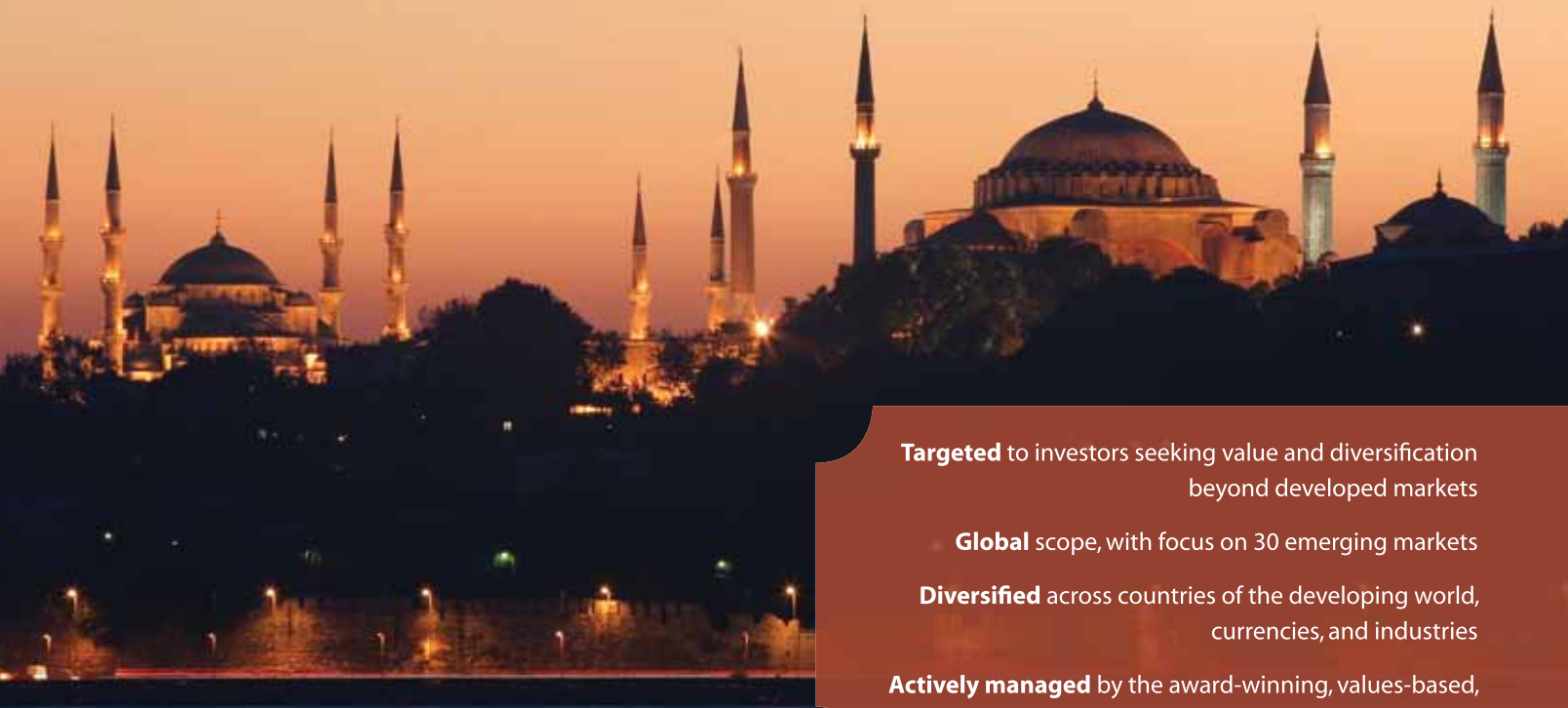
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WWW.IFAN



Fruit of Heaven

By Suzann Audi





n Surat Ar-Rahman, God tells of the delights, sweet smells, and splendor the believers will enjoy in heaven, including dates: “*Therin is fruit and palm trees having sheaths [of dates]*”

(55:11) and “*In both of them are fruit and palm trees and pomegranates*” (55:68).

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PHUH]) said, “When one of you breaks his fast, then let him do so with dried dates. And whoever does not find dates, then water, for it is purifying” (Tirmidhi).

Muslims break their fasts with dates, but what else do we know about this sweet dried fruit? Read on to discover God’s gift of dates.

The Science Behind God’s Gift to Maryam



“*And shake toward you the trunk of the palm tree; it will drop upon you ripe, fresh dates. So eat and drink and be contented*” (Quran 19:25-26). These verses tell of God providing dates to Maryam (Peace Be Upon Her), giving her relief before the birth of Prophet Isa (PBUH).

Since the Quran was revealed, we have known that dates benefit pregnant women. Fast forward to 2011, scientists at the Jordan University of Science and Technology in Irbid have studied the relationship of dates upon pregnancy; specifically, the effect of date consumption during late pregnancy upon labor and delivery. They found that women who ate six dates per day during the last four weeks of their pregnancy had significantly improved labors as compared to eating no dates.

Fiber Powerhouses



Dates are packed with fiber. Just four Medjool dates, or eleven Deglet Noor dates, provide a quarter of our daily fiber needs! But, why is fiber so important — particularly when we are fasting?

Fiber can be divided into two categories: soluble and insoluble. Our bodies need both. Soluble fiber can help lower our cholesterol, while insoluble fiber, like that found in dates, helps with our digestion and can reduce constipation.

Extremely long days of fasting, as Muslims experience when Ramadan is in the summer, can contribute to constipation. Many factors contribute to increasing our susceptibility to constipation: a long day without water, eating fewer fruits and vegetables, not drinking sufficient water between *iftar* (sunset meal at the time of breaking the fast) and *suhoor* (pre-dawn meal before fasting begins), sleeping directly after *iftar*, and not exercising or even moving much after *iftar*. Eating a handful of dates each day is an easy way to increase our fruit and fiber during Ramadan and help keep our digestive system running smoothly.

Dates are also a good source of potassium and magnesium. What fruit comes to mind when you think of potassium? For many people the answer would be bananas. Pound for pound, dates contain nearly twice as much potassium as bananas! One medium banana contains 12 percent of our daily potassium needs, while four Medjool dates, or fourteen Deglet Noor dates, provide 19 percent. Our bodies need potassium for proper nerve and muscle function, and potassium can also help to lower our cholesterol levels.

Feet in the Water, Head in the Fire



Date palms can grow in a variety of climates but will not thrive and produce high-quality fruit unless grown in an arid, hot climate. Palms do need a large amount of water to produce quality dates, so the plants are irrigated. The dry, hot weather and large water requirement branded date palms as having their “feet in the water and head in the fire.”

A dry climate is needed for date production because, if rained on while developing, the dates will crack and discolor, according to botanist Julia Morton in her book *Fruits of Warm Climates*. Even a humid environment during development will cause the dates to become damaged and rot. As protection from occasional rain in even the driest areas, the date clusters are covered with bags. Bagging also guards the fruit from insects and birds. With proper conditions, one mature date palm can produce more than 250 pounds of dates per year.





The Date Belt



Worldwide date production in 2012 exceeded 8.3 million tons, as estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Check a world map and you can find the “date belt” where most date production occurs. Starting in Morocco, the date belt extends east throughout North Africa in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Sudan; then continues in the Middle East in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Oman; and extends further east into Pakistan and China. Egypt is the leading producer of dates, yielding more than 1.6 million tons of dates in 2012, followed by Iran and Saudi Arabia, both with 1.1 million tons.

Looking for something a little closer to home? Drive two hours southeast of Los Angeles, California, and you will be in the heart of United States date production: Coachella Valley. This pocket of desert produces 95 percent of the dates grown in the United States, around 30,000 tons per year.



Fresh or Dried?



Did you know though that there are more than 300 distinct cultivars grown around the world, with some sources estimating as many as 600? Medjool and Deglet Noor are two of the most common date cultivars readily available in most grocery stores in the United States. To add to your myriad of choices, you can choose to eat dates at three different stages of their development, and each offers a unique texture and taste!

In their early stage, called *kimri*, dates are bitter and not edible. Dates can be eaten in the next three phases: *khalal*, *rutab*, and *tamr*. In September and October, *khalal* dates, or fresh dates, are ready to enjoy. *Khalal* are full grown, but crunchy and can be yellow, orange, or red, depending on the cultivar. With further ripening, the dates reach the *rutab* stage and they are softer and light brown, though still delicate. Both *khalal* and *rutab* must be handled and transported similarly to fresh tropical fruits. Though they have a short shelf life, with careful storage and transportation, *khalal* and *rutab* can be enjoyed fresh worldwide.

After drying, the dates reach the *tamr* stage. *Tamr* are the color of molasses, soft and chewy, and have a satisfying, rich flavor. In a cool environment, *tamr* can be stored for more than a year. *Tamr* are the stage you can find on grocery shelves year round.

Fruit of Heaven for Dessert



Each Ramadan, Muslims are given the fruit of heaven to break their fasts. But remember, we can enjoy these delights all year round. What could be more divine? This Ramadan, instead of preparing syrupy time-consuming desserts, dip into your date supply! The standby of stuffing with almonds* and walnuts is delicious and healthy, but you can dress up a few dates by stuffing them with slivers of candied citrus rind or drizzling them with melted chocolate** and dipping in unsweetened coconut. Sweets *can* be healthy. You don't have to tell the family that you are watching out for their digestive health when serving up dates for dessert! ☺

SUZANN AUDI earned her masters degree in food science from Kansas State University. She lives in Illinois and enjoys volunteering at her mosque and children's school.

*IFANCA halal-certified Wonderful Almonds

**IFANCA halal-certified Godiva Chocolate

IFANCA halal-certified dates are available in your grocery store under these brands: Bard Valley, Mariani, SunDate, and SunPalm. Check www.ifanca.org for a list of specific certified products.





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Understanding Mono- and Diglycerides

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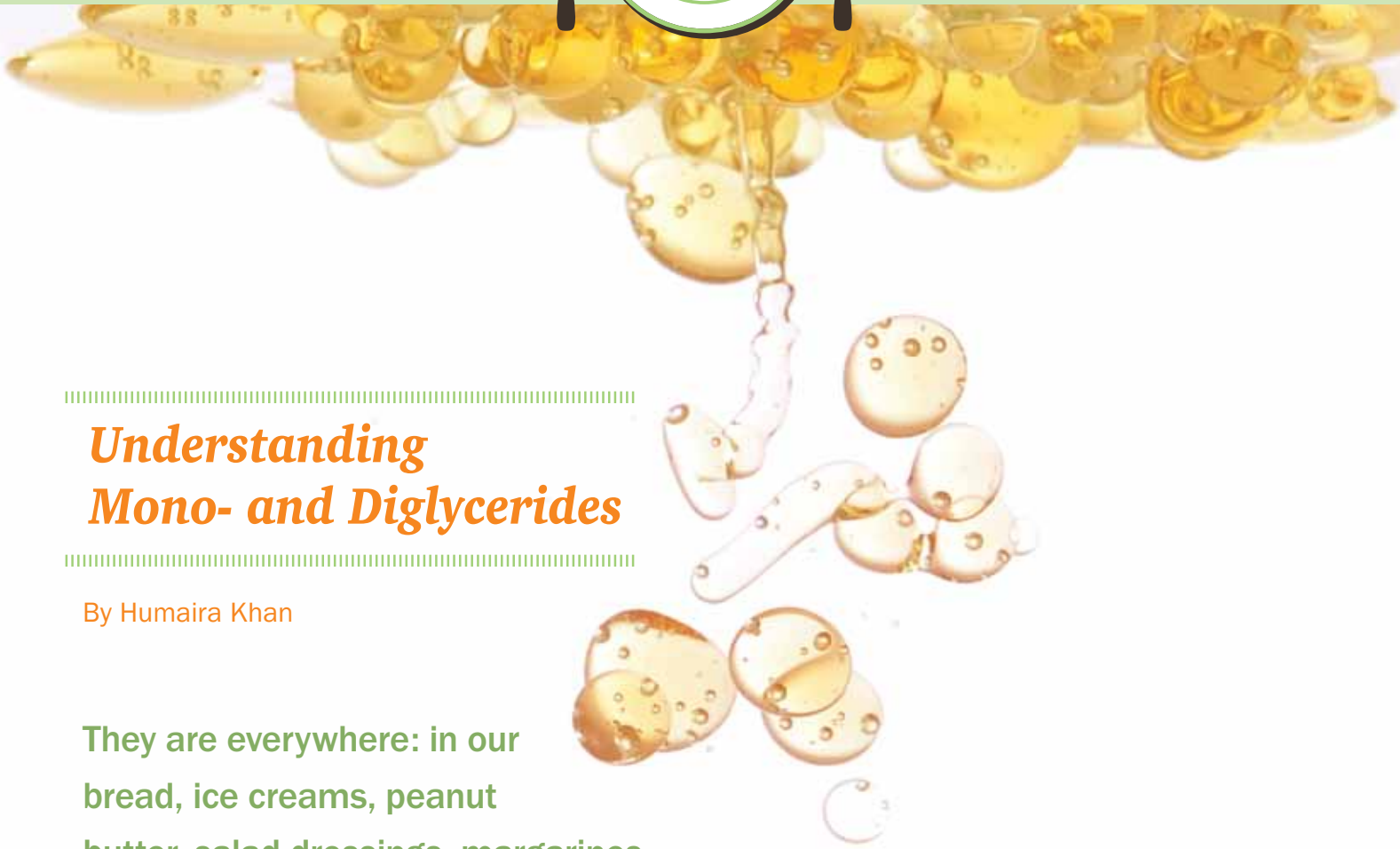
By Humaira Khan

They are everywhere: in our bread, ice creams, peanut butter, salad dressings, margarines, frozen desserts, bakery products, beverages, sauces, syrups, and drink mixes.

What are these elusive ingredients, why are they in our food, and should we worry about whether or not they are halal?

WHAT ARE MONOGLYCERIDES AND DIGLYCERIDES?

“Made in part of fatty acids, they [mono- and diglycerides] are similar to triglycerides, which are the predominant fat in food,” says Dr. Javed Rashid, IFANCA halal auditor and a food scientist, “except they are classified as emulsifiers rather than fats.”



To understand what emulsifiers are and why they are added to commercially-produced food items, let us first consider what happens when we add water to oil or oil to water. If you have ever seen this being done, you know that the two liquids tend to separate out and form two distinct layers, with the oil layer on top and the water layer on the bottom.

The same thing happens when batter that contains both oil and water is left to stand for a long time: the oil and water components separate and the look of the batter changes from a smooth, homogenous mixture to a not-so-smooth-looking concoction.

That is where emulsifiers like mono- and diglycerides come in.

SO WHAT IS AN EMULSIFIER?

An emulsifier is a substance that is made up of two parts: a water-soluble (hydrophilic) component as well as an oil-soluble (lipophilic) component.

This allows the emulsifier to settle in between the oil and water. It is here that it interacts with both liquids in the mixture and prevents them from separating from each other.

An emulsifier can act in a similar fashion even when added to two non-liquid substances that do not mix easily, such as air bubbles in whipped cream or cake batter, ice crystals in ice cream, and sugar crystals in chocolate.

OTHER FUNCTIONS:

Emulsifiers, specifically mono- and diglycerides, also interact with other ingredients during food manufacturing and processing in different ways, which adds to their functionality.

Ever wonder why commercially-manufactured bread does not become stale as quickly as home-made bread? The mono- and diglycerides added to the dough interacts with the starch in the bread, preventing it from going bad and prolonging its shelf life.

Amazed by the quality of store-bought yeast-raised dough? Smooth ice cream? Margarine that does not separate? Yes, that's mono- and diglycerides at work again.

ARE THEY HALAL?

“The commercial source [for mono- and diglycerides] may be either

animal (cow- or pig-derived) or vegetable (derived primarily from soybean and canola oil). They may also be synthetically produced,” says Dr. Rashid.

According to The Vegetarian Resource Group's Guide to Food Ingredients, mono- and diglycerides may be non-vegetarian but are “typically vegan.” An item is considered vegan when not only is it plant-based but it also does not contain any animal-derived products or by-products.

So how do we know whether a particular food item containing mono- and diglycerides is halal or not?

The easy answer: look for the Crescent-M symbol on the package, which means it is IFANCA halal-certified.

However, if the product is not certified halal, or the ingredient list does not specify the source of the mono- and diglycerides, contact the product manufacturer to be sure. If the company informs you that the mono- and diglycerides are animal-derived, then it is likely not halal. You might suggest they consider switching to a vegetable source to accommodate a larger consumer base. And it would be even better if they obtained halal certification. Do not underestimate your power to make a difference as a consumer. ☞

HUMAIRA KHAN is a doctor with a postdoctoral fellowship in neurogenetics and a diploma in freelance and feature writing. Her interests are Quranic studies, reading, and creative writing.



Spotlight on an IFANCA Halal-Certified Company




Spotlight on Bard Valley Natural Delights

With Ramadan upon us, images of sweet dates being passed around the room come to mind. This year, make halal-certified Bard Valley Natural Delights Medjool Dates your staple.

Situated where California and Arizona meet, Bard Valley is “home to the finest Medjool dates in the world.” Their Medjool dates, both conventional and organic, have been halal-certified for over three years.

Why would dates need to be certified halal? A lot goes into processed foods, even if we view them as “natural.” While it may seem that dates are not processed, they are not packaged and sold straight off the trees. Some processing is required, and halal certification means all processing, packaging, and plant chemicals have been scrutinized to meet halal requirements. Also, some plants may process foods that are not halal using the same equipment, creating an environment for cross-contamination. Bard Valley brand recognized these concerns and decided to take the steps necessary in order to receive halal certification. According to David Anderson, director of marketing for Natural Delights Medjool Dates, “We believe halal certification matters to this valued market segment.”

While there were no major changes that needed to be made, Anderson reveals, “We were very impressed, however, with the thoroughness of the halal certification process.”

All of Bard Valley’s Natural Delights Medjool Dates carry the Crescent-M logo, , IFANCA’s symbol of halal compliance. You can find them in 80 percent of supermarkets in the United States,

including Jewel, Kroger, Meijer, Walmart, Sam’s Club, Costco, and Caputo’s. Use the Store Locator on their website for a location near you.

To explore Bard Valley, learn more about Natural Delights, and find delicious recipes, visit :

www.naturaldelights.com

Bard Valley Natural Delights Medjool Dates are not only halal-certified but also certified Heart-Healthy by the American Heart Association.

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Medjool Date Power Balls


COURTESY: WWW.NATURALDELIGHTS.COM

MAKES: 18

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup raw almonds
- 16 Natural Delights Medjool dates, pitted water, for blending
- ½ cup unsweetened coconut, shredded
- ⅓ cup raw almond butter or coconut butter
- 3 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

DIRECTIONS

1. Pulse almonds in a food processor until coarsely ground. Transfer to a bowl.
2. Pulse Medjool dates in food processor until almost smooth, adding up to 3 tablespoons water as needed to help blend.
3. Add almonds back to food processor with coconut, almond butter, cocoa powder, and cinnamon and pulse, scraping down mixture in bowl with a wooden spoon as needed until completely incorporated.
4. Transfer to a large bowl. Scoop mixture into 2-tablespoon balls, rolling with your hands; place balls on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Cover and refrigerate. 

Recipes



Cabbage, Apple, and Kohlrabi Slaw


By YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RDN, LD

SERVINGS: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large kohlrabi
juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ a lemon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dill, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon mayo or halal Greek yogurt
salt and pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ head Savoy cabbage, shredded
- 1 large Granny Smith apple, cored and thinly sliced

DIRECTIONS

1. Peel kohlrabi and cut into thin slices, like matchsticks.
2. Whisk together lemon juice, dill, garlic, mayo or Greek yogurt, salt, and pepper in a bowl.
3. Whisk in the olive oil and toss with the kohlrabi, cabbage, and apple.
4. Add salt and pepper to taste. 




Pickled Beets

By Saira Mohiuddin

INGREDIENTS

- 3 pounds beets
- 1 cup balsamic vinegar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup honey
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- cracked black pepper
- pinch cayenne pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Peel beets and steam, over low heat, in large pot filled with 1 cup water.
2. When beets are fork tender, after about 15 minutes, remove from stove and cool.
3. Slice beets with mandolin set to $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch.
4. Mix together balsamic vinegar, honey, sea salt, cinnamon, black pepper, and cayenne pepper.
5. After honey is dissolved, pour mixture into an air tight container. Add beets to mixture and seal container tightly. Let sit in refrigerator for at least 12 hours before enjoying. 



Watermelon and Feta Salad

By Saira Mohiuddin

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole seedless watermelon, cubed
- ½ pound halal feta cheese, cubed
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- ⅓ cup pure cane sugar
- fresh mint, chopped
- cracked black pepper
- extra virgin olive oil

DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare balsamic reduction. Heat small sauce pan over medium heat; add balsamic vinegar and sugar. Bring mixture to a quick boil, then reduce flame to low and simmer for 8 minutes. Cool and refrigerate before serving.
2. Plate watermelon and feta. Garnish with mint and add cracked black pepper. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil.
3. Drizzle with balsamic reduction and serve immediately. ©



Slow Cooker Lamb

By YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RDN, LD

SERVINGS: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Vidalia onion, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 cup chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 cup chopped tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 pounds halal lamb, cut into cubes and external fat trimmed
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

1. Place onion, celery, carrots, garlic, stock, tomatoes, tomato paste, rosemary, ginger, and bay leaf in a slow cooker. Stir to combine.
2. Season the lamb with salt and pepper. In a large sauté pan over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil until nearly smoking. Add the lamb and brown on all sides, about 5 minutes total. Transfer to the slow cooker.
3. Remove the sauté pan from the heat, pour in the lemon juice, and return to medium-high heat.
4. Bring to a simmer, stirring to scrape up any browned bits from the bottom.
5. Add the lemon juice to the slow cooker, cover, and cook on high for 6 hours until very tender.
6. Transfer the lamb to a large serving dish.
7. Remove the bay leaf from the cooking liquid and blend/puree the liquids and solids until smooth. Pour sauce over the lamb.

Serve with mashed sweet potatoes, rice, bulgur wheat, or couscous to soak up the delicious sauce. 🍴



Slow Cooker Cashew Ginger Chicken

By YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RDN, LD

SERVINGS: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds halal boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed
- ¼ cup flour
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ½ cup cashews

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine black pepper and flour in resealable storage bag. Add chicken and shake to coat.
2. Heat oil in skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and brown, about 2 minutes on each side. Place browned chicken in slow cooker.
3. Combine soy sauce, lemon juice, ketchup, sugar, garlic, ginger, and pepper flakes in small bowl; pour over chicken.
4. Cook on low for 3 to 4 hours. Add cashews and stir. Serve over rice. 🍴

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Features

Crafty Fun While Fasting!

By Husna T. Ghanji





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It's that time again! The time for focusing on faith, festivities, fasting, and FOOD! We have been blessed with witnessing another Ramadan. The Holy Month is upon us and what better way to get children and adults excited than by nurturing the holiday spirit? From preparing special Ramadan foods and treats to decorating your home with festive crafts, your children are sure to be engaged in the joys of the month. Aside from brightening up our homes and families with these goodies, they also provide an excellent way to share our holiday month and to participate in *dawah* (inviting to Islam) with our non-Muslim neighbors, friends, classmates, teachers, and coworkers.

Ramadan and Eid cookies are always a big favorite. Whether they are in the shape of a crescent moon, star, or *masjid* (mosque), children of all ages enjoy making and decorating them. This year, try something new with holiday stencils and sprinkles. You can find a set of eight stencils featuring designs of the Kaba, a sheep, and the word “Eid” at Eidway (www.eidway.com). Keep your cookie shape simple, bake, and top with icing. Once the icing is dry, lay your desired stencil on top and fill with a complementary icing color. Get to sprinkling for the finishing touch.

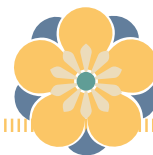


Photo by Ode To Inspiration

Masooda Rahman from Once Upon A Tier bakery in Lombard, Illinois, is busy during Ramadan making *iftar* gift bags with her children. She addressed that making these gift bags is a great way to keep the children occupied while fasting and it also teaches them the lessons of sharing and being a good Muslim neighbor. She bakes her delicious cookies and wraps them in colorful paper. She then includes a bag of freshly made samosas to complete the sweet and savory *iftar* gift bag. Rahman then distributes these to her neighbors and friends...both Muslims and non-Muslims. What a yummy way to do *dawah* and have fun with the children!

Kiran Ansari from Up A Notch (www.upanotchgifts.com) is getting ready for her busiest season. Ramadan is a great time to get custom-printed gifts made for everyone. This adds both a personalized touch as well as a message of faith. One of her most popular treats are her custom designed candy wrappers. An idea Kiran shared was to set out a bowl of chocolates on your desk at work wrapped in the message “Ramadan Mubarak” or “Eid Mubarak.” What a sweet way to introduce the topic of Ramadan to your coworkers? Trust me, it will work better than you having your head on your desk from hunger pangs and your coworkers staring at your plight. Your children can also introduce Ramadan and Islam to their teachers and classmates by bringing these personalized goodies to share.

Aside from running a personalized gift business, Ansari is also a mom who knows how to get children excited about Ramadan. A countdown calendar to Eid with an envelope attached to each day is an easy and fun way to keep track of your *ibadah* (worship) activities as well as generate excitement as we head into the last ten days. For each of the thirty days, you can have children check off their daily Ramadan *ibadah* activities (prayer, reading Quran, cleaning, helping with chores, etc.). Then after *iftar*, they open the coinciding day’s envelope to find something special, such as a small treat or a gift voucher for “homework help.” During the last ten days of Ramadan, you can have the treats get more exciting. What child (or me) wouldn’t love to get a gift voucher for “pizza night?”



One of the best things about being an American Muslim is that we truly represent various traditions and cultural heritages from around the world.

One of the main excitements of Ramadan is *iftar*. Ahh yes, fasting from food is always about the food! What better way to break our fasts than with indulging in some family *iftar* traditions? One of the best things about being an American Muslim is that we truly represent various traditions and cultural heritages from around the world. Along with these traditions, we create new ones as well. Atyia Muzammil, a mother of three, makes fried shrimp dumplings (shrimp pakoras) and beef-filled puff pastries with her children. Huma Ghani and her four children get ready for *iftar* season by making crab rangoon and almond kheer. Growing up, my family savored *iftar* that included pierogis, potato and cheese filling wrapped inside a pasta shell. You can picture it as the Polish version of a samosa. Ghada Fahmy does not have to worry about leftovers when she makes macaroni béchamel for her family and friends during Ramadan. Why? Because how can you go wrong with pasta layered with meat and baked in a creamy white sauce?



Photo by Once Upon A Eid

With all these festive sweets, gifts, and *iftars*, we need to make sure our homes are festive as well. For engaging older children, Maysem Hammad, the crafty blogger behind Ode To Inspiration (www.odetoinspiration.com), has a fun way of lighting up her home. She uses baby food jars and paints the inside with translucent glass paint. Using dimensional paint, she then adds designs on the outside of the jars. Once they are dry, Hammad places tea lights inside to create her version of homemade “Moroccan lanterns.”

For younger children, I suggest making several cardboard cutouts of star and moon shapes and decorating them with paint and glitter (after all, who doesn't love glitter, especially when it gets stuck to your hands, face, clothes, and all over the kitchen floor). Punch a hole at the top and hang them from the ceiling, banister, or wherever you want to spread a little Ramadan bling.

With Ramadan and Eid approaching, it's important to show our children and family how much we love and cherish this special time of year. Take the time to make it a brilliant month of reflection, faith, sharing, and *dawah* in creative ways that children will enjoy, think back fondly of as they grow, and pass down to their own children down the line, God willing. May God bless everyone and their families and accept all our efforts this Ramadan and always! ☪

HUSNA T. GHANI holds an MEd and an MBA. She has taught science and health and is now a strategy consultant. When Husna is not glued to her computer, she's glued to a newspaper (real wood pulp paper) or a book (with actual pages).



Crab rangoon

And don't forget to set the table with decorative paper plates designed especially for Ramadan. Dalia Matariyeh, owner of Once Upon A Eid (www.ouaoneid.com), shares, “I feel that using Ramadan/Eid themed tableware and decorations will add a great joy to the little ones and will always remind them of the beauty of our roots and holidays!” Added bonus: no dishes to wash!



Blessings In Disguise: The Long Days of Ramadan

By Nadirah D. Muhammad

Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic lunar calendar, also known as the month of fasting, is expected to start around June 28 this year, which means that it is fast-approaching — no pun intended. Once it begins, Muslims all over the world will abstain from food, drink, and marital relations from dawn to dusk, as we are instructed to do so in the Quran: *“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous —”* (2:183).

Here in North America, Ramadan will take place this year during the peak of high temperatures. In addition to summer heat, the fast will be lengthy as daylight during this season spans over sixteen hours. With this in mind, fasting will undoubtedly be a challenge this year, but the benefits that accompany long days of fasting are plentiful.

If you view the fast each day simply as deprivation, it may seem torturous. This should not be the focus during this month. Instead, the practice of self-restraint should be a focus, as God tells us that is the purpose of fasting. When practicing self-restraint from food, drink, and other acts that are permissible throughout other times of the year, not only do we gain a better appreciation of the sustenance that God provides for us, we also are able to humble ourselves with the feeling of real hunger, particularly during these long days.

Recent Rutgers University graduate Neelum Quraishi believes one of the blessings of fasting these longer days lies in allowing her to empathize with those who live in less developed parts of the world who have limited access to food and clean water. Additionally, if one can abstain from that which is permissible and essential to survival, abstaining from what is not permissible will not seem as difficult.

Still, the fast will not be an easy feat, especially the first few days. As Fonda Muhammad, a national educational consultant, admits, “As beautiful as fasting is, the first three days always remain a struggle for me.” She adds that keeping patient, especially with her children when they were younger, can be difficult. “Despite the struggles,” Muhammad continues, “in my 30 years of fasting, I have never had a year where I haven’t felt personal and developmental growth.” As God promised us, “*For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.*” (94:5). Moreover, we learn from Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]) that, “If God wants to do good to somebody, He afflicts him with trials” (Sahih Bukhari). With these reminders, Ramadan should be viewed as a hardship that not only betters us, but also better prepares us for conquering the other trials that we will face throughout our lives.

Aside from learning self-restraint and resilience, Ramadan is also a time for self-reflection. How often do we reflect on our God-consciousness and the strength of our faith? For those who work, attend school, and/or have families, finding the time to worship outside of what is obligatory can be difficult. And let’s face it, with all of the worldly influences and the negativities we face surrounding our faith, even the obligatory can be hard. Eliminating the time and energy that is typically spent eating, drinking, and preparing meals affords us the chance to focus on our faith. The longer we fast each day, the more time we can spend on increasing our *iman* (faith).

An essential part of this Holy Month is reciting the Quran. As we are to read some Quran each day with the goal of completing it at least once by Ramadan’s end, these lengthy summer days present us with an abundance of time to reach that goal. Aisha Khan, a single mother of three, works as a babysitter and says, “When the kids take naps, I try to read Quran, as my plan

is to complete the whole Quran in the month of Ramadan for *thawab* [reward].” What better way is there to commemorate the month the Book of Guidance was revealed than to spend it worshipping, praying, and showing appreciation to the Creator who gave it to us?

Additionally, lunch breaks can be spent reading and studying the Quran, helping others at work, or running household errands that are normally done in the evenings or on the weekends. Weekends offer opportunities to volunteer for a worthy cause, read more Quran, or partake in other positive activities to occupy whatever free time we have. Middle school teacher Sarah Said spends her off time gardening, working on art projects with her three children, and reading Quran.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is known for saying, “Every act of goodness is *sadaqa* (charity)” (Sahih Muslim) and that by giving even half of a date in charity you can save yourself from Hellfire (Sahih Bukhari). This means that even the smallest good deed or charity can save oneself from the punishment in the hereafter, especially during this glorious month where good deeds are given more rewards than any other month of the year: “Whoever draws near to God during it (Ramadan) with a single characteristic from the characteristics of (voluntary) goodness, he is like whoever performs an obligatory act in other times. And whoever performs an obligatory act during it, he is like whoever performed seventy obligatory acts in other times” (Ibn Khuzaymah).

The Prophet (PBUH) stated, “When the month of Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of the (Hell) Fire are closed, and the devils are chained” (Sahih Bukhari). Because of this, it is very difficult to be misled by *Shaytan* (Satan), and performing good deeds not only becomes easier, you are rewarded much more for them. We can also take this to mean that *dua* (prayers of supplication) during Ramadan has a greater chance of being accepted. Longer days mean more free time to spend on making *dua*; therefore, greater likelihood for additional *dua* acceptance.

We often do not realize how much of our days are spent on food, whether eating it, preparing it, or both, until Ramadan rolls around and we suddenly find ourselves with this profusion of spare time. Longer days of fasting are like gifts in disguise, blessing us with increased opportunities to strengthen our *iman* and earn good deeds. May you and yours have a successful and blessed Holy Month. Ramadan Mubarak! (☞)

NADIRAH D. MUHAMMAD holds a BA in journalism. She was recently accepted into Teach For America, a national organization whose mission is to eliminate educational inequity throughout low-income communities, and is excited about teaching middle school English in the fall.

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		
Amara	Cosmetics	Baqi Inc.	Visit their website: www.amaracosmetics.com
Baskin Robbins	Dairy Products	Baskin Robbins	Baskin Robbins stores throughout the United States
Bard Valley	Food Products	Bard Valley Natural Delights	Kroger, Publix, Meijer, Walmart, Whole Foods, and various markets 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
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
Goldon Bonbon	Candy / Chocolate	Asti Holdings Ltd.	Visit their website: www.goldenbonbon.com
J&M Food Products	Food Products	J&M Food Products	Visit their website: www.halalcertified.com

Brand	Product Type	Company Name	Available At
Kontos	Bakery Items, Bread	Kontos Foods, Inc.	Ethnic (Arab, Indo-Pak) stores and fruit & vegetable markets throughout the United States
Lawash	Bread	American Bakery Products, Inc.	Kroger and Meijer stores in Michigan
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		
My Own Meals	Food Products	My Own Meals	Visit their website: www.myownmeals.com
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		
Nutriline	Nutritional Supplements	Access Business Group, LLC	Visit their website for distributors: www.nutriline.com

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
Organic Valley	Dairy Products	Cropp Cooperative/ Organic Valley	Supermarkets throughout the United States
POM Wonderful	Beverages / Beverage Concentrates	POM Wonderful, LLC	Supermarkets throughout the United States
	Tea		
	Fruits Processed		
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		
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
Wonderful	Pistachios and Almonds	Paramount Farms	Supermarkets and drugstores throughout the United States

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