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

Assalamu Alaikum

Obesity is a global problem. Overindulgence has become a way of life. In reference to eating, Prophet Muhammad, salla ALLAHu alaihi wa sallam, said: “There is no vessel which the son of Adam, alaihis salaam, can fill more evil than his stomach, for it is sufficient for him to take a few mouthfuls in order to straighten his back, but if he must, then fill one-third with food, one-third with drink, and leave one-third empty to breathe.” This refers to how much to fill your stomach. The guidance is clear: do not overindulge in eating and drinking — sound advice for any place or time.

Though food is intended to provide us the nutrients we need, it is not uncommon to eat for reasons other than hunger or to overeat when we are hungry, especially in more affluent societies. In addition, we often eat high energy density foods which pack calories into small servings. This has led to obesity among children and adults. According to the World Health Organization 1.4 billion adults over the age of 20 and 40 million children under the age of 5 are overweight. They also say there are more deaths globally due to being overweight than underweight.

Despite the elimination of saturated fats and sugar from many food products, it is still not difficult to make poor food choices in today’s fast paced environment. Technology hasn’t helped much either as smart phones, remote controls and tablet computers are keeping children indoors, exercising their fingers rather than outdoors, getting real exercise. That also keeps them closer to fatty and sugary snacks. Many schools have even eliminated recess and made gym optional!

There are many other issues involved in leading a healthy life. Diet and exercise are but two of them. In this issue we explore how to promote health and prevent disease by making the right food choices. Take a moment to consider your family’s diet and exercise habits and make the necessary adjustments for a healthy life.

Sincerely,
Roger M. Othman  managing editor
From the Publisher’s Desk

Aasalamu Alaikum

From its inception, IFANCA educational programs have served consumers with information on Halal; nutrition; food trends and health issues. In 1982 IFANCA began issuing The Islamic Perspective®, a newspaper styled publication covering IFANCA certification procedures; halal dietary requirements; health related issues and more. In 1988 The Islamic Perspective changed to a magazine style publication and introduced color. And in 2000, The Islamic Perspective evolved into Halal Consumer®, the glossy, color magazine you see today. Publication evolved from the tedious cutting and pasting of printed material to the current electronic production methods. And circulation increased from 5,000 copies per issue to over 60,000 copies per issue today.

Through this evolution consumers have become savvier and more involved in the development of food products. Fat content; genetically modified organisms; ingredient sources and hormone and antibiotic free (organic) farming are but a few of the current concerns among consumers. Halal Consumer will continue to bring you articles addressing these and other issues of concern as well as healthy and yummy recipes and the latest news on halal developments.

It is you, the consumer, that has made these publications a success and we want to thank you for your support. Please continue to send us your ideas and do continue to let the food producers and marketers know your preference for halal products.

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry president

DISCLAIMER: The advertisements in Halal Consumer magazine do not necessarily imply endorsement or halal certification by IFANCA. Please check www.ifanca.org to verify halal certification by IFANCA. None of the health-related information contained here should be used in lieu of medical advice nor should it be used without consulting a physician first. Halal Consumer magazine, its writers and editors, its parent organization IFANCA, IFANCA’s board of directors, and its employees and consultants are not liable for any actions taken by individuals or groups based on the information, including recipes, presented here.
Food Choices in the Land of Abundance

By Aisha Kureishy
We are all well aware of buying healthy foods, establish good eating habits and to exercise. But how many of us are able to do this on a regular basis and make that a life-time commitment? Indeed, there are several people among us who have been able to manage their health and go that extra mile to maintain their weight. I am also one of those people, and I am delighted to share my tips with Halal Consumer to educate its readers, and emphasize to them the importance of eating healthy for a healthy lifestyle.

Maintaining weight is not a myth or a mystery. It is not impossible either. It is a reality that needs to be admitted and addressed for a proper and a successful outcome. But what would it take a person to find that kind of motivation to get started on this healthy journey. For me it was my health. Therefore, it did not take me a single moment to delay further being healthy, and I started to get back in shape as soon as I was struck by this question.

One can read about all the informative materials that are available on what to buy as healthy foods, how to get fit and maintain a healthy weight for life. People who are actually practicing a healthy lifestyle can also inspire one another, and that is my aim and mission. Mass production of unhealthy foods has always been a health issue and is on the rise nowadays. Diseases such as diabetes and obesity are swarming everywhere and invading people's health. Cancer is now also being linked to obesity according to some latest clinical researches. Hence, it is up to an individual to observe and incorporate healthy eating habits to establish a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, choosing healthier foods for cooking and eating healthy became my number one mission. I knew that I couldn't choose to get healthy seasonally or occasionally. But it should be done on a regular basis for the rest of my life. I also believed that my regimen must not slow down or get flexible around the holidays or celebrations, and should not excel only around spring or summer.

I trained myself to be disciplined about eating healthy as well as choosing healthy foods because I knew that a healthy lifestyle is achieved only with discipline and conviction. It also requires courage to overcome cravings and takes a lot of time and patience to see desired results. But choosing healthy foods and eating healthy is just one step towards great health. The other important factors to stay healthy and have a healthy lifestyle are eating in moderation, exercise and activity. All of these factors go hand in hand. That is so because the amount of food intake also plays a significant role in losing and maintaining weight.

A lot of people think that only buying and eating healthy foods will end their weight war. But losing and maintaining weight also requires eating smaller portions, and burn off those consumed calories with exercise.

One must burn all of the old and saturated calories to make new room for the newer and healthier calories. Think of it as if you do not burn
the old and existing calories then the newer ones will pile up and will continue to further increase your BMI.

Therefore, exercise is the other key to unlock the treasure box of your health. It banishes many ailments and prevents common injuries from occurring. However, with today’s hustle and bustle, exercising has become most challenging and the hardest. But had it been the case, and then nobody would have attained a healthy body and maintained ideal weight. It is one’s own lack of determination and commitment that becomes an obstacle or clears the path.

Self-motivation is also very essential, so that is why I became my own motivator, and I committed to myself to exercise three to four days a week besides my job and taking care of my family. I became my own health instructor and cheerleader. When I took the lead, I was able to become more concerned and accountable for my own eating habits. It helped me a lot to control and manage my weight. Accountability of what I ate and how much I ate helped and guided me to stay on my health track and reach my target weight.

Choosing and eating healthy foods is a reflection of an individual’s lifestyle and his/her own commitment to health. One should keep in mind that the eyes are bigger than the stomach before consuming food. Therefore, eating in moderation is as essential as choosing and eating healthy food along with exercise. Successful results can be achieved by practicing all of these remedies and can make anybody the healthiest body for life.
For more than a century, Abbott has been passionate about finding better ways to help people live longer, healthier lives. Abbott Nutrition is committed to producing quality, science-based nutritional products that you and your family can trust.

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We Impact Life at Every Stage
There is no proper definition for junk food and there will never be one. If we google it, we may find that junk food refers to any man-made food which is often high in fat, sugar and salt. Of course, so-called junk foods typically contain high levels of calories. The human body requires protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals but in moderation. Some health-conscious people consider salted snack foods, gum, candy, sweet desserts, fried fast food and carbonated beverages as junk food. On the other hand, foods such as pizza or hamburger can either be considered as healthy or junk food depending upon the ingredients used in the preparation. The unhealthy eating habit may be categorized as the consumption of junk food.

If someone really wants to get rid of junk food, he or she must watch the pictures or videos of hungry people on YouTube or other social media. A few days ago, a picture made me cry when I saw an African woman was making dough out of soil. A person who eats more than what he actually needs cannot
even imagine what a hungry person feels. We can show a way to eat moderately by not wasting food because one’s junk food can be another’s life line.

Food waste is a major problem in much of the world. While millions of people go hungry millions of ton of food are wasted at all levels of the food chain. Farmers, manufacturers, retailers, restaurants and consumers are all complicit in this problem. The growing lines at food banks in the developed world, a result of the continuing economic crisis, have now turned the media attention on what can be truly termed a crisis.

In Canada an estimated 40 percent of the food, valued at $27 billion by the Value Chain Management Centre, finds its way into landfill and composting every year. In the US roughly 30 to 50 per cent of food produced for consumption ends up in landfills each year. The estimated cost of such waste is pegged at more than $1 billion. Similarly, in the European Union countries around 50% of edible and healthy food is wasted each year. The European parliament recently adopted a resolution calling for urgent measures to halve food waste by 2025 and to improve access to food for needy EU citizens.

In an age of increasing poverty such waste is absolutely intolerable and urgent measures should be taken to address it all levels of the food chain. Islam forbids all forms of waste and explicitly states that food waste is an impious act. In the Islamic worldview, food is considered to be a great and highly valued blessing. Therefore we find numerous teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warning against any kind of food wastage. There are explicit instructions related to the value of food for the individual, traders, businesses and the state. The most prevalent narrations of the Prophet (PBUH) begin at the individual level. This is logical as every major initiative begins with the individual before it permeates through the society.

In one authentic narration, the Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said, “When you eat, do not wipe your hands till you have licked them...” (Bukhari & Muslim). The message in this narration is that once one has eaten all the food that one has taken in their plate, they should even utilise the grains or gravy that are left on one’s hand after the completion of the meal.

In another narration in the Sahih Muslim collection the Prophet (PBUH) is reported as saying that if a morsel falls off one’s hand he should pick it up, clean it, and eat it. Just because the food has fallen off one’s hand or plate doesn’t mean it should be wasted. Islamic jurists have interpreted this narration to mean that if the morsel falls in a clean place then it is clean and should be eaten. If it falls in an unclean place then it (the morsel) also becomes unclean and should instead be fed to the animals. In either case it should be utilised and not wasted. In another narration the Prophet (PBUH) is reported as saying one eats everything that he or she has put on the plate as one never knows which part of the food has barakah (blessing). (Muslim)

In the light of these teachings it is imperative on Muslims to be conscious of the value of food and treat it with the respect that it deserves. Just because we have access to abundant food doesn’t mean we have a license to indulge in waste. We never know when we will be denied this blessing. This is exactly what we should teach our young generation. Even in different events like wedding ceremonies, people waste a lot of food. This is a common practise in the Indo-Pak region where affluent people may be wasting food while someone close by must go to sleep without anything to eat. This really hurts big time. We hope the time will come when one person will really care about the other.

Some Muslim communities and organizations are already taking action to tackle food waste. Chicago's Sabeel Food Pantry (www.sabeelfoodpantry.org), an IFANCA initiative, collects healthy, safe, and edible food from Panera Bread, J & M Food Products, and other businesses, which would have otherwise been wasted and distributes it among the needy. This service reaches nearly 1600 people each year and is only increasing. More such initiatives need to be taken to tackle waste and hunger at all levels of the food chain.
Healthy Desserts
Fact or Myth?

By Kiran Ansari
Can desserts really be healthy or is it just an oxymoron? Many people who are watching what they eat often put all desserts off-limits. They just drool at confectionery in a bakery window but never actually eat them. This can lead to self pity and low self esteem or even binge eating when you let the cravings snowball into one day when you eat the entire chocolate pie and hate yourself.

Indulging in a little something sweet occasionally can actually be good for you. It lets you be a part of the celebration at parties and prevents you from always feeling sorry for yourself by saying no. If you choose healthier dessert options and practice portion control, desserts need not be a bad word in your diet dictionary.

There are a few ways to approach healthy desserts and adopting a combination of all of them can bring variety to your menu and lead you to feel satisfied.

As Natural Possible

Try to stick to as natural a dessert as possible. This means opting for fresh fruit and even sweet vegetables like squash and carrots to satisfy a craving. When you make desserts, look for recipes that use few, if any, processed ingredients. If you are buying a dessert, read the label to see how many chemicals and fillers they might have added for the volume, vibrant colors or extra sweetness.

Chef Rubina Hafeez has her own bakery, Gur Sweets, in Elmhurst, Illinois (www.gursweets.com.) She uses all-natural fresh fruit bases and no preservatives. She uses whole milk, unbleached flour and no fillers. This leads to a shorter shelf life for her products, but it’s a small trade-off for the freshness and healthier desserts she whips up every day. Instead of high fructose corn syrup, she uses raw cane sugar to stay as natural as possible. For diabetics she uses agave nectar which is low on the glycemic index. She also offers gluten-free, eggless and vegan desserts upon request.

She enjoys creating fusion desserts where she can couple her professional pastry chef training with ethnic flavors and requests such as her pina colada desserts and a hot rod which includes a kick of pepper. Whatever is left over is donated to local shelters.

“I believe there is a need to educate the Muslim consumer that it’s not only meat that you have to worry about being zabihah halal,” Hafeez said. “Lots of bakeries and chain stores use animal byproducts, chemicals and alcohol in their ingredients. Many don’t even know about it as they purchase pre-made mixes.”
Substitute When Possible

You might have your hands on a fabulous recipe but if you see the calorie and fat per serving, it might throw off your entire daily nutritional balance. In such instances, home baker, Sheeba Khurram of Mrs. Cay’s Cupcakes (www.facebook.com/MrsCays) in Glendale Heights, Illinois, substitutes ingredients with healthier alternatives. For instance, she uses unsweetened apple sauce and mashed bananas in her desserts in place of sugar to cater to a more health conscious clientele. She even finds apricot and pear sauces at stores like Whole Foods to add a different flavor to her desserts. Similarly, she makes an unsweetened base in fruit tarts and uses brown sugar instead of white sugar where possible.

“Honey is also a possible substitute, and a Sunnah,” Khurram says. “Similarly, whole grain flour has more fiber and is healthier for you. You just need to develop the taste — like brown rice, it grows on you.”

Arm Yourself with Why

Dalia Hassabala, a certified holistic health coach (www.dillyhealthcoaching.com) gives workshops across Chicagoland about how to beat the sugar blues and nutritious eating.

“When the body craves something and needs energy, we should give it what it wants, but try for the most natural solution,” Hassaballa said. “We need to get our body used to natural sugar such as fruits, carrots and plant based sources.”

Personally, she rarely eats desserts and when she does, she chooses fruits because she asks herself why do I want to have this sugar-loaded concoction and what will it do to my body?

She is a firm advocate of learning more about healthy eating as knowledge provides power to make good choices. Coupled with will power, eating right becomes natural and something to be proud of instead of feeling sorry for yourself.

She buys almonds in bulk and grinds them into flour for pancakes and other recipes. When she needs to add some sweetness, she prefers naturally occurring sugars like organic maple syrup or dates.

“Do not deprive kids of desserts as we are not with them all the time,” Hassaballa said. “Instead make healthy foods with them. When they are involved in the preparation, they are more likely to be pleased with the outcome.”

If we empower ourselves with the knowledge instead of just saying no it will be easier to accept no when we hear it. If you realize how the spike in blood sugar will eventually lead you to crash, you will be encouraged to make wiser choices like a sliver of cake on a special occasion.

Experts agree that desserts need not be taboo. We just need to learn how to make wiser choices as a service to our body and to set a good example for our family.

Kiran Ansari is a writer and entrepreneur who lives with her family in the suburbs of Chicago.
Diet. Die-t. No wonder the first three letters of the word “diet” spell D-I-E. We kill ourselves by food extremism. As a nation we are extremists. On one extreme we starve ourselves with crash diets….such as the watermelon diet, the grapefruit diet, the banana diet, the boiled egg diet, or the “I'll just watch you eat while I cry internally from hunger” diet. On the other extreme, we gluttonize ourselves until we can't breathe… with “dumpster-size” movie theater popcorn, a gallon of pop, nachos, and a box of “mega mondo” sugar candy….before we go out to dinner.
So what are we talking about? Moderation. What happened to moderation and common sense?

Let’s start with the basics. Once eaten, our food breaks down into carbohydrates, proteins, or fats. Carbohydrates have 4 calories per gram, proteins have 4 calories per gram, and fats have nine calories per gram.

Carbohydrates are needed for energy. However, carbohydrates break down into sugar, which in turn eventually becomes fat if unused. Therefore, moderation is the key. Proteins are needed because they are the essential building blocks of muscle and skin. Proteins break down into amino acids which aid in body development and function. However, too much protein can be tough on kidney functioning. Therefore moderation is the key. Although fats have the most calories per gram, they are necessary for healthy skin, hair, nails, for vitamin absorption, proper brain function (neurons have a myelin sheath that is made from fat), and for numerous other body functions. However, too much fat can cause damage (which you already know). Therefore moderation is the key.

What’s the key word? Yup, it’s “moderation.” So we know what our food is made up of and what it breaks down into. Now let’s discuss what our food labels are made up of and what they can tell us. Food labels can be misleading. Not that I’m cynical about the marketing intentions of corporations (okay, maybe I am). Let’s take a look at the food label for one serving of granola and analyze the carbohydrate, protein, and fat content.

So to summarize this, not even 10 percent of the serving is protein and nearly 90 percent will break down to sugar and fat. So that’s the breakdown of the “healthy” granola bar.

So what do we do as mere mortal humans trying to overcome the evils of bad nutrition? First we grab a superhero cape. Then we educate ourselves. After that, we try to make healthy food choices. Lastly, we need to avoid being “food extremists.” Moderation is the key!!!
### Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 2 bars (42g)

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<th>Amount Per Serving</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>% Daily Value*</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL CALORIES 180**

- **FAT CALORIES = 6 grams x 9 (calories per gram of fat)**  
  = 54 fat calories
- **So the percent fat would be:**  
  54 fat calories/180 total calories (multiply by 100 to convert to percent)  
  = 30% fat

- **CARBOHYDRATE CALORIES = 29 grams x 4 (calories per gram of carb)**  
  = 116 carb calories
- **So the percent carbohydrate would be:**  
  116 carb calories/180 total calories (multiply by 100 for percent)  
  = about 64% carb

- **PROTEIN CALORIES = 4 grams x 4 (calories per gram of protein)**  
  = 16 protein calories
- **So the percent protein would be:**  
  16 protein calories/180 total calories (multiply by 100 for percent)  
  = about 8.9% protein
As the halal market grows in North America, one of the large manufacturers of processed meat products in Canada did their research to see what the Canadian Muslims are looking for when they buy halal food. In order to get their range of halal products right for the halal consumer they went to great lengths to make sure they were going to meet the right criteria.

What they discovered, contrary to what the previous generation of Muslims wanted which was price based, the cheaper the better, was this generation of Muslims want a quality product, not a cheap one, and they are prepared to pay for it.

When asked what they were looking for when they bought their food they repeatedly came back with the same answers: humanely treated, additive and preservative free, environmentally friendly, for which they were prepared to pay the higher price for a quality product.

This change in Muslim shopping patterns is not unique to Canada, it has developed strongly worldwide through all cultures and races of Muslims who have a higher awareness of food safety, illness caused by additives, and high amounts of ingredients like sugar, salt and fat in food. We must be reminded that whenever halal is mentioned in the Quran it is always connected with tayyib (wholesome, pure, nutritious and safe).

Because the Muslim consumers are making demands for these changes, the food companies are being forced to comply. Too much is being publically exposed about the results of additives, preservatives and high sugar/artificial sugar substitutes, fat and salt content in foods for them to be able to get away with it any longer.

Diabetes is now rife amongst Muslims young and old. Plus with the sharp rise in cancer, and the research on the long term consumption and use of carcinogenic ingredients in food and personal care products, pesticides and additives, they are now able to find how the consumption and use of these products can be fatal to humans, or at the very least the cause of many illnesses.

The other side of this, which can be just as life threatening, is of course obesity. One quarter of the adult population in the US is considered obese, including around 12 million children. Four Muslim countries in the GCC are also included in the top 10 fattest countries in the world. Kuwait is the second fattest country in the world behind the United States.

The simplest way to get around this would be to make everything from scratch yourself so that you can monitor what you are putting into the food you eat. Go for natural flavorings, and give your palate time to change. Strong spices can sometimes help to replace the additives.
But not everyone has time for this. Muslim women no longer have the time to cook fresh meals for their family, and they have to rely on prepared foods that make their life easier when going out to work or study every day. Their children want to eat the same junk food all their friends have in their lunch box. So, once again, it goes back to petitioning the food manufacturers to do their best to make sure that the products that they are producing aren’t exceptionally high in sugar, salt, fat, additives and preservatives that give them a long shelf life, and to list on the label what is in the food.

Fat, sugar and salt in processed foods are usually added to mask the taste of chemical additives. With this increased flavoring, salt and sugar content in their food, people that are used to eating these types of products might find it difficult to go to a purer product with just the basic ingredients in it. They have become an addiction, just like tobacco.

Yale University professor of psychology and public health, Kelly Brownell, an especially vocal proponent of the view that the processed-food industry should be seen as a public health menace, said, “As a culture, we’ve become upset by the tobacco companies advertising to children, but we sit idly by while the food companies do the very same thing. And we could make a claim that the toll taken on the public health by a poor diet rivals that taken by tobacco.”

Changing your diet, if it is an unhealthy one, is not one that you can do overnight. But one of the blessings given to the Muslims is the month of Ramadan. During the fasting month, which is now during the long days of summer in North America, people who are looking to make these changes can try to start doing this while fasting. It is a time of strong intentions, and Allah gives you the blessing of helping you fulfill these intentions during this blessed month.

So take advantage, and make a plan to improve your diet during Ramadan if you need to. The night is not the time to get as much into your stomach as possible, but to get the nutrients that you need to sustain yourself for your fast the next day. Monitor the food you are eating at this time to get simply the best from it.

Then, once you get back to your normal eating routine after Ramadan, you will hopefully have the resolve to keep hold of the changes you have made, and carry on with a healthy diet and a halal and healthy lifestyle.
Ramadan Kareem
Fasting Your Way to Better Health

By Aysha Hussain

It's summer time which means it's hot outside and the nights are long. With Ramadan just weeks away, Muslims around the country may find themselves grappling with how to bear these harsh conditions, not to mention the sometimes unbearable hunger pangs that tend to get the better of our stomachs. We are all guilty of it, but before you decide to overindulge at Iftar time, new research, although somewhat controversial shows there are bonuses associated with fasting during Ramadan (aside from spiritual), and even some health incentives to fast more regularly.
Often considered a running joke among fellow Muslims, the reality is that fasting during Ramadan for some serves as the catalyst for newly established weight loss goals. A new study published in the *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* discovered that weight loss during Ramadan is, in fact, a very realistic outcome. The study found that fasting between the hours of dawn and sunset, not only led to weight loss in more than 200 adults over the course of 20 days (out of 30), but also a reduction in overall body fat, particularly among males all of whom made very little changes to their food consumption before and during Ramadan.

Tina M. Kaufman, Ph.D., PA-C, Assistant Professor in Preventive Cardiology and the Clinical Supervisor of Cardiac Rehabilitation at Oregon Health & Science University, believes this type of study and similar research may be subject to skepticism within the medical community as fasting is not considered an ideal method of weight loss.

“A lot of people will fast for weight loss purposes,” says Kaufman. “The problem is when you fast your body goes into a state of deprivation. That’s a very poor way of losing weight because once you fast for more than 8 to 12 hours, your metabolism slows down and you’re not really burning any calories at that point and you mostly lose water.”

Fasting is typically prescribed to hospital patients prior to undergoing a medical procedure or surgery. While Muslims are not allowed to eat or drink during the fasting process, patients are allowed to drink water with no consumption of solid foods between 8 and 12 hours. Aside from this routine medical practice, Kaufman says fasting can benefit people who eat an otherwise unhealthy diet, and as a result can create a shift or positive change in the body.

“If you took someone who had a really poor diet — meaning they ate a lot of processed foods, junk foods, [and] fast foods — then fasting might be a good type of reset for their bodies, particularly if they ate a vegetarian diet,” says Kaufman.

Health fasts involving juice cleanses that claim to rid the body of toxins, have always been a go-to among wellness and fitness enthusiasts and people looking to quickly shed a few extra pounds, but nowadays they are more popular than ever. Cooler Cleanse and BluePrint Cleanse are among the leading brands at the front of this increasingly, growing trend.

While evidence that definitively lays out the health benefits of fasting, aside from weight loss remains weak, “intermittent fasting,” or fasting on consecutive or alternate days (or 2 days of fasting per week), is hailed as one form proven to facilitate disease prevention. Dr. James Brown, a lead researcher at Aston University located in the United Kingdom, along with his team of researchers, recently revisited the topic of intermittent fasting as a dietary intervention in the prevention of diseases. Their findings revealed that periods of intermittent fasting assisted with weight loss, the reduction of inflammation and instances of diabetes, slowed down the progression of Type 2 diabetes, and lowered blood pressure levels even when there was little or no change in total daily calorie consumption.

Despite these findings of its disease prevention capabilities, intermittent fasting should not be mistaken as cutting back on calories, otherwise known as “calorie restriction”. Previously held studies have found that restricting calories by margins of approximately 15 to 40 percent have been shown to improve cardiovascular health by reducing blood pressure and heart rate, halt the development of cancer, and dementia including Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases.

According to Kaufman, people who intentionally lower their calorie intake, in particular by eating vegetables, tend to have less chronic diseases and as a result end up living longer.
“There is some evidence people who eat a very low calorie diet tend to live longer,” Kaufman says. “These are people who eat very healthy, predominantly vegan, and some of them raw. Not people who are eating Big Macs.”

When it comes to fasting during Ramadan, Belco Maryama Bocoum, of Harlem, NY, doesn’t enjoy feeling too full, and even admits she does not eat before dawn because it’s too difficult to go back to sleep on a full stomach, unless she eats something light. Bocoum, however, breaks her fast starting with a cup of tea prior to eating anything heavy.

“During Ramadan I definitely experience weight loss,” says Bocoum. “Some people try to stuff their stomach when they break [for] fast which is a mistake because then you get full very fast [and] can’t eat anymore.”

Whether you are fasting during Ramadan or want to try fasting intermittently, Kaufman says there is no right or wrong way of fasting as everyone has different dietary needs, however she recommends following these guidelines before and after the fast.

- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of liquids
- Eat mostly vegetarian such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables, i.e. beans and lentils
- Try to consume meat prior to fasting because animal proteins break down slower in the body
- Stay away from eating a huge meal, especially after the fast. Doing so can put a lot of stress on the body and negatively affect sleep
- Try not to exercise, light-walking is okay
- If you have a heart condition, cardiovascular disease or diabetes, consult with your health care provider prior to fasting

**SOURCES/EXPERTS**

*Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*
“Effect of fasting in Ramadan on body composition and nutritional intake: a prospective study.”

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“Intermittent fasting”
http://dvd.sagepub.com/content/13/2/68.full.pdf+html (2013)

“Calorie Restriction”
http://ebm.sagepub.com/content/238/2/127.full (2013)
http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/86/1/7.full (2007)
Through this evolution, consumers have become savvier and more involved in the development of food products. Origin and source of critical ingredients; genetically modified organisms; hormone and antibiotic free (organic) farming; and calories content are but a few of the current concerns among consumers. Halal Consumer magazine will continue to bring you articles addressing these and other issues of concern, as well as healthy and yummy recipes, and the latest news on halal developments.

It is you, the consumer, that has made these publications a success and we want to thank you for your support. Please continue to send us your ideas and do continue to let the food producers and marketers know your preference for halal products.

From its inception, IFANCA educational programs have served consumers with information on Halal; nutrition; food trends and health issues. In 1982 IFANCA began issuing The Islamic Perspective®, a newspaper styled publication covering IFANCA certification procedures; halal dietary requirements; health related issues and more. In 1988 The Islamic Perspective changed to a magazine style publication and introduced color. And in 2000, The Islamic Perspective evolved into Halal Consumer magazine®, the glossy, color magazine you see today. Publication evolved from the tedious cutting and pasting of printed material to the current electronic production methods. And circulation increased from 5,000 copies per issue to about 30,000 copies per issue today, plus many more thousand viewers of its electronic version on our web site, www.ifanca.org.
Veggielicious Delicious

By Tayyaba Syed
Grown-ups know that vegetables are one of the most important parts of a diet as they are rich with minerals and vitamins. These nature-made leaves, roots, and stalks are vital to the body’s health. However, it is not that easy to explain this logic to children. When parents mention eating greens, the little ones’ faces turn a matching green color with queasiness. Many kids try to avoid veggies at all costs and miss out on the beneficial nutrients that are packed inside. This rough start in childhood does not have to transition into a lifetime of anti-vegetables. The key is to incorporate a love for them early on and many times it can be as easy as making them just look and taste more appealing. There are many great ways to present and serve veggies to even the toughest little critics as Halal Consumer’s avid readers have so graciously shared.

First-time mom Sofia Alam of Elmhurst, Illinois, makes sure her 1-year-old son Dawud enjoys vegetables right from the start. She purees many of his meals at home which mainly consist of wholesome vegetables. Baby Dawud’s first solid foods included zucchini and squash, which is known to be a super-food containing antioxidant and antibacterial chemicals which prevent damage to the skin, joints, brain, and heart. He is also a huge fan of avocado, but that happens to fall under the fruit category.

“Zucchini, squash, and avocado are great first foods for your little baby,” says Alam who is a certified teacher by profession. “They are filled with vitamins and good fats that are highly nutritious for the youngest to the oldest family member. Before he tasted the flavors of real vegetables, I introduced Dawud to the bland, buttery taste of a ripe avocado,” she says.

Alam simply mashed and spoon-fed avocado to him when he was six months old. It was love at first spoon. Gradually from there, she transitioned his taste buds into enjoying vegetables as well.

“I want to make sure he grows up making the right choices when it comes to his diet,” shares Alam. “God has blessed us with an endless array of delicious foods, and Dawud will be exposed to them as early as possible. We as a family try to avoid foods with refined sugars or that are processed, especially in our home. ‘Out of sight, out of mind’ is our motto for staying away from junk foods. The best way to teach is by example, and we parents need to show our kids how to appreciate and enjoy the natural foods God intended for us to eat,” she says.

Asra Farooq Rahman, a literary specialist from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, has a very similar stance when it comes to feeding her two little toddlers. She believes it is all about providing healthy options in and out of the home for her son Zaki, 4, and daughter Noor, 2.

“The adults do the grocery shopping and cooking, so it is our responsibility to make healthy choices for our children,” says Rahman. “If you bring junk food or unhealthy foods in the house, it will undoubtedly get consumed. Therefore, we make sure it does not even come in our home but lots of yummy fruits and vegetables do.”

Zaki’s school makes it mandatory for students’ lunches to have at least two dairy products, two kinds of fruits or vegetables, as well as grains. A sample of his school lunch may be milk, spinach and cheese quesadilla, string cheese, strawberries, and raisins. His snacks may consist of yogurt, grapes, crackers, and pretzels. Rahman keeps the portions small yet options plentiful.
“We make packing snacks and lunches extra fun and special for the kids,” she says. “On weekends we go fruit picking. Zaki and Noor love eating their hand-picked fruits. It just gives them a personal feel to what they consume,” Rahman says.

Rahman is also consistent about throwing in vegetables into whichever foods she can for her kids. For example, for breakfast she will toss in chopped spinach, tomatoes, and onions into their omelet. Zaki and Noor usually do not mind the extra color and flavor to their eggs and happily eat their morning meal.

“For snack time, the kids love homemade Pico de gallo,” shares Rahman. “It is a staple in our home with a side of plain tortilla chips. Soups also make great appetizers or even meals for kids, and with the right flavoring, they will slurp up all the vegetables with a smile. Also fresh salad or steamed veggies such as asparagus are served regularly with our dinners. Sometimes I will throw in dried cranberries or diced strawberries or grapes into their salads, and the kids will actually eat that as their dessert!”

If salad for dessert does not seem likely to win over the little ones, then a tall glass of juiced vegetables might do the trick. Juicing is a great way to enjoy veggies, and one glass can suffice as a whole meal. It is a simple and easy way to get all the goodness out of vegetables. If there is juice leftover, Zainab Sozzer recommends freezing it by making mini popsicles out of it. Her sons Muhammad and Ahmad Kamani, ages 3 and 2, love juiced veggie drinks or smoothies.

“Allhumdullilah, it makes me happy to see my kids fighting over kale juice or a broccoli smoothie,” says Sozzer of Chicago, Illinois. “They also enjoy anything with carrots, and to add some natural sweetness, I throw in some apples or cantaloupe into the juicer. After the boys have had their share, whatever juice remains, I simply pour into Popsicle trays and freeze for some yummy, nutritious relief on a hot day later,” she says.

Catering to kids’ dietary needs does not have to be at the expense of healthy eating. There are many healthy options out there starting with the produce section of the grocery store. It may require some proper pre-planning before heading out to the store and allowing a few extra minutes to prepare the snacks and meals. In the end, it is worth it when children snack on fruits and vegetables instead of chips and cookies. Parents must be the best of models. There is no real trick involved except to make eating vegetables a usual part of the family regimen. Presentation plays a major role in turning those greens into veggie-delicious options. A healthier foundation will only lead to a stronger, longer future for everyone.

Director Muslim Library and Resource Center, Chicago, IL

A premier not-for-profit organization is in the process of establishing an Islamic library and resource center in the heart of downtown Chicago. It is a brand new project whose details will emerge from practice. A building has been acquired for this purpose. We are looking for a creative and energetic individual with strong public service orientation. Enthusiasm, flexibility, and self-motivation are essential for this job. The candidate should be a dynamic leader who is passionate about serving the cause of Islam and Muslim community in the United States. The person needs to develop the project and work closely with neighboring schools, colleges, religious institutions, and civic groups. We would like to see this facility be the center of Islamic learning, outreach, and civic and interfaith engagement.

The ideal candidate should have a bachelor’s, preferably master’s, in relevant sciences such as media, culture, political science, religion, law, etc. He/she should have held responsible positions in the past, and should know how to apply 21st century tools and technologies. Working knowledge of Islam and U.S. Muslim community, excellent communication, and interpersonal skills are must. The successful candidate should be broadly focused and adventurous enough to expand the range of center’s operation to meet the evolving needs.

A generous compensation package includes competitive salary, health benefits, and retirement plan.

E-mail your resume to: zkazmi@zhkcpa.com or mail hard copy to: PO Box 597722, Chicago, IL.
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In matters of halal, we take the doubt out of doubtful.

The Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, IFANCA, is working with the world’s food producers to ensure what you eat is halal and healthy.

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www.youtube.com/ifanca4halal  halal@ifanca.org  www.ifanca.org

*The Crescent M® and IFANCA are registered trademarks of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) and appear on IFANCA halal-certified products internationally.
IFANCA’s 15th International Halal Food Conference was a great success. Speakers, industry representatives and community members gathered in Rosemont, Illinois on April 6-8 to discuss issues relevant to halal production. The conference featured speakers from Belgium, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and the USA and from government bodies, industry, academia and IFANCA discussing a variety of topics of interest to food processors and consumers. The topics ranged from a review of the growth of the halal market to halal management systems, food safety, security, animal welfare and export considerations. Success stories were told by industry representatives that implemented halal production under IFANCA guidance and newcomers were eager to listen and learn about the opportunities that lie ahead.

A community banquet of more than 250 guests allowed the industry representatives to enjoy some authentic halal food, listen to a touching keynote address by Mr. William (Bill) Kurtis, and interact with halal consumers. Both the industry representatives and the consumers had a good time learning what products are demanded and how easy it is to produce them. During the banquet, awards were handed out, including lifetime achievement awards to Dr. Ahmad Sakr, Dr. Mohammed Sadek and Mr. Allan Hamoud. Other awards included IFANCA employee of the year, company of the year to Cargill Inc., and awards to the 12 conference sponsors.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Saudi Chamber of Commerce (SCOC) and IFANCA with Dr. Al Khatrawi signing for SCOC and Dr. Muhammad M. Chaudry signing for IFANCA.

At the close, attendees congratulated IFANCA for a successful conference and looked forward to next year. More information on the Conference is available on the IFANCA website at http://bit.ly/ifanca_HD_May.
*Dr. Al Khatrawi, Chairman Madina Chamber of Commerce, and Dr. Chaudry, president of IFANCA Signing of Memorandum of Understanding between IFANCA and Saudi Chamber of Commerce
Low Calorie Bread Pudding

Courtesy Mrs. Cay’s Cupcakes

SERVING SIZE 6 | TOTAL PREP TIME 15 MINUTES | BAKING TIME 40 MINUTES
CALORIES: 158 PER SERVING | TOTAL CARBS: 25 G | FIBER: 1 G

INGREDIENTS

3 Tbsp. Vegetable Oil or Butter
2 Cups Milk
½ Cup Sugar (can be substituted with baking sweetener, like Splenda)
4 Egg Whites
½ Tsp Salt or a pinch
1 Tsp Vanilla essence (alcohol free)
3 Cups Bread, cut into 1” cubes (whole grain bread or sour-dough bread give good results and are high in fiber)
¼ Cup Raisins (optional)
¼ Cup Dried cranberries (optional)
¼ Cup Slivered Almonds
½ Tsp Cinnamon
Pecans for decorate
Light Whipped Cream, if desired

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven 350 degrees. Grease 8”x8” dish butter.
2. Place the bread cubes in the prepared dish. Sprinkle with raisins, cranberries and almonds.
3. Cook milk, sugar and the oil/butter on medium heat, until the butter is melted. Make sure that the milk is just warm, not hot.
4. Whisk the egg whites, slowly add the milk mixture while beating the egg whites till its blended. Add vanilla and salt.
5. Pour the egg and milk mixture over the bread cubes, making sure everything is nicely soaked. Top with pecans and sprinkle cinnamon.
6. Place this dish in a bigger oven proof dish, fill the bigger dish with halfway hot water.
7. Put the dishes in the oven for 40 minutes or until the sides are golden brown.
8. Let cool and serve with whipped cream.
Carrot Halwa & Carrot Rice Pudding

By Jawairia Sial Ashraf

Carrot Halwa

SERVING SIZE 10 | TOTAL PREP TIME 4 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS
- 2 ½ Lbs Shredded Carrots
- 5 Cardamom
- 2 Cups Milk
- ½ Cup Sugar
- 3 Tbsp Ghee
- 1 Tbsp Almonds chopped for garnish

DIRECTIONS
1. Add carrots, cardamom and milk to cook on low heat for about 4 hours.
2. Once the water has dried up, add sugar and ghee and fry 10-15 minutes.
3. Garnish with almonds, and serve warm.

Carrot Rice Pudding

SERVING SIZE 25 | TOTAL PREP TIME 4 HOURS

INGREDIENTS
- 2 ½ Lbs Shredded Carrots
- 5 Cardamom
- 1 Cup Rice
- 14 Cups Water
- 5 Cups Milk
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 2 Tbsp Ghee
- Almonds for garnish

DIRECTIONS
1. Add carrots, cardamom, rice and water to cook on medium heat for about 3 hours until the rice starts breaking.
2. Add milk and bring to boil.
3. Add ghee and keep mixing, cook on medium/high heat until the desired consistency.
4. Add sugar and reduce water to desired consistency.
5. Garnish with almonds.
Over Roasted Potato Wedges
& Roasted Brussel Sprouts

By Tayyaba Syed

Over Roasted Potato Wedges
SERVING SIZE 4 | TOTAL PREP TIME 40 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

2 Medium potatoes, scrubbed and rinsed
1 ½ Tbsp Olive Oil
2 Garlic Cloves, minced/mashed
¼ Tsp Dried Rosemary
¼ Tsp Dried Oregano
¼ Tsp Dried Thyme
¼ Tsp Paprika
¼ Tsp Ground Black Pepper
½ Tsp Salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.
2. Wash and cut potatoes into wedges.
3. Mix all spices with oil in a mixing bowl.
4. Toss / coat the potatoes with the spices mix.
5. Bake evenly for 35 minutes in the oven.

Roasted Brussel Sprouts
SERVING SIZE 3 | TOTAL PREP TIME 45-50 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ Lbs Brussel Sprouts
3 Tbsp Olive Oil
⅔ Tsp Salt
⅕ Tsp Ground Black Pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Cut off brown ends of the sprouts and pull off any yellow leaves.
3. Mix oil, salt and black pepper in a blow.
4. Toss / coat the sprouts with the spices mix.
5. Bake and roast for 35-40 minutes in the oven.

Pan Grilled Chicken Burger

By Aisha Kureishy

PREPARATION TIME 5 MINUTES | COOKING TIME 15-20 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

1. Lb lean and thawed Ground Halal Chicken Meat
   Salt to taste
   Black Pepper to taste
1. Tsp Garlic Powder
1. Finely Diced Tomato
2. Finely Diced Green Onions
1. Finely Diced Green Pepper
3-4 Tsp Oil or Oil Spray Can
   Coriander or mint leaves for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix all the ingredients in the ground halal chicken.
2. Use a burger presser or make thin chicken patties.
3. Heat oil on medium heat, place 3-4 patties at a time, turn when getting brown.
4. Serve them warm, Garnish with coriander or mint leaves.
Vegetable Pizza

By Tayyaba Syed

PREPARATION TIME 10 MINUTES | COOKING TIME 15-20 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

4-5  Non Pocket Pita Breads (the ones used in gyros sandwiches)
½  Cup Pasta Sauce
½  Cup Baby Spinach Leaves
1  Cup Chopped Bell Peppers (red, orange, yellow)
½  Red Onion, sliced
½  Cup Chopped Olives
6-8  Cherry Tomatoes sliced in half
1  Cup Halal Feta Cheese, crumbled

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Arrange pita breads on baking sheets.
3. Spread two tablespoons of pasta sauce on each pita bread.
4. Place a few leaves of baby spinach on each pita.
5. Sprinkle each pita bread with a mix of all the chopped veggies.
6. Sprinkle feta cheese on top.
7. Bake for 10-12 minutes.
Strawberry and Feta Salad

By Tayyaba Syed

This recipe creates a very tangy, fresh and flavorful summery taste you can enjoy with the family and loved ones.

Ingredients

- 2 Cups of Baby Spinach
- ½ Cup Chopped Red Onion
- 6-8 Cherry Tomatoes, sliced in half
- ½ Bell Pepper (Orange or Yellow), chopped
- 6-8 Strawberries, sliced
- ¼ Cup Walnuts, chopped
- ¼ Cup Halal Feta Cheese, crumbled
- ¼ Cup Pita Chips, crushed
- 2-3 Tbsp Balsamic Vinaigrette

Directions

1. Adjust all measurements to your taste and liking.
Water: The Source of Life

By Zeshan Sadek
Halal Administrator
ALLAH, Subhanahu wa ta’ala, teaches us in Qur’an, the importance and value of water, as HE says:

Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of Creation), before We clove them asunder? WE made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe? (Qur’an — Chapter Al-Anbiya: Verse 30)

It is HE Who sends the winds like heralds of glad tidings, going before HIS Mercy: when they have carried the heavy-laden clouds, WE drive them to a land that is dead, make rain to descend thereon, and produce every kind of harvest therewith: thus shall WE raise up the dead perchance you may remember. (Qur’an — Chapter Al-‘Araaf: Verse 57)

... You see the earth barren and lifeless, but when WE pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth in pairs. (Qur’an — Chapter Al-Haj: Verse 5)

It is HE Who has created man from water: then has HE established relationships of lineage and marriage: for your Lord has power (over all things). (Qur’an — Chapter Al-Furqan: Verse 54)

And do they not see that WE do drive rain to parched soil (bare of herbage), and produce therewith crops, providing food for their cattle and themselves? Have they not the vision? (Qur’an — Chapter Al-Sajdah: Verse 27)

It is clear from these verses that without water, there cannot be life, neither human, nor animal, nor plant. All creatures are dependent upon water for survival. Science has determined that the human body is made up of about 70% water. We need to drink water to maintain our bodily functions, including temperature regulation, delivering nutrients and oxygen, protecting tissues and joints and cleaning out toxins and wastes. In addition, making sure to drink enough water can prevent constipation, reduce the wrinkling of skin and even suppresses the appetite, which can help control weight. It’s because water is essential to healthy blood flow, trouble-free functioning of the digestive tract and maintaining proper body temperature—which is especially important during exercise, when we’re losing water constantly through breathing, sweating and other basic bodily functions. So the more you work out, the more important it is to keep tabs on constant replenishment.

While we may drink tea, coffee or soft drinks, they are not a substitute for water. Actually, caffeinated drinks and tend to increase fluid loss, requiring more water to make up for lost fluids. Alcohol, though we do not consume, but has this same effect. In addition, the sugar in these beverages inhibits the absorption of water by the body.

It is generally agreed that the average adult requires at least 8 full glasses (60-80 ounces) of water a day. Heavy activity or exertion and high temperatures will increase fluid loss requiring even more water consumption. An easy rule of thumb is to drink one ounce of water for every two pounds of weight, so a 150-pound person should drink 75 ounces of water a day, about 8 glasses.

Not drinking enough water leads to dehydration, that can result in serious health problems including, heat stroke, heat exhaustion, asthma, headaches, allergies, hypertension, elevated cholesterol, chronic fatigue, depression and abdominal pain. We must get in the habit of drinking water regularly throughout the day, not just when we feel thirsty. In fact, when you feel thirsty, you have already begun to dehydrate, so you are already late in drinking. Other signs of dehydration or not drinking enough water are dark colored urine and dry skin.

Many of us are used to snacking on things during the day. One way to drink enough water is to keep a bottle or glass nearby and take a sip every few minutes, or chug half a glass every half hour or so. It will pay off in better health and more energy.
SPORTS & ENERGY DRINKS
Should You Believe The Hype?

By Naazish YarKhan
Whether it’s Gatorade®, Powerade®, VitaminWater®, 5-Hour Energy®, Red Bull®, Monster® or Fuze Beverage®, Sports and Energy Drinks form a multibillion-dollar energy-drink industry. Hugely popular, especially among young adults, these flavored beverages come in various forms from carbonated fruit drinks enriched with vitamins to vitamin enhanced water to blends of water, electrolytes and carbohydrates. And yet, a simple Google search reveals that the experts take issue with health claims that accompany many of these beverages. In fact, court cases have been associated with some brands. To help separate the marketing spin from reality, Halal Consumer spoke with nutritional experts, Zaira Ahmad and Sarene Alsharif (www.healthyplate5.com; www.healthyplate5.blogspot.com).

“First, let’s start with the difference between Sports Drinks such as Gatorade and Powerade and Energy Drinks like 5-Hour Energy and Red Bull. The main difference is caffeine. In general, Sports Drinks contain carbohydrates and electrolytes while some also include vitamins, minerals and amino acids,” says Sarene Alsharif, a nutritionist, public health educator and consultant with a Master’s degree in Public Health. “Energy Drinks, on the other hand, have caffeine in extremely high amounts and can contain any mixture of carbohydrates, amino acids, vitamins and minerals.”

“Sports Drinks are meant for high intensity workouts lasting over an hour long (and are intended) to replace fluids and electrolytes lost in prolonged sweating and energy expenditure. They typically do not contain caffeine,” adds Zaira Ahmad, a Registered Dietitian with a Master’s degree in Nutrition and Food Science, who works as a Clinical Dietitian in Somerville, New Jersey.

Drinks like Gatorade are meant to balance electrolytes that are lost when the body is sweating profusely, she says. Rather than opting for the calories and sugars that come with Sports Drinks, her sons prefer coconut water to get the electrolytes they need. They bottle it with ice to keep it from spoiling when in the hot sun, once the original packaging has been opened.

As for vitamin waters such as VitaminWater or Fuze Beverage that tout a slew of vitamins, again, Shahana Khan’s family chooses to skip the calories that come with those flavors. “Take a multi-vitamin with water before you head out to exercise, practice or a game,” is her advice.

“Drinks that began as Sports Drinks to replenish depleted athletes, are consumed today by people whose bodies are already overwrought by calories and chemicals,” says Linda Gardner, a mother of two children under age ten. Her family’s replenishments of choice: water, sparkling water, coconut water, water kefir, kombucha, and cool herbal teas.

“Younger folk are prone to choosing Sports Drinks to accompany a meal thinking it is a “healthier” choice than soda and sugary drinks. I like to tell people that if they aren’t running a marathon while eating their lunch, there’s really no need for a Sports Drink. In reality, Sports Drinks tend to be high in sugar since they are meant to restore energy in an athlete,” says Zaira Ahmad. Despite how frequently we see Sports Drinks at sports trainings and gyms, “for low or moderate 30-60 minute exercising, water during the workout and a light snack following it suffice.”

Besides there being no evidence of benefits associated with the consumption of Sports Drinks when engaging in average amounts of physical activity, Sarene Alsharif says that research is sketchy even when it comes to supporting the consumption of Sports Drinks by elite athletes. “The best way to remain hydrated is to drink water before, during, and after physical activity. If you are thirsty, go get a drink of water.”
ARE ENERGY DRINKS A GOOD IDEA?

Neither Zaira Ahmad nor Sarene Alsharif would recommend Energy Drinks under any circumstances. “The average Energy Drink is highly caffeinated, larger than one serving size, high in sugar, and costly. Energy Drinks tend to be packaged in cans and may have up to 3 servings in them, depending on the brand. In reality, since it is a single can, a person will drink the entire three servings in one sitting,” Zaira Ahmad explains.

Consumption of high amounts of caffeine is known to disrupt heart beats resulting in atrial fibrillations in some cases”, says Sarene Alsharif. “Water and a balanced diet typically provide enough hydration and nutrition to keep people healthy.

Despite these side effects, these over-caffeinated Energy Drinks are often marketed to teens and young adults. “In general, this age group may be negligent of their caffeine intake and consume a combination of (various) caffeinated beverages in a day, including coffee, tea, sodas, and Energy Drinks. This can make them more susceptible to the side effects of too much caffeine. The culture of overindulgence can be dangerous,” says Zaira Ahmad. “The added sugars also play a part in the obesity epidemic in the United States.”

“Consumption of high amounts of caffeine is known to disrupt heart beats resulting in atrial fibrillations in some cases”, says Sarene Alsharif. “Water and a balanced diet typically provide enough hydration and nutrition to keep people healthy.”

DEATH BY CAFFEINE?

In 2012, the FDA investigated 13 deaths including one non-fatal heart attack linked to Energy Drinks. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that “emergency room visits due to Energy Drinks have doubled over the last four years from 10,000 in 2007 to 20,000 in 2011.” According to CBSNews, “American Heart Association’s 2013 Scientific Sessions in New Orleans revealed that Energy Drinks may increase blood pressure and change the heart’s rhythm.”

“Children younger than 12 should eliminate caffeine in their diets and pregnant and breastfeeding women should restrict it to 200 mg or less per day”, says Zaira Ahmad. Those with pre-existing heart conditions are most at risk of complications associated with having over-caffeinated drinks. “It may cause increased blood pressure and irregular or racing heart beats. Anyone with pre-existing gastrointestinal conditions may further irritate their digestive systems with high caffeine intake. Individuals with pre-existing conditions such as these should avoid caffeinated beverages generally.”

“All in all, there is no immediate risk when caffeine or Energy Drinks are consumed by a healthy adult in moderation and with good sense. If a person is aware of their caffeine intake, refined sugar intake, and past medical history there is really nothing wrong with having one energy drink, once in a while. If they utilized their good sense, however, they may find that the problem isn’t really a lack of energy that a drink can fix, but rather a need to readjust their lifestyle to feel more energized in natural and safer ways.”

ABOUT THE WRITER: Naazish Yarkhan is a content strategist and publicist. Her work has been featured by NPR, Huffington Post, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Public Radio, Common Ground News Service, Saudi Aramco Magazine and in over 50 outlets internationally.
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