How Does Your Indoor Garden Grow? P4
Battling the Winter Blues: Seasonal Affective Disorder P13
Exceptional Food of the Quran: Figs P18

Discover
HALAL COOKING CLUB P30
J&M® halal certified meals use only wholesome ingredients and have NO MSG, NO SOY, and NO ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS OR COLORS. Six varieties are gluten-free. Each meal is fully cooked and is conveniently packaged in either 10 oz. (283 g) microwaveable serving dishes or 8 oz. (227 g) travel and camping pouches. Reheat to eat in minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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DHABIHA HALAL

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Editor’s Note

Assalamu Alaikum

Winter is officially upon us. Comforting meals are starting to make a regular rotation on the dinner table, whether that means lasagna or lentils, mac n’ cheese or maqluba. But sometimes creative chefs give these classics a makeover. I once heard of a woman who decided to make her maqluba healthier by using quinoa instead of rice. I find this “Classic with a Twist” interesting; my husband deems it sacrilege. What do you think?

For many, winter means frigid temps and short days. This can lead to a poor attitude and sadness. Did you know the winter blues is a real disorder, aptly called Seasonal Affective Disorder? Check out “Battling the Winter Blues” to learn more about it.

Exercise can often boost your mood in the colder months. For some, heading to the health club is part of a daily routine year-round. Are you a gym rat who consumes protein shakes to help bulk up? Do those shakes contain whey? What about your breakfast yogurt? You may be surprised to learn there are many foods that contain whey and not all whey is considered halal. In “The ‘Whey’ of the World,” you’ll discover all there is to know on the subject.

Do you or your child suffer from eczema? Read up on “Itching for a Cure” for some helpful tips on relieving the irritating symptoms of the disease.

Foods from the Quran and Sunnah can often be healing. Learn about the benefits of adding figs to your diet in “Exceptional Food of the Quran: Figs,” and try out a few of the fig recipes included in this issue.

Speaking of figs, have you ever thought of growing your own fig tree indoors? Or any other produce or herbs? Gardening doesn’t have to end with the summer as you’ll learn in “How Does Your Indoor Garden Grow?”

You’ll definitely want to flip to our feature story about a group of women who created their own “Halal Cooking Club.” While the club does have rules, we’re lucky one of them isn’t, “You do not talk about Cooking Club.” You might be inspired to get your friends together and start your own club after you see the amazing displays these ladies are putting together.

We’ve included a wide variety of recipes in the issue. Hope you’ll give some a try and let us know what you think via our Facebook page or Twitter account!

Happy reading!

Sincerely,

Alia Shalabi content manager
Assalamu Alaikum

In the early hours of November 24, it was with great sadness and a heavy heart that I received the news of the passing of Dr. Ahmad H. Sakr. I have known Dr. Sakr for nearly 40 years. He was my colleague at IFANCA, a friend in life, and confidant in social issues. He preceded me at the University of Illinois where he received his PhD in biochemistry. He was a scientist and a scholar, having received his education from then Grand Mufti of Lebanon.

Dr. Sakr was a visionary. As a student at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon, he saw the need for an organization that would create a bond between Muslim students. He brought the same idea to the United States and founded the Muslim Students’ Association (MSA), which later evolved into the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Dr. Sakr was also a founding member of the World Council of Mosques, Islamic Medical Society of North America, American Islamic College, and a founding member of IFANCA and chairman of its Religious Advisory Council.

Dr. Sakr taught at several universities, including American University of Beirut, Western Illinois University, and National University of Health Sciences (formerly National College). He served as acting president and executive vice president of the American Islamic College in Chicago. He was selected as an outstanding Educator of America in 1973.

Dr. Sakr authored 58 books on various subjects in science, religion, and Islam including A Muslim Guide to Food Ingredients; Understanding Halal Foods: Fallacies & Facts; Gelatin; Shortening in Foods; Food Supplementation; A Handbook of Muslim Foods; Cheese; Dietary Regulations and Food Habits of Muslims; Overeating and Behavior; Alcohol in Islam; Honey: A Food and a Medicine; and Islamic Dietary Laws and Practices (co-authored).

Dr. Sakr was often invited to deliver sermon at Friday prayers throughout the United States. He was also a sought after speaker and fundraiser, traveling wherever he was called to offer his wisdom and help raise funds for worthy causes.

Perhaps most significant of all, Dr. Sakr was a mentor to so many young people who appreciated his nonjudgmental approach and his ability to relate to their needs and mentality. In that capacity, he transformed my thinking too; when I found myself not wanting to pray behind a certain imam in Chicago, he simply asked, “Who do you pray for?” That question never left my mind.

Farewell my friend and the friend of millions. Your generosity and wisdom live on in your extended family and the many lives you touched. May you enjoy the fruits of your efforts in the highest levels of Paradise!

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry  president
In urban landscapes, anyone who wants to have the experience of growing food turns to indoor gardening out of necessity. There simply isn’t much accessibility to outdoor plots in most apartment complexes, and food deserts make produce sparsely accessible. However, even those with expanses of land turn to planting in their homes when they’re slogging through the blustery winter months.

Greens and root vegetables are also a good choice when raising produce in a home, since the amount of light needed is such a critical factor in any cultivating. “In general, if you eat the leaves [of a vegetable], they’ll tolerate the least amount of sun,” explains Melinda Myers, gardening expert and host of The Great Courses “How to Grow Anything: Food Gardening for Everyone” DVD set.

Good inside vegetables include radishes, baby carrots, peas, beans, tomatoes, lettuce, arugula, and microgreens, or the sprouts of leafy greens. Some citrus, surprisingly, can also thrive in unexpected environments if the temperature and lighting are controlled. Meyer lemons are good for beginners, according to Myers, and have the additional benefit of fragrant flowers. Baird also starts her spring and summer seeds in the winter, since it gives them some time to flourish before they are transplanted outside.

The important thing to keep in mind with any interior vegetation is the position of windows: South-facing ones are best, but East and West windows can work in a pinch. “You just have to move your plants back and forth with the sun,” explains Stephen Ouldhouse, an employee at Planet Natural, a gardening supply store. Avoid putting anything that needs sun in a Northern exposure.

Fluorescent and LED lights are also worth the purchase for those who want to expand their plots and ensure that they can control exactly how much luminosity is received. “If you only have the space for indoor growing, a light is worth the investment,” Baird says, since vegetation can require up to 14 hours of light a day, and many winter-ridden states provide much less than that on a daily basis.

Myers also recommends keeping the illumination six inches above any potted growth and placing something reflective underneath, whether it’s a decorative mirror or painted white surface.
Windowsill herb boxes can make a good gift, she suggests, and children can be part of the process of assembling them.

Off-months also provide a good time to experiment. Myers has heard of newer varieties of bananas that may work in lower light conditions. “I have not met anyone who’s had success growing bananas indoors, but that doesn’t mean it won’t happen,” she says. “Part of the fun is experimenting and trying new things. It’s not the same harvest you’re going to get outdoors.”

In Islam, cultivating natural goods is also a form of giving. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]) said, “There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him” (Bukhari).

Children and adults alike are also more prone to eating healthier when they’re the ones actually putting in the time to care for and harvest vegetables. Plus, Ouldhouse thinks there’s something unique about knowing where food comes from and experimenting with new varieties.

“You’re not just limited to a Roma or a cherry tomato from the store; you can really get a lot more and have a lot more options,” he says. “I think [homegrown fruits and vegetables] taste better, too, to be honest. I can really tell the difference.”

Those who are serious about crops year-round can also consider hydroponics, a method of raising edibles and flowers without soil that provides nutrients in a controlled manner. Kits are sold with containers and means to test the pH of non-soil potting materials to gauge the best acidity. It may sound intimidating, but Ouldhouse says once he was able to get a handle on the correct balance of nutrients in a hydroponics system, he cut his time spent on caring for plants to 10 or 15 minutes a day.

Indoor horticulturists also need to keep an eye on the temperature of the house and the amount of moisture in the air, especially in winter months. That may mean a closer monitoring of how often vegetables are watered and testing for dryness. Myers suggests using fingers as a moisture meter. When the potting substance has the consistency of a dry sponge, it likely needs to be watered again.

“It’s just finding that fine line between keeping it very slightly moist and not letting it get too dry,” Myers expands.

Growing material is also important; outside soil won’t work in the home. Potting mixture is a better bet, supplemented with fertilizer, which is likely already included depending on the type of mix. Local garden centers can also help navigate the world of coco coir, perlite, and peat moss, which are basically just different mediums to facilitate healthy farming.

Indoor work may not seem worth it for a smaller ration of crops through some cold months, but working with nature in general has been shown to be beneficial.

“It’s more challenging than gardening outside, but it can be done. There’s so much research on the value of gardening for adults: it calms our mood and reduces blood pressure,” Myers expands. “But, for kids that are involved in nature and gardening, it makes them more focused. Plus, it’s something to keep them busy when they’re inside all winter.”

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.
No, it’s not coffee. It’s Bulletproof coffee, aka buttered coffee, and it’s trending on social media. Made by blending coconut oil and unsalted, grass-fed butter into your coffee, the concoction promises to deliver both “mental clarity and sustained energy,” according to enthusiasts.

Talk about a classic with a twist!

While not all of us have tried it, Bulletproof coffee is very much on the cutting edge of food innovation. A cup of coffee that has had a makeover, it’s a reminder of how often we are oblivious to just how much thought goes into formulating foods. Whether it’s food created in a plant or a meal made from scratch at home, there are some foods that we gravitate towards that much more. Food scientists know exactly what will have us licking our fingers, just as our favorite chefs do.

When Sameena Basha of Rochester, Michigan, lived on campus she often found herself craving haleem, a classic Pakistani comfort food made with meat, wheat, and lentils. When she asked her mother for the recipe, she got one where instant unflavored oats was a substitute ingredient for the wheat, barley, and all the lentils, including chana dal, urad dal, and mung dal.

“What’s this? This isn’t going to taste anything like the original,” was Basha’s flabbergasted reaction. And then she tried the recipe. In came the oats and out went the need to soak the lentils overnight. “It tasted just like it was meant to, rather than a twist on a classic. Twenty years later I don’t even use the classic recipe. My mother’s recipe called for one and a fourth cup of uncooked instant oatmeal for every pound of boneless meat, and the haleem was ready in ten percent of the cooking time,” she says.

“We are here in America, and we have to do what we have to do,” says Basha’s mother, Parveen Quader, also of Rochester, Michigan, where she’s lived for the past 30 years. “I learned to cook after I moved to America and learned by trial and error and by practicing. When I tried the instant oats in my haleem, it turned out nice, so I just started to use that,” she recalls.

Another staple and classic that’s undergone a twist in her kitchen is the milk and rice dessert, kheer. “I use Cream of Rice instead of rice to quicken cooking times, but there is no difference in the taste. People still enjoy it, and it’s [ready in] less than half the cooking time!”

Aasem Khan of Atlanta, Georgia, has a twist on haleem, too. “You do everything like you do with regular haleem. However, instead of beef, you can add textured vegetable protein (TVP) in the same quantity as you would the meat,” he says. “TVP gives the texture of meat, but it takes a lot less time. Given the spices we have in haleem, we can’t tell the difference in taste. In
haleem, the meat pretty much disintegrates in the rest of the ingredients and TVP gives that meaty texture.” TVP is Khan’s replacement for ground beef, in the same proportion, whether he’s making chili or spaghetti sauce. “The spices mask the taste of meat anyway.”

So what prompted Khan’s experiment with TVP? “The decision to become vegan was health-based. Like many South Asians, heart disease and diabetes run in the family, so I wanted to be proactive. So I read up on the benefits of being vegan and I became a weekday vegan. Slowly, I stopped eating meat completely. Today, I am mostly vegan, but sometimes I’ll add dairy.”

Does that mean he spends a lot of time experimenting? The short answer is yes. “I wanted to find more vegan alternatives to egg-based breakfasts,” says Khan. “The pakoda waffle is the best waffle you can have. It’s a fusion recipe. Two cups of chick pea flour to half a teaspoon of baking powder—this is the only proportion to remember; adjust the spices to taste. I add red chili powder, half a teaspoon of salt, and mix in whatever I want, like (finely diced) mushrooms, onions, and pour it into the waffle maker. The steam cooks everything inside, and if you want to make it more moist, add oil to the mix. I serve it with the green chutney and the tamarind-date sauce that you use for samosas.” While the pakoda waffle takes double the time of a regular waffle to make, unlike a regular waffle it now has fiber and unlike a regular pakoda needs no frying. “It tastes awesome, but no milk and eggs are required so it’s vegan-friendly. Anything you eat regularly, you can find a vegan alternative,” insists Khan.

In Sabina Abdul Qadir’s kitchen, wonton wrappers have replaced flour, hand-made wrappers for samosas, fruit juice is a substitute for water in recipes, and cake mix from a box has been used to make doughnuts, pancakes, pie crust, and in place of puff pastry. “It’s the same thing,” says this consummate cook and Naperville, Illinois, resident.

“Everyone has a different lifestyle. For me, it’s about what’s quick and easy,” Abdul Qadir shares. When summer rolls around and she’s inevitably hosting a BBQ for several extended relatives, “quick and easy” is still her M.O. “When it comes to BBQs, I marinate everything just as I would regularly do, but then I bake it till the meat is two thirds done. The next day at the BBQ, we’ll throw it all on the grill, and it’ll be done in half the time. The pre-baking also ensures the meat is cooked all the way.”

What’s cooking in your kitchen? Any new flavors you’re adding to a classic? Send us your thoughts!

NAAZISH YARKHAN has bylines in more than 50 media outlets including Chicago Tribune and Huffington Post.

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Itching for a Cure: Dealing with Eczema

By Shireen Hakim, MS, MPH, RDN
The Disease

Eczema is a chronic inflammatory skin disease characterized by red, itchy, dry, and sometimes scaly skin. A reduced skin barrier function results in moisture loss, leading to the dry, cracked skin. In infants and young children eczema is commonly found on the face, neck, cheeks, and scalp. In older children and adults it’s found on the forearms, elbows, and knees.

Eczema disorder is more common during the early stages of life, affecting 20 percent of infants, 15 percent of children, and (up to) 10 percent of adults. Mubaraka Abdullah*, who lives in California, says her two-year-old son Isa* developed severe generalized eczema when he was four months old, but it has since improved and localized.

Eczema results from a hypersensitive immune system that attacks harmless substances in the body. “It is an immune response similar to an allergic response,” explains allergist immunologist and American Muslim Health Professionals board member Dr. Naba Sharif, of Maryland. There are many interwoven factors that can lead to eczema—namely heredity, allergies, environmental irritants, an unhealthy digestive tract, and stress.

Often a child will get eczema if his/her parents have or had it; there’s a 60 percent chance if one parent carries the gene and 80 percent if both do. Accordingly, Abdullah says Isa’s maternal grandfather also has eczema.

Moderate to severe, persistent cases of eczema are sometimes linked to allergies, whether they are food-related or environmental. The most common food allergens are cow’s milk, wheat, soy, egg, tree nuts, peanuts, fish, and shellfish. Dr. Madiha Saeed from Illinois, and author of HolisticRx, adds chocolate, cheese,
tomatoes, and goat’s milk as possible allergens. “Most of my patients heal by avoiding foods known to cause sensitivities like gluten (and/or grains), dairy, sugar, and processed foods for four weeks. If they still have symptoms after that, I test them for food allergies. But food allergies are often associated with eczema, so most individuals should be tested,” she explains. An integrative holistic physician, naturopath, or allergist/immunologist will carefully test the patient to determine which foods are causing the allergic reaction and need to be eliminated from the diet.

Food allergies are especially common among child eczema sufferers. According to the World Allergy Organization (WAO), physicians consider (food) allergies if children do not respond to routine, mild treatment. In fact, the WAO states that 35 percent of children with severe eczema also have a food allergy. The good news is that the majority of food-related eczema cases in children usually clear up after age five. The Daily Mail reported that a twenty-month-old girl’s severe eczema cleared up simply with the elimination of dairy from her diet. Isa, who as an infant was fed a diet of breast milk and formula, was initially allergic to tree nuts, nuts, sesame, soy, corn, eggs, and pet danger during his first year of life; he is now tolerating corn, soy, and eggs as his eczema simultaneously levels off.

Imbalanced gut flora is an underlying trigger of eczema because a lack of healthy organisms in the digestive tract compromises the immune system and allows dangerous microorganisms to enter. Naturopath Alisha Lynch, of the popular Facebook page Naughty Naturopath Mum, explains, “Autoimmune issues and problems like eczema are caused by an impaired gut lining because food particles get into the blood stream.” Dr. Saeed concurs, “Leaky gut is a root cause of eczema.” Therefore, Lynch advises that healing the gut is the way to heal and treat eczema. “A healthy gut is integral to cure eczema,” agrees Dr. Saeed.

Further, yeast overgrowth, namely strains candida and malassezia, has been found in some patients with eczema and may worsen it. Related to this, emotional stress also contributes by activating the inflammatory response in the body and weakening the immune system.

Effective Treatment

Being an inflammatory condition, eczema can be eased by eating anti-inflammatory foods. In general, choose organic foods, especially for animal products like meat, dairy, and eggs, to avoid allergy-inducing antibiotics, hormones, and pesticides. Likewise, Dr. Sharif advises her patients to eat a “healthy diet and avoid processed foods.” Both Dr. Saeed and Lynch insist on adding bone broth to the diet to heal eczema. “Cook it with pureed vegetables, soups, and sauces. It heals and repairs the digestive tract because it has the amino acids proline and glycine,” explains Lynch. Coconut oil is also a widely accepted treatment for eczema, cited across the board from Western and alternative medicine to home remedies. There is good reason to be cuckoo for coconut oil. Specifically, it has caprylic acid, which breaks up the overgrowth of yeast found in some eczema patients. It is an ideal cooking oil, especially for cooking vegetables, fish, and oatmeal, and is a good substitute for butter. Two tablespoons a day is an adequate serving amount. Dr. Saeed recommends...
eating (wild-caught) cold water fish like salmon at least twice a week. Lynch suggests eating fermented foods like sauerkraut, kefir, kombucha, and kimchi because they contain natural probiotics, which restore the “friendly” bacteria in the gut. Both Dr. Saeed and Lynch recommend the herb turmeric, for its anti-inflammatory and infection fighting properties.

For infants, “breastfeeding is recommended as primary prevention,” according to the WAO. Breastmilk strengthens and protects the body by providing essential anti-inflammatory and immunity elements. Lastly, it’s also important to drink plenty of water to hydrate the body, prevent and replenish lost moisture from dry cracked skin, and for detoxification.

Nutritional supplements can also help nourish the body so it can heal itself. Lynch says it’s essential to supplement daily with a probiotic. Dr. Saeed agrees, noting the probiotic should contain the strains of the genera lactobacillus or bifidobacteria and have at least five billion organisms per dose for adults and two billion for children. (Try IFANCA halal-certified 4Life Probiotic and Forever Active Probiotics.) Other effective supplemental remedies are essential fatty acids omega-3, -6, and -9 (try IFANCA halal-certified omega supplements by Nutrilite and Principle Nutrition), evening primrose oil (containing another essential fatty acid GLA), and vitamin E (try IFANCA halal-certified Nature Made Vitamin E). Essential fatty acids provide the proper structure and function of cell membranes that form the skin.

Islamic tradition coincides with natural remedies as well. When discussing cures for dryness, Prophet Muhammad [Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH)] said, “If there was anything that would have a cure for death in it, then it would have been (s)enna.” (Tirmidhi). Dr. Zaghloul El-Naggar, a geologist and head of the Committee on Scientific Nations in the Glorious Quran and the Purity Sunnah Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Egypt, further explains on his website that senna is a shrub-like desert plant that treats skin conditions when brewed with vinegar. It is typically prepared by soaking the leaves and pods in water, or mixing dried, ground senna with honey.

Topical treatment is important to heal damaged skin and prevent further itching and scratching. Soothing, protective topical agents include coconut oil and creams with chamomile, licorice root, or calendula oil. Coconut oil’s antioxidant, moisturizing, and antimicrobial properties both rejuvenate and protect the skin without any side effects. It can be applied regularly to eczema sufferers’ skin and scalp. According to a hadith, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also recommended oil as a health remedy, saying to consume oil and apply it to the body (Tirmidhi). As oil may not be a feasible treatment during the day, moisturizers and lotions with minimal ingredients can be effective. IFANCA halal-certified Renew lotion by Melaleuca is commonly known to soothe eczema. Conversely, avoid soaps and creams with harmful chemicals like sodium lauryl sulfate, EDTA, parabens, and fragrance; they may irritate the skin further.

Stress-management is also important to reduce the inflammatory response in the body. This can be achieved with adequate sleep, regular exercise, and a positive and grateful outlook on life.

According to Western medicine, remedies range from mild to strong. Dr. Sharif emphasizes adopting a simple, consistent daily regimen to ensure positive results. “It should not interfere with the quality of life when managed right,” she ensures. Medical doctors treat mild cases of eczema with hypoallergenic emollients, topical hydrocortisone cream, and oral antihistamines, while more severe cases may require oral corticosteroids, UV light therapy, or immunosuppressants. However, long term use of these treatments are known to have side effects.

Eczema is fairly common nowadays due to practices triggering inflammatory and immune responses; however, it can be treated with careful testing and management. A combination of natural and Islamic treatments including healing foods, supplements, and stress management can keep eczema under control. Refer to an integrative holistic physician, naturopath, and dietitian for proper treatment. Avoid triggers such as known allergens and environmental irritants like chemicals. Dr. Saeed, a former eczema sufferer herself says, “I have no recurring symptoms alhamdulillah (praise God) since I healed my gut and avoid common food allergens.”

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated, “God has sent down both the disease and the cure, and He has appointed a cure for every disease…” (Abi Dawud). 🌿
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The cool air brings a majestic change as lush, heavenly greens turn to rich yellows, reds, and oranges, and finally to a bare, cold tree. A change in season is not only accompanied by the change in weather; for some it can be accompanied by a change in mood, a depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

This type of depression usually occurs at the same time yearly, usually beginning in the fall and continuing into the winter months, but can also occur in the spring and early summer. It is characterized by normal mood with no episodes of depression throughout most of the year, with depression consistently occurring only in certain seasons.

Being a subtype of depression, according to criteria established by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), SAD is depression with a seasonal pattern that includes having the following experiences for at least the last two years: feelings of hopelessness/worthlessness, low energy, losing interest, problems sleeping, appetite and weight changes, fatigue and/or agitation or irritability, difficulty concentrating, frequent thoughts of suicide or death, inability to get along with others, substance abuse, and being socially withdrawn.

SAD risk factors include being female, being younger in age, those with a strong family history, having a clinical diagnosis of a form of depression or bipolar disorder, and/or living further from the equator. The specific cause of SAD is unknown, but elements that can play a role include a decrease in the level of sunlight (leading to serotonin and melatonin imbalances) and gut problems also called leaky gut syndrome. For acute and serious cases, medications may be used after being assessed by a doctor. But for chronic less severe cases, getting to the root cause is crucial as diet and its deficiencies are key in the development of SAD. There are multiple factors that can heal those underlying causes by targeting inflammation (when our bodies are out of balance) and allowing our bodies to equalize.
IMPROVE GUT HEALTH. About 70 to 80 percent of the immune system is located in the digestive system. When immune cells are activated through the gut, they release inflammatory molecules that travel throughout the body and cause inflammation in our joints, skin, blood vessels, brain—everywhere! What we put in our stomachs has the ability to harm us in more ways than you might think. It can lead to inflammation and even depression. Keep your gut healthy by adhering to a few simple rules:

1. “O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good…” (Quran 2:168). Use the money you would have spent on processed foods and instead spend it on vegetables, fruits, protein, and healthy fat sources. Balancing each meal with carbohydrates, protein, and fat will help limit the excessive sugar elevations in the body and improve mood.

2. Add back the good bacteria with either probiotics or fermented foods.

3. Drink one cup of bone broth daily; it is healing to the gut and puts out the fire at the forefront of the immune system allowing the body to heal from the inside out. (See the recipe on page 24.)

EXERCISE. Regular exercise is very important in healing SAD as it lowers markers of systemic inflammation. In fact, adding any type of exercise will help reduce inflammation, lift mood, and also relieve stress and anxiety, all of which increase SAD symptoms. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]) was reported to walk in a fast pace, now known as a power walk. In a hadith, Ali described Muhammad’s (PBUH) vigorous way of walking. In another hadith, Abu Hurairah narrated, “I did not see anyone walk faster than him, as if the earth folded for him. A few moments ago he would be here, and then there. We found it difficult to keep pace when we walked with him, and he walked at his normal pace” (Tirmidhi). Exercise does not always have to be a specific workout; it can include any activity that increases your heart rate, so try being active whenever the opportunity arises. Taking a walk outside can help symptoms of sadness, especially within two hours of getting up in the morning.
SLEEP. Our bodies are hard at work while we sleep. In those eight-ish hours per night, the body removes toxins, produces hormones, and builds the immune system to help fight infections. Failing to get enough rest means our bodies cannot complete those important tasks, and this boosts the chance of developing problems due to excess toxins, hormone imbalances, and inflammation, which can all lead to sadness and depression. Prioritizing sleep is crucial in healing SAD.

RELAX. Stress is responsible for more than 80 percent of patients' complaints and can lead to Seasonal Affective Disorder. Managing stress is essential in healing and preventing diseases. A regular practice of mind-body techniques—such as prayer, meditation, guided relaxation, and guided imagery—can have a powerful, positive effect on health and reverse SAD. Daily practices of relaxation help manage stress and anxiety, lower blood pressure and heart rate, keep damaging hormones at bay, spark brain growth, change gene expression, increase blood circulation, and improve digestion; the body detoxes, unhealthy genes are switched off, and the overall immune system is enhanced, balancing your inner world.

SOCIALIZE. One’s social environment is important for overall health. To give and receive love inspires healing—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. When you’re feeling down, it can be hard to be social. Make an effort to connect with people you enjoy being around. They can offer support, a shoulder to cry on, or a joke to give you a little boost. For winter SAD, taking a trip during the winter months to a sunny and warm location can help symptoms.

PRAY/MEDITATE. Healing the soul with prayer/meditation and gratitude is an important aspect in preventing and healing diseases. Numerous studies have indicated a positive relationship between these practices and mental health. God uses the strongest language in the Quran as he swears that he will elevate you if you are appreciative. “And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe” (Quran 14:7). Being thankful helps to create an optimistic subconscious world, which governs 90 percent of our thoughts and actions. This affirmative energy increases optimism which makes us happier, prevents disease, and improves SAD.

I start here with every patient I see. I advise them to recall ten things they are grateful for as soon as they wake up, as this practice can influence the rest of the day. I also ask patients to place sticky notes all over their rooms so their subconscious is constantly in a state of positivity and appreciation. It is truly amazing watching them recover. Alhamdulillah (praise be to God)!
BRIGHTEN YOUR SURROUNDINGS. Waking up to a sunlit environment helps tremendously with SAD. Open blinds and sit closer to bright windows while at home or in the office. Using a 10,000-lux light box for about 30 to 60 minutes in the morning can also aid in treating SAD. A variety of these “artificial sunlight” lamps can be found online and wherever appliances are sold.

TAKE SUPPLEMENTS. Living a healthy life and boosting immunity always starts with the diet, but it’s not always easy to obtain all the necessary nutrients from food alone. Nutritional deficiencies often interfere with the body’s healing process, so adding minimal supplements, like vitamin D and omega-3, to the diet can expedite recovery by supporting the immune system, improving mood, and restoring the body to health and balance. (Be sure to verify your supplements are halal. Check out the box to the left for a listing of brands that are certified halal by IFANCA.)

With these simple steps, you can now take charge of your life and reverse or prevent Seasonal Affective Disorder. With optimal health, you can accomplish optimal spirituality and deepen your connection with God, allowing you to fully enjoy the changes of the seasons and the miraculous beauty unfolding all around.

MADIHA SAEED, MD, ABIHM, is a board-certified integrative holistic family physician in Illinois. She holds a director position for Documenting Hope, a national organization that helps educate the public about healing and preventing chronic disease in children. Follow Dr. Madiha Saeed on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/HolisticMomMD.
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Ever since my son, Amro, was diagnosed with a heart condition a little over a year ago, I have become drawn to articles and information about heart-boosting foods. When these foods also happen to be mentioned in the Quran, another dimension of interest is added. One of these exceptional foods is figs.
In the Quran, the surah (chapter) titled At-Tin, or The Fig, God swears by the fig, saying, “By the fig and the olive And [by] Mount Sinai And [by] this secure city [Makkah], We have certainly created man in the best of stature;” (95:1-4). The way the fig is elevated in the Quran clearly demonstrates its importance for human beings. Figs are not only beneficial for the heart, they also contain advantages for the entire body including, but not limited to, digestion and weight control. Since the creation of humankind until today, figs are a sweet, nutritious fruit that can be found all around the world in both the fresh and dried variety to be enjoyed throughout the year.

God addresses his believers in the Quran, “O you who have believed, eat of the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah (God) if it is [indeed] Him that you worship” (2:172). Technology allows us to break down the nutritious values in detail and prove just how good the “good things” are. Specifically, one medium fresh fig provides 6 percent daily value (DV) of fiber, 4 percent DV of vitamin B6, 3 percent DV of copper, 3 percent DV of manganese, 3 percent DV of potassium, and 3 percent DV of pantothenic acid (also known as vitamin B5).

According to The George Mateljan Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation, figs are one of the world’s healthiest foods. An important reason for this distinction is the high level of fiber per serving. A single serving of figs, which is about 40 grams equaling roughly three to five fresh or dried figs, provides 3.5 grams of insoluble and 1.5 grams of soluble fiber. Figs, like other fruits and vegetables, combine soluble and insoluble fiber, which affect the body in different ways, mostly the intestines. Sharon Perkins, a registered nurse and author of “What Are Figs and Are They Good for the Bowels?” notes, “Soluble fiber binds with fatty acid, forming a gel and slowing the emptying time in the stomach.” Perkins adds, “Americans need at least 20 grams of fiber per day but actually consume just 15 grams. Men and teens need 30 to 35 grams per day or more, according to the Harvard School of Public Health.”

In short, fiber slows the digestion process and makes you feel satisfied longer, thus aiding in weight management. Fiber also helps to balance and lower blood sugar. In addition to high fiber, figs also contain high levels of carotenoids which act as antioxidants within the body to protect against cellular damage associated with aging. A great way to obtain carotenoids is through naturally orange, yellow, and red pigmented food sources such as figs.

Additionally, figs provide a good source of potassium—another important factor in maintaining heart health. As Zaira Ahmad, a registered dietitian, points out, “Because the typical American diet tends to be high in sodium due to processed foods and overeating, the sodium-potassium balance that regulates heartbeats can be thrown off, so figs as well as other fruits and vegetables can be a good source of potassium in the diet. A high-fiber diet is one of the best ways to improve cholesterol levels, and as a result aids in countering heart-related diseases.”

Since fresh figs are naturally sweet, they provide a nutritious and yet tasty alternative to high-calorie desserts. Registered nutritionist Sarene Alsharif reminds us, “Dried, fresh, or cooked figs are healthy fruits rich in potassium, magnesium, vitamins, and antioxidants. Figs pack more nutrients than most fruits. Enjoying a couple of dried figs for dessert promotes a healthy body and weight loss when higher-calorie desserts are eliminated.” Indeed, figs contain natural fructose and glucose. These natural sugars are an excellent healthy alternative to added sugars. The sugar in figs can also help to stimulate the body with a burst of energy and help the brain to think faster and recall information more quickly.

When my son, Amro, was diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy, a condition in which the heart’s ability to pump blood is decreased because the heart’s main pumping chamber, the left ventricle, is enlarged and weakened, the diagnosis hit me like a ton of bricks. I was shocked and fell into despair. As the doctors confirmed a grim prognosis, I turned to the only source I knew would not lead me astray: my faith in God and the Quran. For it is God who says, “Indeed, this Quran guides to that which is most suitable and gives good tidings to the believers and who do righteous deeds that they will have a great reward” (17:9). For this reason, my despair was short-lived.

By the grace of God, Amro’s heart began to improve and he was discharged from the hospital in under a month. In addition to the medical advice, prescription drugs, and instructions, I decided to include in his diet foods specifically mentioned in the Quran, such as honey, dates, and figs. A year since his diagnosis with severe heart failure, I am happy to say that his heart function has returned to normal, albeit he is still in need of daily medication and is closely monitored.

Although Amro’s improvement is not indicative of most patients who are diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, I do believe that his recovery is due in large part to the inclusion of the blessed foods mentioned in the Quran. God reminds us, “O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy” (2:168).

Although not as popular or predominant in today’s marketplace as apples or bananas, figs are one of only a few foods mentioned directly in the Quran. Despite the few forbidden foods in the Quran, there are innumerable permissible foods from all categories for us to gain benefit from and enjoy.

ASMA JARAD is a freelance writer from the Chicagoland area. Asma has a bachelor of arts degree in liberal studies from the University of Illinois, and a master of arts degree in English from National University.
In ancient cultures, whey was considered a cure for ailments ranging from gastrointestinal discomfort to joint and muscle issues. In the food/dairy industry, it was once considered a waste product. Today, after realizing its protein content and health benefits, whey is now considered a co-product in cheese making while its protein has a unique niche in food supplementation.

Read on to learn about whey, its different types, its health benefits, and if you should make space for it in your diet.
WHAT IS WHEY?

Milk contains two types of protein: casein and whey. Approximately 80 percent of milk protein is comprised of casein, while the remaining 20 percent is whey protein. Whey is the liquid that remains in the cheese-making process. To produce it, rennet or an edible acid is added to heated milk. This causes the milk to coagulate or curdle, separating the milk solids (curds) from the liquid whey. Liquid whey typically contains 93 percent water and only less than one percent protein; lactose, minerals and a small amount of fat make up the rest.

Whey protein is considered a high quality protein because it contains all the essential amino acids. Amino acids are needed in the body to construct various proteins and enzymes. Essential amino acids cannot be produced by the human body and need to be ingested through the diet. Whey proteins also have higher concentrations of essential amino acids compared to various vegetable protein sources. Whey is also an excellent source of leucine. Leucine is a branched chain amino acid that triggers the initiation of muscle protein synthesis.

Whey protein is commonly sold in powder form. The conversion process begins when liquid whey is separated from the casein (curds) and sent through filters to remove all non-whey ingredients. An ion exchange process further purifies it. Finally, all the water is removed leaving behind a powder. This protein powder is then ready to be packaged and consumed.

TYPES OF WHEY PRODUCTS

According to Dr. Rafi Shaik, a food scientist with the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA®), whey is unique because it is produced in different concentrations. The following are the different types of whey protein products.

MILK PROTEIN CONCENTRATE (MPC), such as Organic Valley Milk Concentrate, is a complete dairy protein that contains casein and whey proteins. It is available in protein concentrations from 40 to 89 percent. MPC ingredients are suitable to add protein and calcium to nutritional beverages, frozen desserts, and cultured products.

WHEY PROTEIN CONCENTRATE (WPC), such as Organic Valley Whey Protein Concentrate, contains low levels of fats and lactose. The percentage of protein in WPC can range from 30 to 90 percent. It is often used by bodybuilders to aid in the muscle-building process.

WHEY PROTEIN ISOLATE (WPI) is processed to remove fat and lactose. WPI is usually 90 percent protein and is considered a nutritional supplement. It is commonly included in infant formulas and sports drinks. Those who are lactose intolerant or lactose sensitive may still be able to consume WPI, as it contains less than one percent lactose, according to WheyOfLife.org.

WHEY PROTEIN HYDROLYSATE (WPH) is the predigested form of whey protein. It has already undergone partial hydrolysis (a process necessary for the body to absorb protein). It’s often used in medical protein supplements and infant formulas because of its digestibility.
**IS WHEY HALAL?**

The process of separating whey from casein (curd) may cause concern to halal consumers. Dr. Shaik explains, “Cheese is made by using enzymes and cultures. Sometimes these enzymes can be derived from non-halal slaughtered animals.” (Similarly, cultures may also be produced using non-halal channels.) Rennet is derived from the fourth stomach of newly born calves. Chymosin, the active enzyme ingredient of rennet, aids in the coagulation of milk by separating it into curds and whey. It should be noted, however, that most enzymes in cheese today are microbial.

When choosing a whey product or product made with whey, if IFANCA’s Crescent-M is not on the packaging or the label doesn’t specifically state the ingredients are not animal-derived, it’s best to contact the company in order to find out its halal status.

**WHERE’S THE WHEY?**

Dr. Shaik states, “Whey products are mostly found in various cultured milk products, pancake mixes, waffles, condiments, muffins, ice creams, yogurts, pastas, and smoothies.” Whey is also an additive in many processed foods including bread, crackers, and commercial pastry. Additionally, manufacturers add milk and whey protein to energy bars, drink mixes, and yogurt beverages. MPC, WPC, and WPI are available in powder form and can be added to recipes for beverages, smoothies, oatmeal, yogurt, soups, sauces, and dips.

Whey is also the liquid that can pool at the top of a yogurt container and is also an excellent source of calcium. This whey can be stirred back into the yogurt, used in smoothies, or instead of water in hot cereal. Liquid whey from homemade cheese making can be used as a substitute for skim milk in most baking recipes that call for milk.

**HEALTH BENEFITS OF WHEY**

Protein is the major part of all cells in the body and is utilized in the form of enzymes, transport carriers, and hormones. The body needs a steady supply of the nine essential amino acids from dietary protein to make new proteins and balance protein breakdown. Milk, yogurt, and cheese are superb sources of high quality proteins.

Whey protein has the highest biological value (the proportion of absorbed protein retained in the body) of any protein, which means it’s highly usable by the body.

Evidence shows that whey protein can be used to help treat various diseases. For cancer treatment, whey has been found to have anti-tumor and anti-carcinogenic potential. Increasing whey and low fat dairy in the diet has also shown to contribute to raising HDL levels, lowering triglycerides, and lowering systolic blood pressure. Liquid whey containing lactose, vitamins, protein, and minerals used in studies showed reduced spikes in blood sugar levels in people with type 2 diabetes by increasing insulin secretion. The high concentration of bioavailable calcium in whey also aids in the prevention of osteoporosis.

Incorporating whey in the diet can also help with weight loss. The protein content increases satiety in meals and snacks. Satiety may lead to weight loss because of the reduced calorie consumption over time. The leucine content of whey may enhance satiety as well. However, whey supplements will not necessarily promote weight loss if total calorie intake is not taken into account.
SUPPLEMENTS VERSUS FOOD

Whey is widely available in powder form and marketed to fitness enthusiasts. Dr. Shaik shares, “Some whey supplements are specially designed for body and muscle building with different concentrations of protein. Whey naturally found in foods will have less protein content.” It is recommended the average consumer add WPC, WPI, or skim milk powder to foods such as fruit smoothies, but to avoid whey supplements that target bodybuilders because they contain other ingredients that are not necessary to the general population. In moderation, whey does not cause any adverse events. Whey protein consumed in high doses, however, can cause stomach pains, cramps, reduced appetite, nausea, headache, and fatigue.

Whey and whey protein products help add protein to the diet. Research shows that this cheese by-product is helpful in managing various diseases and weight. Consumers should be aware that not all whey products might be considered halal. Whey can be found in milk products naturally, while protein powders are available for more concentrated use.

ZAIRA AHMAD is a registered and licensed dietitian/nutritionist from Central Ohio. She has experience in clinical dietetics, nutrition education, and nutritional counseling.

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Thai Soup with Healing Bone Broth

by Madiha Saeed, MD

### Bone Broth

**INGREDIENTS**
- 2 pounds (or more) of bones from a halal source
- 4 cups water
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Place the bones in a large stock pot.
2. Pour water over the bones.
3. Add onion and garlic.
4. Boil for 3 to 8 hours. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Pour through a fine metal strainer to remove all the bits of bones and onions.

### Thai Soup

**INGREDIENTS**
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
- 1 can mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons red curry paste
- 2 (12-ounce) cans unsweetened coconut milk
- 4 cups bone broth (recipe above)
- juice of 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons cilantro, chopped

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Melt butter in a large stockpot over medium-high heat.
2. Add onions to butter and cook until soft.
3. Add shrimp, salt, and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until shrimp is pink, about 2 to 3 minutes; remove shrimp and set aside.
4. Add garlic and bell pepper to the stockpot.
5. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 3 to 4 minutes.
6. Stir in ginger until fragrant, about 1 minute.
7. Add in mushrooms.
8. Whisk in curry paste until well combined, about 1 minute.
9. Gradually whisk in coconut milk and bone broth; cook, whisking constantly, until incorporated, about 1 to 2 minutes.
10. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until slightly thickened, about 8 to 10 minutes.
11. Stir in shrimp, lime juice, and cilantro.
12. Serve immediately.
Fig Walnut Chocolate Chip Cookies

by Madiha Saeed, MD

SERVINGS: 15-20

INGREDIENTS
3 cups almond meal
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
2 whole eggs
1 egg yolk
½ cup almond butter
1 teaspoon halal vanilla flavor
½ cup local honey
1 bag Enjoy Life Dark Chocolate Chips
(dairy-free, soy-free, gluten-free)
½ cup chopped walnuts
½ cup chopped figs

DIRECTIONS
1. Whisk all dry ingredients together. Add the eggs, nut butter, vanilla flavor, and honey; blend well by hand. Fold in chocolate chips, walnuts, and figs.
2. Grease two large cookie sheets.
3. Oil hands, as the mixture is sticky. Make quarter-sized dough balls and press them down lightly on the cookie sheets about 2 inches apart.
4. Bake in a 350°F preheated oven for 15 minutes, or until golden brown.
5. Allow to cool before removing from the cookie sheet.
Baked Sweet Potatoes with Sliced Apples and Figs

by YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RDN, LD

SERVINGS: 2

INGREDIENTS

2 large sweet potatoes, washed, peeled, and chopped
1 cup figs, sliced
1 large honey crisp apple, sliced into thin wedges
1 cup water
2 tablespoons butter, divided
1 tablespoon cinnamon
½ cup brown sugar (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Lightly coat a medium-sized baking dish with 1 tablespoon of butter.
3. Place sweet potatoes, figs, and apple slices into buttered baking dish; add water.
4. Top with cinnamon, remaining tablespoon of butter, and brown sugar if desired.
5. Bake for 45 minutes until sweet potatoes are soft and golden brown.
Tandoori Roasted Chicken

by Saira Mohiuddin

INGREDIENTS

1 whole halal roasting chicken with skin
1 large yellow onion, sliced
1 bunch cilantro
¼ cup butter, softened
3 serrano chilies, chopped
1 tablespoon garlic, chopped
3 tablespoons Tandoori spice powder
1 ½ tablespoons ginger garlic paste
½ teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon garam masala
zest and juice of 1 lemon
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon sea salt, plus more to taste
freshly cracked black pepper
2 large carrots, peeled and thickly sliced
2 large potatoes, peeled and thickly sliced

DIRECTIONS

1. Fill cavity of chicken with sliced onion and cilantro.
2. Combine butter, chilies, and garlic with 1 teaspoon sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper.
3. Gently rub the butter mixture under the skin of the chicken.
4. Combine the remaining ingredients (down to the olive oil), creating a paste-like mixture, with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Generously rub the mixture over the entire chicken, as well as underneath the skin.
6. Marinate in the fridge for 3 to 5 hours.
7. Use butcher’s twine to tie the chicken legs together.
8. Preheat oven to 425°F. Allow chicken to come to room temperature.
9. Place sliced carrots and potatoes on lightly greased roasting pan.
10. Place chicken on top of vegetables. Roast for 1 ½ hours, basting every 30 minutes.
11. Transfer chicken and vegetables to platter; cover with foil. Allow it to rest for 20 minutes.
12. Carve and serve immediately.
Slow Cooked Lamb with Fresh Figs
by YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RDN, LD

SERVINGS: 4

INGREDIENTS
1 Vidalia onion, diced
2 stalks celery, diced
2 carrots, peeled and diced
3 cloves garlic, crushed
1 cup chicken or vegetable stock
1 cup tomatoes, chopped
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
1 cup fresh figs, sliced

DIRECTIONS
1. Place the onion, celery, carrots, garlic, stock, tomatoes, tomato paste, rosemary, ginger, and bay leaf in a slow cooker and 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 of the pan.
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.
8. Pour the sauce over the lamb and top with fresh figs.
9. Serve with mashed sweet potatoes, rice, bulgur wheat, or couscous to soak up the delicious sauce.
Ginger-“Beard” Men

by Saira Mohiuddin

SERVINGS: 2 DOZEN COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

3 cups flour
1 ½ teaspoon baking powder
¾ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon sea salt
2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
1 tablespoon ground ginger
½ teaspoons ground cloves
6 tablespoons unsalted butter
¾ cup brown sugar
1 egg
½ cup molasses
2 teaspoons halal vanilla flavor
zest of 1 lemon
zest of 1 orange

DIRECTIONS

1. Whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, sea salt, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves in a small bowl.
2. In a medium bowl, using a hand mixer, beat butter, brown sugar, and egg.
3. Add molasses, vanilla flavor, and zests to the mixture; blend well.
4. Stir in dry ingredients gradually.
5. Wrap dough in plastic and let it stand at room temperature for 3 to 6 hours.
6. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
7. Dust countertop and rolling pin with flour. Roll dough ¼-inch thick.
8. Cut out cookies using gingerbread man and woman cutters.
9. Space cookies 1½ inches apart on the lined baking sheets. Bake each sheet 8 to 10 minutes.
10. Allow cookies to cool completely before decorating.
11. Decorate cookies with black and white cookie icing. On the men, use white icing for the kufi (hat) and black for the eyes, smile, and beard. On the women, use white icing for the hijab (headscarf) and black for the eyes and smile. Enjoy!
Features

Halal Cooking Club

by Asma Ahad

Photos by Asma Ahad
Welcome to my Halal Cooking Club. We are a group of eleven women with a true love for culinary experiences, sisterhood, and following halal. Usually we keep our dinners very private, but today we want to share some of our precious culinary travels with all of the Halal Consumer readers.

How does it work? We rotate dinner venues; each of us gets an opportunity to host. The hostess gets to pick the theme, assign the recipes, and decorate her home to match her theme. She also is responsible for providing theme-related beverages. Usually, these are unique concoctions (forget about water and soda). The hostess goes all out—ordering flowers from the florists, getting unique service sets from abroad, and rearranging the house to meet the theme.

The rules are very strict—no husbands, no kids, and absolutely no extra guests.

When the Cooking Club day arrives, we are all hard at work, taking our unique recipes and making sure they come together. As the evening draws close, anticipation...
HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS—THE BEST OF HALAL COOKING CLUB. ENJOY!!!

FAVORITE BEVERAGE
Non-Alcoholic Mojito
CUBAN CUISINE

FAVORITE APPETIZERS
Hawaiian Pizza
AMERICAN CUISINE
Thai Spring Rolls
THAI CUISINE

FAVORITE SOUP
French Onion Soup
FRENCH CUISINE

FAVORITE SALAD
Greek Salad
GREEK CUISINE

FAVORITE DINNER ENTRÉE
Ale-Battered Cod
BRITISH/IRISH CUISINE

FAVORITE DESSERTS
Crème Brulée
FRENCH CUISINE
Tiramisu
ITALIAN CUISINE

Salt, paprika, black pepper, soy sauce, turmeric, and ginger garlic paste.

Before I joined my Halal Cooking Club, that is what my spice rack consisted of. Our table settings were mediocre, and our culinary universe consisted of my mom’s simple dinner solutions and some ad hoc recipes I picked up along the way. Being a strict zabiha connoisseur, the scope of my family’s palate was framed by my limited kitchen abilities and what was available at local Muslim restaurants. Every day as 3pm rolled around, I was shocked and mortified—it’s dinner time again??!! With Cooking Club that has changed; whipping something up is so much simpler. My spice rack is now brimming with ingredients that bring new zest to the kitchen table.
grows—not only of how our individual recipes will present themselves, but also of the amazing degustation that awaits us. The menu usually consists of a five-course meal: two appetizers, a soup, a salad, a main dish, and two desserts. The main dish is made up of two meats and two sides.

Dressing to the theme is imperative, from the Mexican sombrero to the red carpet red lipstick (Emmy’s Theme). The evening comes to life not only in our kitchens but also our closets.

We are all busy women, with kids, extended families, and many of us with careers; however, it is seldom that any of us will miss these precious evenings. Our Cooking Club has existed for over four years now, and our palates are still constantly surprised by the beautiful culinary universe that awaits us.

We all hail from different backgrounds, from South Asia to the Balkans to the Midwestern American Heartland. We all live in different parts of Chicago, from the heart of Lincoln Park to the vast homes of the North Shore. Cooking Club not only offers us the opportunity to bond and indulge our taste buds, but also to experience genuine hospitality in each other’s homes.

There are no exclusions. Being strict halal connoisseurs, this is liberating. We have made it all—ale-battered cod (using ginger ale), Hawaiian pizza, Mexican beans, French onion soup—of course finding very viable halal alternatives for all relevant ingredients. We savor the opportunity to open doors to foods that may otherwise be off limits. We have reinvented the game: halal for us has gone from a dietary requirement to a magical culinary journey. What is amazing is that we have a beautiful sisterhood (and supportive families) to share it with!!!

ASMA AHAD is a mother of four who lives in the northern suburbs of Chicago. She is IFANCA’s director of halal market development.
### HALAL-CERTIFIED PRODUCT LOCATOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
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<td>Amara</td>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td>Baqi Inc.</td>
<td>Visit their website: <a href="http://www.amaracosmetics.com">www.amaracosmetics.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bard Valley</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>Bard Valley Natural Delights</td>
<td>Kroger, Publix, Meijer, Walmart, Whole Foods, and various markets throughout the United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabot</td>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>Cabot Creamery</td>
<td>Supermarkets throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>Campbell Company of Canada</td>
<td>Supermarkets throughout Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carole’s Cheesecake</td>
<td>Bakery Item</td>
<td>Carole’s Cheesecake Company Ltd.</td>
<td>Select markets, restaurants, and bakeries throughout Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<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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<tr>
<td>English Biscuits</td>
<td>Bakery Items</td>
<td>English Biscuit Manufacturers (Pvt.) Ltd.</td>
<td>Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States and Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Godiva</td>
<td>Candy / Chocolate</td>
<td>Godiva Chocolatier</td>
<td>Company stores, department stores, supermarkets, gift shops, and drugstores throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Bonbon</td>
<td>Candy / Chocolate</td>
<td>Asti Holdings Ltd.</td>
<td>Visit their website: <a href="http://www.goldenbonbon.com">www.goldenbonbon.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J&amp;M Food Products</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>J&amp;M Food Products</td>
<td>Visit their website: <a href="http://www.halalcertified.com">www.halalcertified.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontos</td>
<td>Bakery Items, Bread</td>
<td>Kontos Foods, Inc.</td>
<td>Ethnic (Arab, Indo-Pak) stores and fruit &amp; vegetable markets throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Product Type</th>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Available At</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lawash</td>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>American Bakery Products, Inc.</td>
<td>Kroger and Meijer stores in Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; Quiches</td>
<td>Brownies and Cakes</td>
<td>Love and Quiches Desserts</td>
<td>Visit their website for outlets: <a href="http://www.loveandquiches.com">www.loveandquiches.com</a></td>
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<td>Mead Johnson</td>
<td>Infant/Baby Food Products</td>
<td>Mead Johnson Nutritional Foods</td>
<td>Department stores, supermarkets, and drugstores throughout the United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melaleuca</td>
<td>Personal Care Products</td>
<td>Melaleuca, Inc.</td>
<td>Visit their website for distributors: <a href="http://www.melaleuca.com">www.melaleuca.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Own Meals</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>My Own Meals</td>
<td>Visit their website: <a href="http://www.myownmeals.com">www.myownmeals.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>National Foods Limited</td>
<td>Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States and Canada</td>
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<td>Sauce &amp; Dressings, Condiments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dessert Mixes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spices &amp; Seasonings</td>
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<td>Nestle</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>Nestle Pakistan Ltd.</td>
<td>Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Beverages / Beverage Concentrates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dairy Products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drink Mixes, Dessert Mixes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutrilite</td>
<td>Nutritional Supplements</td>
<td>Access Business Group, LLC</td>
<td>Visit their website for distributors: <a href="http://www.nutrilite.com">www.nutrilite.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Olympia</td>
<td>Gyros, Flat Bread</td>
<td>Olympia Food Industries, Inc.</td>
<td>Ethnic (Arab, Indo/Pak) stores and restaurants throughout the United States and Canada</td>
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<td>Organic Valley</td>
<td>Dairy Products</td>
<td>Cropp Cooperative/Organic Valley</td>
<td>Supermarkets throughout the United States</td>
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<td>POM Wonderful</td>
<td>Beverages / Beverage Concentrates</td>
<td>POM Wonderful, LLC</td>
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<td>Tea</td>
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<td>Fruits Processed</td>
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<td>Saffron Road</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<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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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snack Food</td>
<td></td>
<td>Visit their website to locate a store near you: <a href="http://www.saffronroadfood.com">www.saffronroadfood.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appetizers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunrider</td>
<td>Personal Care Products</td>
<td>Sunrider International</td>
<td>Visit their website for distributors: <a href="http://www.sunrider.com">www.sunrider.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Food Products</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Nutritional Supplements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Toms of Maine</td>
<td>Personal Care Products</td>
<td>Toms of Maine, Inc.</td>
<td>Department stores, supermarkets, and drugstores throughout the United States</td>
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<tr>
<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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</tbody>
</table>
100 YEARS OF THE Coca-Cola BOTTLE