**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, chickpeas and red and green sweet peppers. Aromatic herbs and spices invite all to taste and enjoy this truly delicious meal.

**CHICKEN & 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.

**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.

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

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

**CHICKEN & 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

Halal certification is by the Islamic Food & Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA)

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Contents

02 Editor’s Note
03 From the Publisher’s Desk

Food Trends
04 A Secret Ingredient
06 Futuristic Food Trends: Not Your Mama’s Kitchen Anymore

Health & Nutrition
10 Stress and Your Health
14 Folly or Fodder? Clearing the Air on GMOs

Quranic & Prophetic Foods
20 The Sweetness of Honey

A Closer Look at Labels
22 Folic Acid: the Unborn Child’s Lifeline

Recipes
25 Olive & Cheese Bruschetta
26 Vegetable Curry
27 Apple Spice Cake

Features
28 Caring for the Skin God Gave Us
30 Vegan Muslims: Plant-based and Proud
34 Halal-Certified Product Locator

Spotlight on an IFANCA Halal-Certified Company
24 Amara Spotlight

In the name of God, the Most Beneficent, Most Merciful
Editor's Note

Assalamu Alaikum

As the year comes to a close, we bring you a variety of topics from new uses for tea to printed food and many things in between.

Would you pay $100 for an ounce of tea? Do you cook with tea? In “A Secret Ingredient” you will learn that tea is making its way into interesting food items.

Perhaps you are a Trekkie longing for a replicator to create your food fantasies or a Jetsons fan preferring a filling pill? We aren’t there yet, but check out “Futuristic Food Trends” for information on 3D food printing and other futuristic efforts.

If you are pregnant you will want to read “Folic Acid, the Unborn Child’s Lifeline” to learn about the benefits and need for folic acid.

Concerns about animal welfare in the meat industry have turned some Muslims to a vegan diet. Others have different reasons for shunning meat. Check them out in “Vegan Muslims” but understand that eating meat is not against Islamic guidance.

In this election year, how would you vote on GMOs? Examine the pros and cons in “Folly or Fodder: Clearing the Air on GMOs”.

It makes sense that skin care products contain fatty substances, so they may not be halal. But would you have guessed they may also contain human stem cells? Learn more about it in “Caring for the Skin God Gave Us.”

If life is weighing you down, check out “Stress and Your Health” for ideas on how to relax. And I thought a chocolate indulgence was the best way to relieve stress!

Finally, using honey as a sweetener is an age old application, but did you know honey can be used to prevent wounds from getting infected? Learn more in “The Sweetness of Honey.”

Quite a variety in this issue. Enjoy!

Sincerely,
Roger M. Othman
managing editor
Assalamu Alaikum

As the year winds to a close, I thought I would review some of our accomplishments this year.

For starters, with this fourth issue of Halal Consumer®, we will have distributed 120,000 copies of the magazine this year, all for free! If you didn’t get your copies in the mail or from an Islamic Center, subscribe on our website.

At the ISNA convention, we gave away thousands of samples of halal-certified products. Can you believe some conventioneers didn’t know that most Godiva® chocolates, Cabot® cheeses, ZonePerfect® nutrition bars, Wonderful® pistachios, Organic Valley® milk, Lawash bread, and Saffron Road™ crunchy chickpeas were halal-certified? They do now! We also unveiled the Crescent-M costume character.

Over the year, IFANCA food scientists conducted one thousand eight hundred plant inspections, reviewed over one million ingredients, and issued five thousand halal certificates for 100,000 products.

IFANCA made 15 presentations at international conferences discussing halal certification, animal welfare in Islam, and the impact of halal on the global economy.

The successful Halal and Healthy Workshop series, introduced in 2012 continued in 2014 with two workshops three more are scheduled for early 2015. These are fun, interactive events where attendees get to sample recipes made with halal-certified products while learning how foods are designed to be appealing.

The Sabeel Food Pantry, an IFANCA initiative, in collaboration with AMAL and IMAN, distributed 1,400 turkeys to families in need. In its fourteenth year, this was an increase of 280 turkeys from last year.

Also this year, IFANCA was selected to work with a prison system to help them implement a halal food service for their halal consuming population. We are also working with a University to help them implement a halal offering for their students.

Over the year we sponsored 25 events from local activities for Islamic schools and organizations to national organizations like Muslims in Dietetics and Nutrition (MIDAN) and American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP).

The majority of the products we certify are destined for Muslim lands abroad. Within the United States, only those companies that realize the power of the consumer have obtained halal certification. When you see the Crescent-M halal logo on a package, don’t hesitate to call or write the company to thank them for making the product halal.

In the upcoming year we expect to expand on these activities and introduce new ones. These are exciting times for halal consumers with more offerings and greater variety available. Please enjoy the magazine and be an engaged halal consumer.

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry president
A SECRET INGREDIENT

By Yousuf Khan
Looking for ways to spice up your meals? Want your in-laws to be impressed with your cooking whenever they visit for the holidays? Well, you can cook with a secret ingredient — tea! Whoops, did I say that too loud? Make any dish you serve a party for the mouth. There is such a wide variety of scrumptious recipes with tea as an ingredient, from cookies to smoothies and even chicken noodle soup.

Whether it’s oolong, Earl Grey, matcha, Darjeeling, hibiscus, chamomile, or jasmine tea, advanced and amateur cooks can all use tea to cook with. You will want to choose the tea specifically to format the taste you want your meal to have. You can use tea as a brew or as sprinkled leaves. Tea leaves are sold in grocery and specialty stores ranging in price depending on quality.

Cooking with tea started in Ancient China. The Chinese used to fill fish with dry oolong tea leaves by stuffing them into the mouth of the fish. They would then proceed to steam and eat the fish. Tea-smoked duck is a Chinese classic and tea-leaf eggs are a Chinese New Year special. Hard boiled eggs are soaked for an hour in green or black tea while keeping the tea brew hot. A few minutes prior to taking the eggs out of the pot their shells are cracked slightly, allowing the egg to have a brownish, marbled appearance.

In recent years, cooking with tea has made its way from China to the western parts of the world. Currently, some of the world’s most famous chefs use tea in their recipes. Martha Stewart has a popular Earl Grey Tea Cookie recipe. In her Green Tea Poached Chicken with Green Tea Rice recipe, “brown rice soaks up the green tea, giving it a delicate, earthy taste.” Her Green Tea Poached Salmon seems like a delectable dish for the family. Stewart’s Pacific Halibut in Green Tea Broth combines a cup of brewed green tea with peanut oil, soy sauce, and honey, creating a unique and sharp taste on your tongue. Her Green Tea Ice-cream will look appealing to your children and have them begging for more. Using tea relieves you of the guilt of unhealthy eating.

Daniel Patterson, renowned chef and owner of Coi, the Michelin two-starred restaurant in San Francisco, had his famous Jasmine Tea Rice recipe featured in the New York Times. He’s added ground chamomile tea to almond cake and used finely ground oolong tea leaves to transform scallops in citrus sauce. Yes, tea has found itself a place in many of his recipes at Coi. In Bon Appétit magazine, Patterson tells home cooks to “think of it as a spice,” much like you would cumin or thyme.

In an article he wrote for the New York Times, Patterson elaborates on his use of tea as a way to elevate the usual. “Tea has a way of making the most mundane dishes feel exotic and new — for example, chicken soup infused with green tea.” The seasoned chef admits, “No tea can save a badly made stock, but it will make a good one better, adding a nutty dimension.”

IFANCA® has certified a number of tea products, including teas made by Isagenix, POM Wonderful, and Third Street Chai; syrups made by Monin, Inc.; nutritional supplements made by 4Life Research, Herbalife, Nutrilite, and Unicity International; cosmetics made by Baqi Inc. (Amara); flavors made by Anet Pharmaceutical; dairy products made by Baskin Robbins and Nestlé Pakistan; and personal care products made by Melaleuca, Inc. and Sunrider International.

I guess tea truly is a ‘secret ingredient’! Please note not all of these products are available in every market. Check the website for regional availability. [IFANCA]

Pierre Hermé, a world-famous pâtissier, is yet another chef who incorporates tea in his creations. Hermé, famed macaron maker, is known for his unique combination of flavors. He uses the green-colored matcha tea in his matcha and chestnut and matcha and black sesame macarons. Hermé also makes a beautiful jasmine tea macaron. According to Bon Appétit magazine, “Matcha prices range from $5 per ounce to a whopping $100 per ounce. For drinking, look for premium grade. For cooking, buy the less-expensive culinary grade.”

It’s important to use precise amounts of tea so as not to give the food a bitter taste. To receive the best taste from your tea, use loose tea. Tea coming from bags is usually the less appetizing parts of the leaf. Loose tea also provides healthy antioxidants that tea from bags lack. Regular tea bags will give off a decent amount of flavor but loose leaves pack in more due to size. Their scent is hypnotizing, too.

In addition to the unique taste, dishes made with tea can be healthier. As mentioned earlier, tea leaves supply the body with antioxidants when consumed. Antioxidants are nutrients that counter diseases like cancer and heart disease. The tea leaves also provide your body with plant polyphenols that fight against pathogens trying to harm your body.

Any recipes that require water can have tea as a substitute. For example, when you are making cake out of the box and the instructions call for one cup of water, you can use one cup of tea instead. You will want to use fresh brewed tea, of course. If you have a recipe that you enjoy making, give it a twist with tea. You’ll have your own unique and delectable way of cooking. Your secret ingredient will be tea. Shhh! ✈️

YOUSUF KHAN is a budding chef and in his spare time experiments with spices in his family’s pantry.
Picture, if you can, a world in which you can push a button and your dinner appears before you, ready to consume; a time in which a robot or holograph can help with tasks like prepping and cooking food, or cutting out the time it takes to find and prepare healthy food by drinking all the nutrients you need in one quick step. Well, you don’t have to imagine such a world anymore and you no longer have to watch fictional programming set in a futuristic universe to get your fix of advanced trends in the culinary world.
Think back to the imagined twenty-first century setting of the popular 1960’s cartoon, *The Jetsons*, in which it was a regular occurrence to see machines churn out food pills and breakfast appear on the table simply by pressing a button. These were revolutionary concepts to view on your evening television, but in today’s world, modern technology has given us the ability to dabble in advancements that are slowly changing the way we think about our food, our dining experiences, and even what we should expect from our kitchen appliances.

### 3D Food Printing

3D printing, the process of creating three-dimensional solid objects from a digital file, is a concept and practice that has been around for several years now. However, growing in popularity is the idea of 3D printing food. In order to execute the printing of food via a 3D printer, one has to start off with food in a semi-solid state. One version of this technology is the ChefJet, which allows users to insert any type of soft confectionary like chocolate, caramel, or frosting for instance, then program the desired shape or design, and finally, sit back and watch their work of art print to life. The ChefJet is specifically geared towards creating sweets, offering amateur bakers the ability to craft works of art in the form of dessert as well as providing the professional pastry chef the ability to build intricate designs in half the time of completing the process manually.

Similarly, the Foodini is a 3D food printer designed to be used for savory foods. Again, one has to begin with a puree of sorts in order for the technology to work, and then the output must either be food that can be eaten raw, or food that will then still need to be cooked. Lynette Kucsma, co-founder of the Foodini, touts the advantages of this product as a way to use fresh, healthy ingredients to create quick meals instead of having to rely on the conveniences of pre-cooked processed foods with unrecognizable ingredients. Occasional home cook Nina Awotwi says that 3D printing food is a concept that sparks her curiosity but not something she can imagine becoming an everyday function for her. There is currently no version of a 3D food printer available on the market that can not only create quick food in any design, but also cook it at the same time, though a project is underway by undergraduate students at the Imperial College London.

### Holographic Dining

Imagine being able to conjure up any chef in the world to help you create tonight’s dinner. Or perhaps you are dying to learn how to make an ethnic halal meal straight from the source and you’d love to be able to connect with someone from the Middle East to show you the ropes. Better yet, maybe you have a grandmother who lives across the country making it difficult for you to dine together or cook family recipes with one another. With Dawid Dawod’s concept known as Global Chef, you just might be able to make all three of these scenarios a reality.

The concept uses hologram technology to connect people together through the art of cooking. Global Chef allows users to select family, friends, random people from anywhere in the world, or even join cooking classes via a hologram that is conjured up on its glass surface using Laser Plasma hologram technology. The design even transfers smells and can sense what ingredients are placed into its bowl. The possibilities Global Chef can potentially offer have many people thrilled. Home cook DeMarko Glover says, “To learn from a chef in holographic form would be exciting.” Glover occasionally follows online video tutorials of his favorite chefs when cooking, and because he often stops and rewinds videos to try and get all the steps right he feels as though “having someone right there with you via holograph would be much easier to follow.” Global Chef was submitted to the Electrolux Design Lab for consideration in its annual design competition and may very well be a product we see available in the future.

### Soylent

Would you ever consider cutting out the process of buying and preparing food by solely drinking a liquid food supplement that
provides you with all the nutrients you need? If the answer is yes, then there is a product that can do just that; it’s called Soylent.

Created by a software engineer named Rob Rhinehart, Soylent is a powder supplement one mixes with water to create a liquid drink that contains 33 nutritional ingredients, including proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, and mineral substitutes. According to Rhinehart, he created the substance to battle the expense and trouble he was experiencing with trying to obtain or cook healthy meals regularly. He also believes it has the potential to help the food crisis in the developing world. However, on the taste scale, it might leave much to be desired as those who have tried Soylent often describe it as bland.

While it does provide you with the nutrients you need to survive, for most people, food is not just about sustenance. Food evokes memories, experiences, joy, and love. . .none of which can be found in Soylent. Awotwi states, “Cooking is more than the actual preparation [of food]. It’s the memories of being with family and friends.” While she feels like there is a certain efficiency that could be gained from this product, it comes at the expense of feeling like one is a part of a community. Still, there are others like food enthusiast Glover who see the convenience and benefits for busy people. “A product like this means you never have to worry about the time it takes to prep food, cook food, and sit and eat food.” Glover feels Soylent would be something he’d use on occasion to save time. Whatever side of the conversation you are on, Soylent definitely seems like the closest thing to getting your meals in a pill, a la the Jetsons. You may, however, have to be willing to sacrifice taste and variety.

While a few of these concepts still need more development before becoming available in the mainstream arena, the excitement and buzz they are creating in the culinary world is very evident. It’s clear that we as a society have come a long way in regards to the possibilities available to us to enhance and supplement our dining and cooking experiences. The concepts presented above are really just the tip of the iceberg, and it might not be too long before we’ll be able to press a button and have our dinner appear before our eyes. One thing’s for certain, we’re not in your mama’s kitchen anymore.

RONIA ABDELRAHMAN was born and raised in Chicago. She is a big fan of coffee, T-shirts with witty sayings, and sad songs. Her “Mean Tweets” have been featured on Jimmy Kimmel Live!

Nutrition products such as Soylent are complex products incorporating many ingredients. It would be difficult for most consumers to determine the suitability of such products in a halal diet. Halal certification is the best way to be sure such products are acceptable to halal consumers. IFANCA® is certifying many nutritional supplements and our staff of experienced food scientists has the expertise necessary to scrutinize and certify complex products such as this.

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Health & Nutrition

Life’s everyday worries can add up to a point that seems unmanageable. Deadlines at work, a constantly crying child, problems in a marriage, exams in school... they all contribute to making you feel stressed out, which in turn can have a major effect on your physical and mental health. According to therapist Hooman Keshavarzi, chronic stress can knock seven years off your life — the same amount of time equated with smoking.
Reactions to this pressure can have a physical manifestation. Farah Hussain Baig, a psychotherapist at InnerVoice Psychotherapy & Consultation in Chicago, Illinois, explains this could be as simple as headaches or digestion problems. “You see that a lot in children,” she says. “They don’t necessarily have the vocabulary to say they’re feeling anxious, so you may see a lot of throwing up. Or, if they’re being bullied in school, you might see a lot of stomach issues.”

Adults and children may also have difficulty sleeping, develop a skin rash, or have slowed-down reaction times. Of course, with any physical symptoms, Baig warns a medical issue has to be ruled out first. If it’s stress-related, those causes can then be dealt with. Other mental symptoms may also emerge, such as a flood of thoughts that are hard to compartmentalize. This can lead to distraction and not being able to focus on tasks that actually need to get done.

It’s also important to realize, she continues, that when people talk about stress, they’re largely referring to anxiety. In a state of anxiety, the body reacts with a fight-or-flight response, which is a reaction to some kind of fear. That fear can be real or perceived, and sometimes that alarm can be helpful. It can make you more alert for a speech you have to make, for example. But, when it’s prolonged, issues arise.

Keshavarzi, director of the Khalil Center, a mental/spiritual wellness center based in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, points out stress essentially breaks down into a discrepancy between available resources and perceived demands. “Fear and stress are designed in the short term to alleviate and to give a person more resources,” he continues. In fight-or-flight mode, the body pumps more adrenaline for more energy and alertness. But, this energy is pulled from other areas, such as the immune system.

“In a very primitive sense, you would run away from something you’re afraid of or attack or fight your enemy. The problem is now in our society where stress becomes chronic or long-term. We don’t have a way to get rid of that stressor, but the body still responds in that way,” Keshavarzi adds. That leads to the immune system shutting down for a long time and the body becoming weaker and prone to illness.

The main piece of advice Baig gives her clients is about managing expectations, prioritizing, and recognizing limitations. “There’s always going to be more emails to check, more tasks to accomplish,” she points out. “I think asking for help can be difficult, especially if you’re an independent person. The key is recognizing there are going to be some times you are going to have to ask for it.” Talking to a friend can also help alleviate concerns. Baig adds that a very simple tool can be writing tasks down. That may help you realize that there really isn’t as much to get done as it initially seemed.

Keshavarzi recommends “self-talk” to flesh out what demands there actually are in your life and what resources you have available to address them. Keshavarzi explains stressed people also tend to “catastrophize” because an initial worry can snowball into making demands seem bigger than they are.

Along those lines, Baig recommends taking a moment to step back and slow down. This could include forcing yourself to schedule a night off or using yoga and meditation to relax. Physical exercise also releases endorphins, raises self esteem, and burns off the excess energy that anxiety brings on. Both meditation and exercise trick your body into thinking the stressor is gone, and your body’s fight-or-flight mode — and the associated adrenaline — starts to dissipate.
“Think about a plastic bag. When you twist it and let it go, it bounces back pretty (quickly). But, if it’s twisted up for a really long time, it’s going to be a lot harder to straighten out. If we’re constantly wound up, it’s going to be really hard to straighten out and relax,” Baig says. “We’re always going to be a little crumpled.”

Many people also turn to food when they are stressed out, but things like fat-laden snacks and caffeine may actually lead to more anxiety. Those who are in the midst of trying to juggle several responsibilities at once may turn to something that will give them a sudden boost of energy, such as sugar, but it will ultimately leave them more tired after a short time.

Jennifer McDaniel, spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, explains that since adrenaline is already raised, an extra jolt of coffee will just exacerbate the situation. Tea, on the other hand, may have a calming effect while also soothing the upset stomach that Baig referred to.

McDaniel recommends eating foods that have a combination of slow-digesting carbohydrates and protein for a prolonged energy source. Some snack possibilities include yogurt, fruit, or high-fiber cereal. “A nutrient-rich diet helps manage symptoms of stress better,” she adds.

Taking a step back can also give perspective and help you frame your problems in a bigger picture, according to Keshavarzi. “We tend to equate a particular demand with needs, and so we need to be able to distinguish between need and luxury and wants,” he explains. For example, wanting a nicer car may not be an issue, but thinking that luxury is a necessity will contribute to added pressure.

At the Khalil Center, Keshavarzi and his fellow therapists also focus on using faith to heal. “When demands are realistic and when resources are limited, that’s where faith becomes a powerful healer,” he adds. “Trusting in [God], saying I don’t have enough resources, this is all I can do.”

Sheikh Mohammed Amin Kholwadia, director of Darul Qasim, an Islamic learning institute based in Glendale Heights, Illinois, believes management often begins before actual stress is realized. “In the morning or the evening, when you have time for yourself and you’re not focusing or concentrating on the work at hand, then you develop a certain durability level, a level of emotional stamina, a resilience and resistance to these types of pressures,” he says. The everyday acts of a Muslim — prayer, reading Quran, helping others, giving charity — also help regulate anxiety, he adds.

Kholwadia says the macro idea to keep in mind is that God tells us to be ready for struggle and to also strive for things in life. With that comes the micro of hurdles, handicaps, and detours. If, for example, you’re faced with a delayed or canceled flight, you have to deal with the problem. “Be patient about it. You may feel that you’ve been wronged, that’s fine, but there’s nothing you can do about it except bear with whatever’s
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happening at the moment," he adds. “A positive approach to a problem usually helps you manage the stress better.”

Kholwadia cites Surat al-Baqarah (The Cow) as an example given in Islam of how to handle problems: ‘And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, Who, when disaster strikes them, say, ‘Indeed we belong to God, and indeed to Him we will return.’ Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided” (2:155-157).

Kholwadia also runs Ustaad, a company that deals with stress management. Depending on the situation, he may prescribe meditations that are based on the prayers and recommendations of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]). Taking five to ten minutes for dhikr, or remembrance of God, can make those who are anxious feel more in control of their situation. Keshavarzi adds that this meditation can come in the form of deep breathing combined with imagining God’s light enveloping you.

When stress gets to a point that it becomes unmanageable, however, it may be time to turn to a professional. The larger factors in life — a death, loss of a job, health issues — can become insurmountable unless you have the tools a licensed counselor can provide.

NADIA MALIK holds a degree in journalism and is a former reporter for a Chicago-area newspaper. She has written for websites and publications and has also worked for several non-profit organizations.

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Being a politically charged food subject, GMO is not an acronym taken lightly. Regardless of peoples’ GMO knowledge, most have an opinion: “It’s not natural!” “The science is good!” “It’s making us sick!” “It’s perfectly safe!” For the number of articles declaring GMOs evil, there are a competing number affirming their safety and benefits. All of the information can be stressful for the health and environmentally conscious consumer. What exactly are GMOs and how do they affect our world?

What’s A GMO?
“I know it’s like, some corn, bad stuff, right?”

Jimmy Kimmel, popular comedian and television host, recently aired a segment on his late-night show asking random Americans, “What’s a GMO?” Most people who answered said that they think GMOs are bad and prefer to avoid them, but they couldn’t explain why. For comedic relief, it’s likely editors cut out people who understood GMOs, but the segment did uncover how media and marketing compels people to subscribe to a particular, ideological opinion without reason. So, what is a GMO?

GMO stands for ‘genetically modified organism.’ Through genetic engineering (GE), GMOs are created in a lab by taking genes from one living organism and implanting them into the DNA of another living organism. While in the past farmers have selectively bred and cross-bred varieties of a plant within the same species altering genetics to create better plants and vegetables, genetic engineers may transfer the genes from one species into an entirely different species, creating transgenic organisms. This means, for example, that a disease-resistant trait from a bacterium may be introduced into the DNA of a vegetable to help it resist diseases or frost.

All GMOs are unique entities engineered with traits serving different purposes; GMO corn differs from GMO soy or...
GMO cotton. GMOs have been around for the past thirty years and continue to be a growing sector of biotechnology. Today we have verified GMO versions of corn, canola, cotton, papaya, soy, sugar beets, and zucchini, while others are being tested. Derivatives of these plants, mainly corn and soy, can be found in packaged foods in United States supermarkets. Noted in National Geographic in 2002, more than 60 percent of processed food in the United States contains some trace of GMOs and the number is greater today. This field of biotechnology has come with loads of skepticism, criticism, and politicization of its effects on humans and the environment.

ARE GMOs SAFE TO EAT?

For laypeople, we can only trust evidence based on what we read from scientists or those who have extensive food science knowledge. The problem is that many articles are devoid of science-based reasoning, and those that aren’t often summarize data instead of displaying specific information from scientific studies. Reading and interpreting scientific studies on our own can be challenging, so we must consider what the majority of scientists and world science and health organizations have to say. There have been over a thousand studies over the past decade examining the effects of GMOs on living beings with a majority of the world’s scientists coming to a consensus: GMOs pose no new risks to humans.

Prominent American astrophysicist Neil Degrasse Tyson recently criticized the anti-GMO movement for rejecting all GMO subject matter instead of identifying specific issues. He supports GE, stating that it is just a new way of doing what farmers have done in the past with genetic alteration in seeds, and that there is no evidence to suggest it is harmful. Jon Entine, science journalist and executive director of Genetic Literacy Project, recently wrote an article in Forbes Magazine grounding the ideological discussion of GMOs in science. He notes that over a hundred independent science organizations in the world including the American Medical Association, the European Commission, the National Academy of Sciences, and the World Health Organization have determined that GMOs are as safe as conventional crops.

In his article, Entine also mentioned that there are no tests on humans for food or drugs except for monitoring, so animal feeding studies are the foundation for GMO tests. Cattle have been monitored for illness and growth, as well as their ability to produce dairy; mortality rate is also monitored in poultry. There has been no strong evidence concluding that GMOs pose a health risk to animals or to humans who eat GMO-fed animals. Technically, one can say people alive today are test-subjects, but no studies have conclusively linked any health issues to GMOs.

Well, Are There Potential Risks?
The risks with GMOs are the same as with any other foods. In the past there have been peanut butter recalls for Salmonella, multiple e.coli outbreaks from spinach and other vegetables and meats, and other health risks caused by conventional and organic foods. GMOs don't pose any greater risk. Just like contaminations happen with conventional food items, GMOs have the same risk, as in the StarLink controversy case when GMO corn meant only for animal feed was discovered in Taco Bell taco shells.

Criticisms: Regulations, Pesticides, And Profit

Dissenting organizations do exist, such as the American Academy of Environmental Medicine and Union of Concerned Scientists who argue that GE crops are not sufficiently tested because the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers GMOs to be the same as conventional crops; they contend that because these crops have genetic additives, they should be treated similarly to chemical additives, including more regulations and labels to educate consumers.

Biotechnology Coordinator of the FDA, Jim Maryanski, PhD, confirms that if GMOs are essentially similar to already approved conventional items, they are safe and do not need further approval to be used in foods. If a GMO is quite different from what has already been approved as safe, the FDA must test and approve it before it is allowed in foods.

Charles Margulis, genetic engineering specialist at environmental nonprofit Greenpeace, believes that the United States government is keeping the public in the dark about GE foods because the FDA will not approve GMO labeling, which would educate consumers and give them a choice. Martina McGloughlin, PhD, director of biotechnology and life sciences informatics programs at UC Davis, understands why the FDA does not require labeling:

“[…] the focus up until now had been on the product, not the process by which it’s produced […] Agricultural practices or processing practices have never been a requirement of labeling. And now suddenly they are, which is a total departure from the way regulations have been put into place on both sides of the Atlantic.”

Margulis believes that GMOs should be banned because he contends that the negative effects are unknown. Many nonprofits focusing on environmental and food issues share his position, including the Center for Food Safety, Food and Water Watch, Friends of the Earth, and Organic Consumers Association, who have been successful at keeping GMO salmon from supermarkets. In a recent article in The Guardian, Marc Gunther writes that most of the public opposes GMOs because many of these nonprofits, deemed more trustworthy than corporations or government, have taken that position. He makes a valid point that NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and nonprofits suffer from similar temptations and outside pressures as corporations, and their positions should be scrutinized just as much.
As a food writer for Grist, Nathanael Johnson has researched, interviewed scientists, and analyzed various aspects of GMOs. He states that when it comes to the environment, GMOs have contributed to less insecticide usage because some crops, specifically corn, are engineered to produce Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis), an insect-resistant bacterium. Less insecticide needs to be sprayed on crops and, because it only harms a small set of insects, predator insects survive and can kill other crop-threatening pests. While some insects are becoming resistant to Bt crops and results with Bt crops vary throughout the world, chemical insecticide use is still declining in the United States.

Johnson also writes that GMOs have contributed to an increase in herbicide glyphosate usage. Because farmers plant glyphosate-resistant crops and glyphosate kills weeds well, they spray more often than usual; however, glyphosate-resistant weeds are spreading and farmers are considering stronger, more dangerous chemicals. While glyphosate is a mild and safe herbicide, its effects are potentially harmful. In Mother Jones, Tom Philpott presents results from studies indicating that GMO soy averages significant glyphosate residue; while the amount is well below the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) limit, glyphosate also seeps into our water and air supply creating uncertainty in how much glyphosate people ingest. Some studies have shown that small levels of glyphosate produce changes in some species, such as harming the beneficial gut bacteria in chickens, while Salmonella is resistant. The effects of glyphosate are still unclear, and many agree on more tests and decreasing its use. According to Johnson, Monsanto, who makes the glyphosate-resistant crops and glyphosate herbicide Roundup, has encouraged farmers to continue these dangerous tactics, claiming there is no problem, presumably to maximize profit.

Oftentimes, supporters of GMOs assert that they are necessary to feed impoverished populations and the growing, overpopulated world. While the technology can be used to solve major, agricultural problems globally, it is clear that the Big Agriculture corporations like Monsanto, Dow, and Syngenta, who corner the GE market, have no real interest in feeding the hungry. The developed agricultural system and its dependence on pesticides is more to blame for harming the environment than GE technology. Johnson believes that more long-term, realistic solutions must be made in order to keep the environment safe and healthy.

**Tampering With Nature... Is That Halal?**

One of the main issues with GMOs regarding Islam is that modifying living things is not permissible; however, if its purpose prevents harm or is used to benefit people then
it is permissible. Isabel Schatzschneider from the Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics writes in 2013 that some religious leaders conclude that there isn't enough evidence determining the overall effects of GMOs on humanity and the environment to establish their permissibility. Despite this skepticism amongst some scholars, the Islamic Jurisprudence Council has concluded that genetically engineered crops to date are halal. Sheikh Rachid Belbachir, IFANCA's resident religious scholar, agrees that if it is not harmful to man or animal then it is halal. Since GMO opponents have not provided concrete evidence to suggest GMOs are harmful, he says that they are then permissible until proven otherwise.

Ongoing discussion regarding halal certification of GMOs includes potential issues if DNA is engineered from forbidden foods. For instance, if the DNA from a pig was taken and placed into the DNA of another organism, can that new GMO be halal since its original source is not halal? Sheikh Belbachir remarks, “If it is from haram [forbidden] and it did go through istihala [transformation] process, most of today's scholars consider it to be halal.”

The World Halal Forum in 2010 in Malaysia also established that GE crops are halal and can be beneficial; however, they formed a resolution stating that more Islamic scholars should be involved in scientific discussions about biotechnology and GMOs. As biotechnology prospers and transgenic crops increase, halal certification will face new challenges in determining the source of GE food.

What Does This All Mean?
Unlike the Jimmy Kimmel segment, if you really asked random Americans about GMOs, they would each provide different answers. Some are skeptical of GMOs, some want to embrace the science, and others are somewhere in between, taking the attitude, “If it hasn’t harmed me yet, then I see no problem with it.” Health-conscious individuals tend to be more skeptical of GMOs, and others have more disdain for corporations like Monsanto than the technology itself.

It's normal to fear changes in systems that affect us; it's good to be cautious, particularly with what we put in our bodies and spread to the environment. It's not practical, however, to completely deny technological innovations without proper analysis. Regarding genetic engineering, one should neither completely accept nor refuse the technology, but instead be open and honest about its various facets. We already live in a world with GMOs. They aren't going anywhere and there will be more to come. We can halt innovation or proceed with a healthy dose of realistic skepticism to create a more positive future.

ANNAN SHEHADI is a graphic designer from the Chicago area. She has an MA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her interests include writing, research, food, tea, and natural living.

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Imagine a food so valuable that ancient Egyptians used it as money, ancient Sumerians wrote about it on their world renowned clay tablets, ancient Romans used it to pay taxes, and my mom insists on stopping at the farmers market to pick up a jar or two, even when it’s cold outside. This food does exist and is not caviar or sushi...it’s honey. Honey has a diverse range of uses, described in the Quran and current media, with two of the most well-known being medicine and food.

In the Quran it says, “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” (16:68-69). According to Hadith, the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]) said, “Make use of the two remedies: honey and the Quran” (Tirmidhi) and “Honey is a remedy for every illness and the Quran is a remedy for all illness of the mind, therefore I recommend to you both remedies, the Quran and honey” (Bukhari).

HONEY AS MEDICINE
The Prophet (PBUH) is known to have recommended honey for ailments. However, religion is not the only place where honey is lauded for its medicinal qualities. In the article “Honey’s Unknown Benefits,” Dr. Lindsey Duncan, a well-known neuropathic doctor and nutritionist, writes that honey’s antibacterial properties can help prevent infections, and its thickness can prevent dirt and bacteria from making their way into small wounds. Scientists have already begun to use honey as a way to prevent the proliferation of bacteria, and at the Society for General Microbiology conference in England, honey was discussed as a possible method for reducing antibiotic resistance, as described by reporter Cynthia Graber in the April 2011 issue of the Scientific American.

According to a report compiled by Reza Yaghoobi, Afshin Kazerouni, and Ory Kazerouni published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information, “Honey has antioxidant, anti-bacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties [...] can be used as a wound dressing to promote rapid and improved healing [...] leads to pain relief in burn patients and decreased inflammatory response in such patients [...].” The report goes on to say that these benefits can be attributed to honey’s hydrogen peroxide and antioxidant content, as well as its antibacterial action, high acidity, and osmotic effects. The report concluded by saying, “Honey has almost equal or slightly superior effects when compared with conventional treatments for acute wounds and superficial partial thickness burns.” However, it is recognized that more research is needed before honey has a solid recommendation for commercial medical use.

AN ALTERNATIVE SWEETENER
The prospect of dabbing honey on an oozing cut isn’t particularly attractive; the culinary uses are much more appealing. With sugar substitutes such as Splenda and Equal being attacked by the health world, honey is praised as an all natural alternative. According to Women’s Health magazine, “Nicola Starkey, PhD, a senior lecturer at the University of Waikato in New Zealand, recommends that you substitute sugar with honey anytime you would normally go for the white stuff or artificial sweeteners.”

You can add a spoon of honey in your tea in place of sugar, but honey can also be used as a replacement for sugar in recipes. Since honey is sweeter than sugar, use about half or one third as much honey as the recipe calls for to replace granulated or table sugar. Honey contains more than 10 percent water (around 17 percent on average), so reduce the liquid needed in the recipe by one fifth. If baking sweets, the oven temperature should be reduced by 25 degrees Fahrenheit when honey is used. To keep honey from sticking to utensils, coat them lightly with a vegetable spray. It’s helpful to use honey in baked goods being shipped long distances, such as when mailed to your college student, as it can help foods retain moisture. Honey can also be used as a glaze on baked and roasted foods since it promotes browning or used as a seasoning for fish and cold meats. It is also useful for stabilizing salad dressings. Mix honey in your yogurt and you get a healing dose of antibacterials and probiotics. Raw honey also has its benefits. Honeycomb, the purest form of honey, has many of the same benefits as liquid honey, but can be eaten in the solid form. It tastes great when paired with apples or cheese. Honey right from the honey comb also has all the main amino acids.

Whether straight from the honey comb or out of a bear-shaped bottle, honey has loads of benefits. It’s delicious, sweet as sugar, and has enough medical benefits to be given a chapter in a medical textbook. 

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

WWW.IFANCA.ORG
In an attempt to help prevent neural tube defects in the developing embryo, more than 70 countries around the world, including the United States, require that their flour be fortified with folic acid. Unfortunately, the amount currently required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) pales in comparison to what is needed to effectively combat neural tube defects. In order for women who may become pregnant to better ensure that their baby is born without this potentially life threatening disease the United States would need to at least double the amount that the average woman consumes, mainly from fortified bread. As a result, the realistic option is for women to take folic acid supplements on a daily basis before they become pregnant. So, “take the pills,” you might say. The problem is that neural tube defects occur in the embryo before a woman would know she is pregnant. The American Medical Association and the March of Dimes have been calling for the FDA to increase the amount of folic acid required in flour, but to no avail.

Zainab Al Bagdadi, an educator, and her son Ali, of Palatine, Illinois, were alarmed by the statistics. Al Bagdadi emphasized, “The government should make people aware of that and it should be advertised. They should educate people better.” Though she was blessed with two healthy pregnancies, she did not know that women were supposed to take folic acid supplements before becoming pregnant. “I just took the prenatal vitamins after I was pregnant. I was always concerned about the ingredients [in the vitamins I used to take] and their halal status.”

Ali was also disturbed by the numbers he discovered coming from the United Kingdom. Each year between 700 and 900 pregnancies are affected by neural tube defects in the United Kingdom, where flour is not fortified with folic acid. The United Kingdom experiences the highest rate of neural tube defects in all of Europe.

Folate and folic acid: they are basically the same. Folate is the term used for it when it is in its naturally occurring state, such as in fruits and vegetables, whereas folic acid is the term for the synthetic vitamin you would find on a fortified bread label and in supplements. Folic acid is a water soluble vitamin, meaning it leaves the body in urine each day and your body does not store the vitamin, as occurs with fat soluble vitamins.
This means we need to consume folic acid on a daily basis. It is responsible for helping to form red blood cells and synthesize DNA. Correspondingly, a lack of sufficient folic acid in the newly pregnant mother can result in a neural tube defect in her unborn child, such as spina bifida. Spina bifida is one of the most common birth defects, affecting one in every one thousand births throughout the world.

Since every woman should use folic acid supplements during her childbearing years, they should be taken at some point by half of the human population. Understandably, Muslim women may be concerned if folic acid supplements are halal. Dr. Mian Riaz, director of the Food Protein R&D Center at Texas A&M University explains, “I will say it is mashbooh [doubtful], since during the making of synthetic folic acid you can add some ingredients, chemicals, and additives which may not be halal.” Dr. Riaz explains that if all the chemicals and additives which are used are known, then a food scientist can determine if the synthetic folic acid is halal or not. All ingredients in IFANCA halal-certified supplements are researched to ensure their halal status. Look for the Crescent-M symbol on the product label to be sure your product is IFANCA halal-certified.

IFANCA® has certified a number of folic acid products including products made by Boscogen, Inc., Nutrilite, and Pharmavite LLC. Look for the Crescent-M symbol on the product labels. Please note that not all of these products are available in every market. Check the website for regional availability. [IFANCA]

SUZANN AUDI earned her master’s degree in food science from Kansas State University. She lives in Illinois and enjoys volunteering at her mosque and children’s school.
As Muslims, we often find ourselves reading food labels to ensure the halal status. But would you think to do so in the cosmetics aisle?

Shamalia Mohamed did. She is the founder of Amara Cosmetics, the first company in North America to provide only halal-certified makeup manufactured in the United States. Mohamed explains, “I wanted to create a brand for Muslim ladies where they don’t need to read the cosmetic labels before they purchase the products.”

Many mainstream cosmetics are made with alcohol, gelatin, and animal fats, though the labels often don’t spell them out in terms most of us are familiar with.

Concerned about the ingredients in the makeup you’re currently using? With Amara Cosmetics, you don’t have to be. Mohamed insists she “wanted to make it easy for our [Muslim] community.” What could be easier than looking for the Crescent-M logo? All Amara products are halal-certified by IFANCA, except, of course, for the makeup brushes, and they all display the Crescent-M logo on the outside packaging.

Mohamed chose IFANCA for halal certification because she felt comfortable discussing the project with IFANCA staff. “The staff was very helpful in guiding me with the ingredients and all the procedures that went into developing the product.” Still, she admits it was very challenging in the beginning to obtain this halal status. She says the factories she was working with needed to alter their formula according to IFANCA requirements, as many of the ingredients found in mainstream products do not comply with halal standards.

Currently, Amara Cosmetics can only be purchased online at www.amaracosmetics.com. But, Mohamed has her sights set on making Amara available in retail stores. “It’s important that the cosmetics industry makes halal an accessible option for practicing Muslims.” As a consumer, you can help in this endeavor by making it known there is a demand for halal products wherever you usually purchase your makeup.

Mohamed is doing her fair share of spreading the word to the Muslim public that “halal isn’t limited to what is consumed as food but also applies to what is put on our skin.” She’s taken Amara overseas to trade shows in Dubai and participated in local community events to educate Muslims on the need for her products.

As stated on the website, “We can all be pretty and worry free.”

Got a question? Contact Amara Cosmetics at 818.783.6126 or via email at info@amaracosmetics.com.

Spotlight on an IFANCA Halal-Certified Company

IFANCA halal-certified Amara Cosmetics include:

- Lipstick
- Lip gloss
- Pressed powder foundation
- Liquid foundation
- Blush/bronzer
- Eyeshadow
- Mascara

Check out the article on page 28 (“Caring for the Skin God Gave Us”) to learn more about the relationship between skincare and halal status.
Olive & Cheese Bruschetta

By YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RDN, LD

SERVINGS: 4

INGREDIENTS
- 1 cup plum tomatoes, diced and seeded
- ¼ cup chopped green olives
- ¼ cup chopped black olives
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and crushed
- 16 (¼-inch thick) slices French bread baguette
- 1 cup Cabot Seriously Sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded

DIRECTIONS
1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. Combine first 7 ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.
3. Arrange French bread slices on a baking sheet.
4. Bake until lightly browned and crisp.
5. Remove toast slices from oven and cool 2 minutes.
6. Sprinkle cheese thinly on 1 side of each toast and top with the olive mixture.
**Vegetable Curry**

By YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RDN, LD

SERVINGS: 4

**INGREDIENTS**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 2 red potatoes, cubed
- ¼ head of cauliflower, chopped
- 1 cup mushrooms, chopped
- 1 tablespoon curry paste
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 1 (15-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- ½ cup chickpeas
- 1 ½ cup Saffron Road™ All Natural Classic Culinary Vegetable Broth
- ½ cup frozen peas
- ¼ cup fresh coriander, chopped

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté onion until soft, then add in carrots, potatoes, cauliflower, and mushrooms. Continue to cook for 2 to 3 minutes.

2. Stir in curry paste and garam masala. Add tomatoes, chickpeas, and vegetable stock. Bring to a boil.

3. Cook on a low simmer, stirring occasionally, for approximately 45 minutes.

4. Stir in the frozen peas and simmer another 5 minutes.

5. Serve topped with fresh coriander.

*Curry paste is available at your local Indian grocer or in the supermarket’s ethnic foods section.*
Apple Spice Cake

By Kristin M Pufpaff, DVM, Veterinarian

INGREDIENTS

- 1 2/3 cup flour
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ teaspoon allspice
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ½ cup applesauce*
- 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar

*One apple can replace the applesauce but a little more water will be needed.

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In an 8 x 8 x 2-inch pan, mix all ingredients together. That’s right, you mix it right in the pan! Batter should be slightly thinner than typical cake batter. This is important; if it is too thick, add a little more water.
3. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until knife comes out clean. Sprinkle powdered sugar or drizzle caramel over the top, if desired.

Served warm with ice cream, it completes any nice meal. On its own, this cake is vegan friendly!

Note: To make a chocolate version of this cake, use one cup of water and omit apple sauce and allspice. Reduce cinnamon to ½ teaspoon and add ½ cup cocoa or carob powder and ½ teaspoon red pepper. You can sprinkle the top of the batter with coconut or chips of any flavor you like.

Remember, this recipe has no eggs, so feel free to taste the batter and adjust spices to your liking. ☺️
I rushed to a sink to clean the balm from my lips. The balm that had faithfully kept my lips free from cracking in harsh Chicago winters. I glanced at the suds on my hands. My head began to whirl, trying to grasp the task at hand. I started making mental notes: lip balm, hand soap, deodorant, and lotion. My list of skincare products to check for halal status was quickly growing. I had known about halal as applied to food, dress, and personal character. But my lip balm, God cares about that also?

Blessings come from striving to obey our Creator, as I was reminded after that first experience. When we accept to abstain from pork and alcohol but resist to give up our favorite lip balm even though it contains haram [forbidden] ingredients, what message are we sending to God? Will we consent only when convenient? “And [yet], among the people are those who take other than God as equals [to Him]. They love them as they [should] love God” (Quran 2: 165). This verse applies not only to praying to or following a deity other than God, but to holding anything as more important than God’s will.

Why are some skincare products haram? I asked IFANCA Food Scientist Dr. Rafi Shaik, what are some ingredients Muslims need to be aware of that may be haram. The answer was both logical and shocking. Glycerin and alcohol by-products were two understandable ingredients of which to be mindful. Glycerin keeps our skin soft, smooth, and lubricated. Vegetable glycerin is halal, but beware of animal-derived glycerin.

And on to the shocking: I was stunned to learn from Dr. Shaik that human-derived stem cells are found in some skincare products, specifically, certain anti-aging products.

Selecting halal-certified skincare products can be effortless. Amara Cosmetics offers a complete line of IFANCA halal-certified cosmetics including liquid and powder...
foundation, blush and bronzer, eye shadow, lipstick, and lip gloss. Shamalia Mohamed, owner and founder of Amara, explained how she became interested in halal cosmetics and the difficulties in creating a natural, halal product.

“During my MBA, I had done a research paper on cosmetics and started to learn about the different contents that go into developing formulas for cosmetics and I came to realize that a lot of the contents are not permissible for Muslims. From there I was very determined to create a makeup brand that is targeted to Muslim women, or anyone who desires to use products that are all natural. It was very challenging in the beginning, but after working with several chemists we created Amara Halal Cosmetics. They are made from natural ingredients that are extracted from plants, not animals, and are paraben-free, gluten-free, petrochemicals-free, and vegan friendly.”

Hina Razvi, a children’s book author, can attest to the need for natural products. “There came a time in my late twenties when my skin became very sensitive and I actually needed to maintain my skin. I noticed that some of the chemical-filled products were abrasive and irritating. I always knew that all-natural is better, since we are pretty particular with that in terms of the food we eat [as Muslims], so I transferred it to other things as well. Once I started using the all-natural products, I noticed a difference right away!”

By being part of an organic coop, Fizza Hussain Razvi, a graduate student in mental health counseling, was able to easily find halal soaps, lotions, shampoos, and skincare products. How did she come to this simple solution without necessarily having to rely on hours of internet searches and contacting manufacturers? “I am a curious person and make it my business to educate myself about everything around me, especially when it comes to religious and spiritual matters. It was many years ago that I started reading up on what goes into things I eat, wear, or use on my body.” Razvi continues, “This opened many doors of information at a time when most people did not have any idea that animal products are used in skin care products.”

Whether purchasing halal skincare products through a local coop, natural store, or directly through a company’s website, halal options are more available than we may realize. You can buy Amara Cosmetics from their website, www.amaracosmetics.com, and you can find more halal-certified skincare products by visiting www.ifanca.org. Just click the Certified Products tab and search for Cosmetics or Personal Care Products.

IFANCA® has certified a number of personal care and cosmetics products. In addition to Amara brand products, Sunrider International has a full line of cosmetics including lip gloss, eyeshadow, foundation, nail lacquer, as well as lotions and gels. Tom’s of Maine offers a line of dental and personal hygiene products. Aloe Vera of America, Inc. offers lotion, shampoo, and scrub; CC Pollen offers masques; 4Life Research offers lotions and creams; Melaleuca, Inc. offers soaps, body washes, scrubs, shampoos, lotions, creams, and lip balms; Usana Health Science, Inc. offers skin care products and shampoos; and XanGo LLC offers creams and lotions. All the products are halal-certified by IFANCA. Look for the Crescent-M symbol on the labels. Please note not all of these products are available in every market. Check the website for regional availability. [IFANCA]
Vegan Muslims

PLANT-BASED AND PROUD

By Kelly Izdihar Crosby
Within the past few years, vegan and vegetarian dishes have become very popular. More restaurants and grocery stores are offering meatless options to their customers. Meatless Mondays have been embraced by many Americans who are looking for ways to incorporate more vegetables into their diet. With a focus on environmental sustainability, health concerns, and the knowledge of what takes place in modern slaughterhouses, many have chosen to refrain from eating meat, dairy, and other animal byproducts. Muslims have joined the ranks by becoming vegetarians or vegans. They have even created their own online groups such as Be Muslim. Be Vegan. Be Proud; Raw Vegan Muslims; and the Vegetarian Muslim Society.
For those unfamiliar with the latest in vegan cuisine, sometimes the words vegetarian and vegan are used interchangeably. There are key differences between the two terms. A vegetarian avoids eating all meat, poultry, seafood, and the flesh of animals. Vegetarians follow a variety of different diet regimens. Some vegetarians include eggs and dairy products into their diet while other vegetarians avoid them. Vegans avoid all red meat, poultry, and seafood but also eschew honey, dairy products, eggs, beeswax, and all animal-based products. Veganism is also supported by the belief that animals should not be used for human consumption.

There are many reasons why some Muslims choose to follow a vegan diet. For some, their choices are often rooted in environmental and health concerns. Other vegan Muslims consider the modern American method of raising and slaughtering animals as not in line with the Islamic principles of animal welfare. Some Muslims only consume meat that is organic, grass-fed, pasture-raised, and slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines. Because these kind of slaughterhouses are still rare, some have chosen to avoid eating meat altogether in order to avoid any doubt of its halal quality.

The huge demand for meat worldwide has led to the creation of Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs), agricultural enterprises where animals are kept and raised in confined situations for at least 45 days out of the year. AFOs also congregate animals, feed, manure and urine, dead animals, and production operations on a small land area. When the number of animals is great, e.g. at least a thousand cattle, or ten thousand sheep, the operation is classified as a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO). Since the animals are confined, rather than roaming a pasture for food, feed, typically cheap grain, is brought to them. According to the United State Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there are approximately 450,000 AFOs in the United States, with 15 percent of them being considered CAFOs. While truly halal meat should not come from animals raised in this manner, some Muslims do not feel confident that they can obtain meat that is truly halal, i.e. free to roam the pasture, fed a healthy diet, and slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines.

Some Muslims choose a vegan diet simply because of their love for animals. Many of them belong to animal advocacy groups, such as the American Humane Society, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), that work to protect and nurture all forms of animal life. These vegan Muslims apply the following hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]) as reported by Abu Hurairah (may God be pleased with him): When asked if we should be rewarded for showing kindness to animals, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “A reward is given in connection with every living creature” (Bukhari and Muslim). Additionally, they can apply the verse in the Quran that states, “And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered” (6:38). This basically compares the lives of animals to that of humans; they behave in a similar manner and shall meet the same fate in the end. God also declares that Earth was created for all creatures (“And the earth He laid [out] for the creatures” [55:10]), which some interpret as reason to treat animals in the same way as humans.

The production of meat also raises concern for the environment. The EPA admits that manure and wastewater from AFOs have the potential to contribute pollutants to the environment and can contaminate drinking water supplies drawn from groundwater. Additionally, a study published in July in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences reveals that animal agriculture is responsible for about one-fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. In Ibrahim Abdul-Matin’s book Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet, Zachary Twist, a convert to Islam and a vegan long before embracing the religion states, “My central motivation for all of this, including my diet choices, is simply treading lightly upon the Earth. I concluded at one point in my life that if I can minimize the degradation and suffering caused by my lifestyle, without an excessive amount of cost or inconvenience, why shouldn’t I? To me, treading lightly is an Islamic precept.”

In a world with a growing human population and dwindling natural resources, eating a diet rich in vegetables can improve our health and conserve global water supplies. Shireen Hakim, a registered dietician, is author of The Meatless Protein Cookbook. She says, “A vegan diet can be an effective temporary tool to treat health issues like obesity and cancer. I personally know people that are slim and trim, thanks to a vegan diet. As a flexitarian
myself, for health and environmental reasons, I relate to vegans’ practice of avoiding certain foods.”

Vegan Muslims do face some criticism for their decisions. There is some peer pressure at Muslim gatherings to eat meat since it is a staple food in many Muslim cultures. Plus, it is considered rude in some cultures not to serve meat to guests. Fellow Muslims contend that by avoiding meat and dairy products, vegan Muslims are attempting to prohibit what is permissible. They point to the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) recommendation of consuming honey, milk, and the moderate consumption of meat. Sheikh Rachid Belbechir says, “As long as they [vegan Muslims] are not claiming that eating meat is haram [forbidden], there is nothing wrong with adhering to a vegan or vegetarian diet.” Hakim says, “Paradoxically, the vegan diet both coincides and contradicts Islamic practice. It follows Islamic recommendations for health and environmental care, but avoids healthy foods that are encouraged in the Quran and Hadith. The Prophet’s (PBUH) habits, including eating habits, are our best example to follow.”

With all diet regimes, there are advantages and disadvantages. Vegans can be deficient in certain nutrients, vitamins, and calcium. Hakim points out, “A vegan diet can be restrictive and difficult to follow long term. It can cause deficiency in key nutrients, namely vitamin B12, calcium, and iodine.” She goes on to state, “Vegans are commonly deficient in B12, with 52 percent deficient. This leads to anemia, depression, stroke, decreased cognition, nerve damage, artery damage, brain shrinkage, and bone damage. This can be avoided with proper B12 supplementation.” There is also a loss of DHA and EPA omega-3 fats because of the absence of fish in the diet. DHA and EPA omega-3 fats are crucial to brain development and neurological health. However, there are vitamin and supplement companies, like Nutrilite and Aloe Vera of America, Inc., which offer these supplements in vegan and vegetarian capsules.*

Despite the challenges they face for their choice, vegan Muslims are confident that they have made the best choice in regard to their lives, their environment, and their faith. As Muslims become aware and cognizant of the impact of their eating choices, we will see a future where there is more emphasis on consuming that which is best for our planet, our bodies, and our souls.

**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.

*Aloe Vera of America, Inc. offers halal-certified B12.

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While Muslims may have reasons to be vegan, God clearly allows the eating of meat, seafood, and honey and the drinking of milk. There are many verses in the Quran attesting to this. In fact some verses state that part of the reason for the creation of these animals is for human consumption. So no one should believe that eating meat is against Islamic principles. Some of the references from the Quran regarding meat, seafood, and dairy products are listed here:

“Lawful to you is game from the sea and its food as provision for you and the travelers, but forbidden to you is game from the land as long as you are in the state of ihram (sacred purity). And fear God to whom you will be gathered.” (5:96)

“So eat of that [meat] upon which the name of God has been mentioned, if you are believers in His verses.” (6:118)

“And the grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and [numerous] benefits, and from them you eat.” (16:5)

“And indeed, for you in grazing livestock is a lesson. We give you drink from what is in their bellies — between excretion and blood — pure milk, palatable to drinkers.” (16:66)

“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.” (16:68-69) [IFANCA]
Not all of the company products are halal-certified. Look for the Crescent-M logo on the product label or verify the certification using the Certified Products listing on www.ifanca.org.

## HALAL-CERTIFIED PRODUCT LOCATOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Product Type</th>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Available At</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abbott</td>
<td>Nutritional Products</td>
<td>Abbott Nutrition</td>
<td>Supermarkets and drugstores throughout the United States and Canada</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Infant/Baby Food Products</td>
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<td>Amara</td>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td>Baqi Inc.</td>
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<td>Dairy Products</td>
<td>Baskin Robbins</td>
<td>Baskin Robbins stores throughout the United States</td>
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<td>Food Products</td>
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<td>Cheese</td>
<td>Cabot Creamery</td>
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<td>Bakery Item</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Visit their website for a complete list of locations: <a href="http://www.carolescheesecake.com">www.carolescheesecake.com</a></td>
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<td>Bakery Items</td>
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<td>Candy / Chocolate</td>
<td>Godiva Chocolatier</td>
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<td>Golden Bonbon</td>
<td>Candy / Chocolate</td>
<td>Asti Holdings Ltd.</td>
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<td>Kontos Foods, Inc.</td>
<td>Ethnic (Arab, Indo-Pak) stores and fruit &amp; vegetable markets throughout the</td>
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<td>Mead Johnson Nutritionals</td>
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<td>Desert Mixes</td>
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<td>spices &amp; seasonings</td>
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<td>dairy products</td>
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<td>drink mixes, dessert mixes</td>
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<td>Nutritional Supplements</td>
<td>Access Business Group, LLC</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.nutrilite.com">www.nutrilite.com</a></td>
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## Halal-Certified Product Locator

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<td>Dairy Products</td>
<td>Cropp Cooperative/ Organic Valley</td>
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<td>American Halal Co., Inc.</td>
<td>Target, Whole Foods, Kroger, Publix, HEB and various markets throughout the United States</td>
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<td>Tea</td>
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<td>Wonderful</td>
<td>Pistachios and Almonds</td>
<td>Paramount Farms</td>
<td>Supermarkets and drugstores throughout the United States</td>
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To help the polar bear, we’re partnering with World Wildlife Fund to help protect its Arctic home. To raise awareness and additional support for this initiative, we’re turning our cans and bottle caps white, and inviting the world to join us in our effort to create an Arctic refuge. By working with local communities, supporting research and through additional conservation work, WWF will strive to protect the space the polar bear so desperately needs and help ensure they have a place to call home. Arctic Home is just one example of our efforts to effect positive change in the world as part of our Live Positively commitment. LEARN MORE AT ARCTICHOME.COM