J&M® halal certified meals use only wholesome ingredients and have NO MSG, NO SOY, and NO ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS OR COLORS. 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 & 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.

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.

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

CHICKEN MEDITERRANEAN: A hearty chicken meal with the flavors of the Mediterranean region. It has chunks of light and dark chicken meat, tomatoes, potatoes, chickpeas, and black olives in a tangy sauce.

CHICKEN & NOODLES: A winning combination with chunks of light and dark chicken meat, homestyle Kluski noodles, peas and carrots in a lightly seasoned sauce.

CHICKEN & BLACK BEANS: A scrumptious meal with chunks of light and dark chicken meat, black & kidney beans, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet peppers and corn. Simple spicing brings out its full flavor!

BEEF STEW: A satisfying and delicious stew! It has chunks of lean beef, with potatoes, sweet peppers, tomatoes, cabbage, zucchini, chickpeas and carrots in a flavorful sauce.

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

PASTA WITH GARDEN VEGETABLES: This delicious and robust meal has rotini pasta with peppers, mushrooms, zucchini and tomatoes. It is perfectly flavored with traditional Italian seasonings.

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

CHEESETORTELLINI: Cheese-filled tortellini are simply delicious in a well-seasoned tomato sauce, with the added protein and texture of pinto beans.

FLORENTINE LASAGNA: A meal influenced by the tastes of Florence. Savor the combination of small lasagna noodles in a tomato sauce with Ricotta and Parmesan cheeses, spinach and pinto bean pieces which add texture and protein.

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Tel: 847-948-1290 • Fax: 847-948-0468 • e-mail: sales@halalcertified.com • www.halalcertified.com
In the name of God, the Most Beneficent, Most Merciful

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Salaam Readers,

Marked by the equinox, the season of football fantasy, bulky scarves, Halloween, and Thanksgiving is here. As temperatures drop and sunlight dims, chlorophyll gives way to other pigments to create a glorious spectacle of russet hues, a treat for forest sightseers. I’m wondering if there is any truth in the weather proverb, “If the leaves take longer to fall, it will be a cold winter.”

*Harvest* was the word used until the 1300s to describe the next few months of this season of reaping. Not surprising that it’s still used in other languages e.g. Dutch *herfst*, German *Herbst* and Scots *hairst*. As people gradually moved from working the land to living in towns, the word *harvest* lost its relevance and *autumn*, as well as *fall*, began to replace it. The word *autumn* has connotations of the passing of the year. By the 16th century, it was in common use along with the poetic word *fall*, a contraction of ‘fall of the leaf’ and ‘fall of the year’. The settlers took it with them to North America. While the term *fall* gradually became obsolete in Britain, it became the more common term in North America. Call it what you may, but remember that it’s not caused by the earth’s distance from the sun, but its tilt!

Enjoy fall with our recipes of warm desserts such as baked quince, the heart-warming cauliflower soup, with the Macedonian eggplant salad to complement. Back to the grind? A quick quesadilla might be the solution to a hunger situation at home.

Our feature this time will make you realize that your food may be better traveled than you are and make you ponder over cultivating a kitchen garden and visiting the local farmers market. Our article on food coloring is a reminder of why, while adding color to our lives, it is important to look past the exterior and understand what truly goes into our food. Read this issue to know what Niacin’s job in the human body is and where to get it. You’ll also find out how much better or worse fast-casual restaurants are from fast food joints and fine dining. Read on to review some of the fancy, new butters that are trending today. Know more about a fabulously fit pregnancy and also how to preserve your smile with daily care and cosmetic dentistry. Find out what that strange looking thing called quince is and what to do with it.

As always, your feedback would be very welcome, whether via email, Facebook or Twitter.

Happy Reading!

Sincerely,

Haniya Rais Tirmizi content manager
Assalamu Alaikum,

Thanksgiving is a big part of the autumn season. It is a time when most of us get together with our extended family and friends, partake of various activities, watch a football game, and of course, enjoy a turkey with all the trimmings. Before dinner, we bow our heads in silent prayer or have someone lead us in a vocal prayer, giving thanks for the blessings bestowed upon us. While Thanksgiving reminds us to be thankful, we should not forget to be thankful every day of the year.

Everyone has something to be thankful for and most of us have many reasons to be thankful: health, a loving family, a good home, safe transportation, a steady job, a happy retirement, the ability to offer our daily prayers, the opportunity to earn greater reward and increase our place in Paradise; the list goes on and on. For these and other blessings we thank our Lord, the Creator asking nothing in return though He has promised that:

“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 grateful is not only expressed by words of praise and glory to the Lord, it is also expressed by following His commands which includes avoiding sin, respecting our fellow men, helping those in need, and in all other manner of good deeds.

And as we observe this annual feast, let us remember another teaching of the Prophet [PBUH] reported by an-Nisa’i and narrated by al-Miqdam bin Ma’dikarib, may Allah be pleased with him, who stated: “I heard the Messenger of Allah say: “A human being fills no worse vessel than his stomach. It is sufficient for a human being to eat a few mouths-full to keep his spine straight. But if he must [fill it], then one-third of food, one-third of drink, and one-third for air.”” So let’s try not to leave the table overfilled and let’s remember those around the world, including the hurricane ravaged regions here at home and send them a portion of what we had planned to spend on ourselves.

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry president

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KEEPING THE TASTE, NOT THE WASTE

By Asma Jarad
One of my earliest memories of food is of having a scrumptious peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I can also never forget that delectable, butter glazed cinnamon donut I enjoyed for breakfast in grade school. I wasn’t the only one. My peers and I crowded the cafeteria tables to hurriedly gobble up our peanut butter and jelly graham wafer sandwiches so we could enjoy a few extra minutes of outdoor recess. At that time, there were no designated, “nut free classrooms,” let alone a “nut free table,” in the cafeteria. Seldom did we hear of allergies. As kids, we also had no worries about the fat or calorie content of our food. Good days!

Fast forward thirty years, we’re living in an era of alarming obesity across the age spectrum. With physical activity on the decline, it is indeed critical to proactively seek healthy choices. Yes, everything with “real” butter tastes better! It takes on the star role in a dish—be it your favorite cupcake recipe, or grandma’s famous scrambled eggs. There are many alternatives that can fill in the role providing the same richness we love, without the saturated fat.

First, let’s take a quick look at saturated, unsaturated, and trans fats, to get a better understanding of why we should consider replacing butter. Unsaturated fats originate from plants, seeds, vegetables, fish, and nuts and aid in lowering blood cholesterol levels. According to an article in Harvard Medical School’s Health Publication, titled, *The Truth about Fats: The Good, the Bad, and the In-Between*, adding unsaturated fat to your daily diet is essential. The keyword here being, “unsaturated.” Fat is a source of energy. It helps you absorb some vitamins and minerals. Furthermore, it is essential for blood clotting, muscle movement, and inflammation. Unsaturated fats, such as olive oil, stay liquid at room temperature and are considered the healthiest option. On the other hand, saturated fats such as butter, which are solid at room temperature and derived from animal sources, increase LDL blood cholesterol levels leading to increased risk of heart disease. Coconut oil is however a healthier, plant-derived saturated fat. Finally, the most harmful is trans fat, which is mostly synthetic. It is made by industrially converting liquid fats into solids by hydrogenation. Shortening is an example of a trans fat. Hydrogenated oils used by fast food restaurants for frying also fall in this category. These increase one’s risk of developing heart disease, strokes, and type 2 diabetes.

Replacing saturated fats, such as butter, with unsaturated fats is easier than you think. Some chefs swap butter for *mashed avocado* in traditional baked goods, and get delicious and healthy results. Another alternative is the “liquid gold” of the kitchen: olive oil. As Muslims, however, we have known for centuries from the Quran, that the olive tree is a blessing for humankind:

> “God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. God guides to His light whom He wills...” (Quran 24:35)
A healthy substitute for butter is IFANCA halal certified Cabot or Zone Perfect Greek yogurt, which adds protein and moistness to baked goods without adding unwanted calories and the fat found in butter. According to lifestyle author, Andrea DeShazo, “Greek yogurt will add richness and a tangy flavor reminiscent of buttermilk to your baked goods, along with the heart-healthy benefits that come from reducing fat.” If your recipe calls for butter, simply add the same amount of Greek yogurt instead. Keep in mind that yogurt increases the moisture content of your recipe, so increase the flour slightly.

Pumpkin puree is an appropriate replacement for butter in your recipes. As Marcia Frost from Livestrong.com says, “Pumpkin puree can provide moisture in your recipe the way butter would. You can try it in many recipes, but pumpkin is especially helpful when baking cookies, cakes, and muffins since it has just a bit of sweetness that works well in baked goods.” In this case, if your recipe calls for one cup of butter, replace that with three fourths of a cup of pumpkin puree. In the end, you will have saved yourself from the typical 800 calories and 90 grams of fat found in half a cup of butter, versus only 40 calories and less than one gram of fat found in a half cup of pumpkin puree.

When it comes to the calories and fat per serving, peanut butter is on the same boat as butter. Nut-free substitutes for peanut butter are just as easy to find, and provide a fulfilling taste, vitamins, and minerals without the excess fat and calories. Substitutes include, sunflower seed butter, tahini paste, and coconut butter. Mother and author, Christine Gallary, tested these substitutes and found that the closest spread in terms of flavor and texture, is sunflower seed butter. “Sunflower seed butter has a nice nutty flavor and is smooth and spreadable,” says Gallary. “I honestly don’t feel like I’m missing out on peanut butter.” Indeed, sunflowers are no longer simply a road trip snack, they can be transformed
into a delicious spread that is packed with nutritional benefits, including protein, vitamin E, magnesium, copper, and healthy fat.

**When it comes to the calories and fat per serving, peanut butter is on the same boat as butter.**

**Tahini** can do the job too. For those unfamiliar with tahini, it is a condensed paste made from crushed sesame seeds. Tahini paste is a mixture of sesame seeds, lemon juice, garlic, and water—depending on your preferred consistency. The most common use for tahini paste is obviously hummus (a chickpea dip), but tahini is just as effective in any dish or sauce to give it a creamy and nutty flavor. Author, Alisa Rutherford-Fortunati also comments that, “Tahini makes delicious dressings, creamy soups, scrumptious sweets, and excellent entrees.” It is protein-rich and is also a unique source of sesamin and sesamolin-lignans that are proven to lower cholesterol and protect the liver from oxidative stress.

Last but not least, there is good old **coconut butter.** It may sound more like a dessert ingredient, but is actually a paste made from raw, unsweetened, shredded coconut. If it is broken down in a blender for approximately 15-20 minutes, with a dash of salt, the end result is a consistency similar to creamy peanut butter. Spread it on your favorite bread to make a sweet and nutty sandwich. Just as versatile as peanut butter, it can be used for a fresh fruit dip, a spread for pancakes, or to enhance a meat rub. It’s rich in taste and also in lauric acid which strengthens immunity and helps in weight management by boosting metabolism and thus increasing energy levels. It has all the goodness of coconut: healthy fats, essential amino acids, calcium, and magnesium. These changes do not necessarily mean that we have to sacrifice taste for health. These alternatives are indeed both delicious and pack a nutritional punch, minus the calories and undesired fats.

**ASMA JARAD** is a writer and editor. She holds a Master of Arts degree in English Language and Literature from National University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Studies from the University of Illinois.
Is there anything more miraculous than a pregnancy? What a wonder it is to see how a woman’s body develops to nurture its growing baby, nestled in the comfort of her womb. Religious scriptures highlight the respect and honor mothers deserve from their children, often citing references to the nine months that the baby is entirely dependent upon God’s decree in their mother’s body.

Societal norms guiding an expectant mother vary from culture to culture. Because optimizing nutrition is critical at this time, cultural myths regarding food in pregnancy, abound. An extreme case is of Nigerian women, as highlighted in a study by the Imo State University, who avoid bush meat, for fear that they will have deformed babies that look like animals. They also think that eating snails can make the baby sluggish. Japanese women are told that spicy food can give the baby a short temper. In the United States, birthmarks are attributed to a mother’s craving for strawberries or chili peppers. In Mexico, according to an old belief, eating eggs can make the baby smell bad. On the other hand, in the Philippines, women are told to eat raw egg just before the delivery, to help lubricate the birth canal. A BBC article mentions that it is widely believed in Africa that eating eggs during pregnancy causes sterility.

There’s also a universal abundance of Pregnancy-specific recipes, passed down from generation to generation. Many contain nutrient-rich mixtures of clarified butter, nuts, seeds, honey, and oats. The media, be it in sitcoms, movies, or commercials stereotype a pregnant woman as someone who is always having incredibly unhealthy cravings and giving into them! Consuming mixed media signals on just how to attain a healthy diet is also cause for concern. Don’t women have a green light on what they want to eat once they’re pregnant? If you have ever seen a family comedy or an episode of *Friends*, you’d think so! So, let’s clear up some myths about pregnancy!

**Pregnancy Myth**
Exercising during pregnancy can lead to a miscarriage.

**Pregnancy Truth**
The American Pregnancy Association determines that exercising alone does not lead to miscarriages. There are many reasons why miscarriages occur, the highest percentage of which are said to be caused by chromosomal abnormalities. As long as there are no high risk activities or high impact sports involved that may cause damage to a woman’s...
As long as there are no high risk activities or high impact sports involved that may cause damage to a woman’s body while she’s expecting, anything goes.

body while she’s expecting, anything goes. Dancing, jogging, swimming, and even canoeing! Thirty minutes a day of exercise 4-5 times a week is ideal.

Studies have shown that exercising increases a person’s energy level and uplifts their mood. The American Pregnancy Association recommends that pregnant women should continue their pre-pregnancy fitness regimen, as long as their Ob-Gyn has no objections. Unless contraindicated, exercise is even a great preventative tool to reduce backaches, which many pregnant women complain of getting as their baby becomes heavier and the weight load causes an imbalance on the muscles in the surrounding areas.

A healthy woman’s body is a capable powerhouse. Just look at DeAnne Hemmens, an American Olympian, who competed in the 1996 Olympics when she was two months pregnant. Canoeing while pregnant is one thing, competitive canoeing for the United States Olympic team is quite another! More recently, R&B singer Ciara hired a personal trainer to help her remain physically active before she delivered her baby. Her Instagram followers got to follow her pregnancy journey and fitness journey at the same time! At the other end of the spectrum is United Kingdom royal, Kate Middleton who suffers from severe hyperemesis gravidarum and advocates for more serious care to the small percentage of pregnant women who require medication and more medical attention during pregnancy.

Pregnancy Myth
A pregnant woman eats for two!
Pregnancy Truth

Pregnant women do not have to consume double the amount of calories they normally eat. Unless an Ob-Gyn specifically recommends more (healthy) calories, eating for two or doubling the calories isn’t practical. Just a solid 300 extra calories is plenty. Prenatal vitamins are highly recommended by most Ob-Gyns.

An extra protein-rich sandwich or a few healthy snacks are more than enough to supplement the development of an unborn child. What you eat is more important than how much you eat. Daniel Silas Adamson of BBC.com advises pregnant women to eat at least five portions of fruits and veggies, along with protein and calcium-rich foods. He thinks it is a good idea to stay away from fish that are at the very top of the food chain, such as shark and swordfish, and mold-ripened cheeses like Brie and Camembert, as well as soft blue cheeses like Gorgonzola and Roquefort. According to Adamson, the pregnancy menu should also exclude raw eggs, raw meat, raw shellfish, and all types of pate. Foods that cause acid reflux are best avoided late in the pregnancy. The bad news is that chocolate is also on this list of reflux-causing food, along with fried foods, sodas, caffeine, and high-fat meats.

Eating for two or doubling the calories isn’t practical... Just a solid 300 extra calories is plenty.

Pregnancy Myth

Pregnancy is not an illness so why go for so many checkups.

Pregnancy Truth

Having access to a medical professional on a regular basis is a big blessing. Pregnant women must not miss their prenatal appointments to ensure proper development of the fetus, along with monitoring any health issues that may arise. A high percentage of women develop gestational diabetes and one of the many things an Ob-Gyn would watch out for is a woman’s sugar levels! Those glucose tests with the flat orange soda tasting liquid aren’t exactly a trip to the amusement park, but they are a highly effective method of determining how women can adjust their diet or exercise routine for a healthier delivery. The baby’s arrival should not be an excuse to miss the postnatal checkups either.

The focus is largely on a mother-to-be’s physical well-being, as compared to her emotional and spiritual health. Having restful moments of prayer, reflection, and meditation can help in clearing up thoughts, finding solutions to conflicts, and releasing inner stress. The value of the partner’s and the family’s support cannot be underestimated. Finding a personal counselor or therapist is a great way to help adjust to the new upcoming adventure of motherhood. Whatever the situation may be, resources are available almost anywhere—from sage advice to new techniques.

A pregnant woman deserves to be fabulously fit and fabulously pregnant! Here’s to all the moms-to-be who are on the road to keeping up with their exercise, diet, and overall health goals during their pregnancies.

AFSHAN MALIK is currently working for Rabata and is also a student in a Masters of Nonprofit Management Program. She is a certified social media & community specialist. She organizes a conference every year, celebrating the rise of Muslim women’s voices in literature. Born in Chicago, raised in Atlanta, she is now a happy Houstonian.
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Smile

By Husna T. Ghani
If a picture is worth a thousand words, then your smile is worth a million bucks, sometimes quite literally. In order to keep that smile, do go the extra mile! The extra mile begins with dental hygiene, techniques of which can be traced back to thousands of years. We know that early humans did not have the sugary diets that we have today, hence less caries. Meals were usually heavy on protein and light on carbohydrates. The early humans relied mostly on hunting as the primary source of food with supplementary greens. According to National Geographic’s website, people in northern Africa ate China, the Indian subcontinent and many parts of Africa.

Disease is a symptom of inflammation and poor dental health. Dental health can be a predicting factor for other diseases. Dr. Ehtesham Ghani, an internal medicine physician in Brookfield, Illinois, has discussed the connection between poor dental health and cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s disease. He explained that, “Cardiovascular disease is a symptom of inflammation and poor dental health is linked to high inflammatory burden on the body. This inflammatory burden causes a breakdown in the lining of the heart’s arteries. Even if you have a normal amount of cholesterol in your blood, the cracks in the lining of the blood vessels act like a primer for cholesterol buildup. Eventually with the buildup of the cholesterol, this can lead to atherosclerosis and eventually a heart attack.” Another concern linked to unhealthy teeth and gums is diabetes. Dr. Ghani explained that the inflammation in the mouth can cause excessive production of antibodies. “This exceeds the amount that is needed to fight the mouth’s inflammation and infection. Hence, the excess antibodies attack other organs and glands such as the pancreas. This can lead to an inadequate quality of insulin production in the pancreas and lead to diabetes.” Poor gum health can also increase the risk of Alzheimer’s disease. “When you think about how all these diseases are affected by inflammation, research also shows that Alzheimer’s can be affected by periodontal (gum) disease. The inflammation from the gums can cause an inflammatory reaction that increases “tangles” in the brain and creates almost a glue-like material in the brain which increases the risk of getting Alzheimer’s disease,” said Dr. Ghani.

So how do carbohydrates attack our teeth? Well, carbohydrates break down into glucose molecules which are simple sugars. The bacteria in our mouth feed on the sugars and produce acids that attack the teeth, breaking down the protective enamel.

Humans discovered innovative ways of cleaning and caring for their teeth. According to the Smithsonian Institute, early ways of dental care included using rough cloth to rub teeth, as well as using chalk and salt. The original toothbrush was designed centuries ago using a twig and splitting the end to create bristles of sort. This was also a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). It was commonly used by people in the Middle East, China, the Indian subcontinent and many parts of Africa. It is referred to as miswak and contains fluoride. As natural and organic products have become the rage, miswak may make a strong comeback (although it is still used by some). Even some research and health organizations such as the World Health Organization and the National Center for Biotechnology Information have endorsed the use of miswak.

Dental health can be a predicting factor for other diseases. Dr. Ehtesham Ghani, an internal medicine physician in Brookfield, Illinois, has discussed the connection between poor dental health and cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s disease. He explained that, “Cardiovascular disease is a symptom of inflammation and poor dental health is linked to high inflammatory burden on the body.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) used miswak, a twig with bristles containing fluoride, to care for teeth.
Another method is the at-home professional whitening kit from the dentist’s office. This can take a few days and the third option is the over-the-counter whitening strips."

If you were a child of the 80’s and 90’s, chances are that braces were part of your life. Who didn’t dread the days you had to get your braces tightened? I would eat mashed potatoes on those days. Let’s not forget the colorful tiny rubber bands that added to the metal mouth look. Today there are more discreet teeth straighteners that are clear and can be removed while eating or at social events.

Cosmetic dentistry has made great headway. There is now the Endosteal dental implant, which is a titanium post (nail-like thing) that is surgically nailed into the jawbone that allows your dentist to mount replacement teeth or a bridge on top. An implant cannot come loose like a denture can and is more conducive to oral health because it is not anchored to other teeth, like bridges. If you are considering implants, you must have healthy gums and a strong jawbone to support them. Sometimes, there is not enough bone height in the upper jaw or the sinuses are too close to the jaw, hence making the procedure complicated or inadvisable. The other type of implant is called Subperiosteal, where a metal frame is fitted onto the jawbone and gets attached to it. Titanium...poor dental health is linked to high inflammatory burden on the body.
posts, are then attached to the frame, and protrude through the gums and are used for mounting fake teeth.

What about things that we eat that harm the teeth? Let’s not even get started on how candy, coffee, cigarettes, and all things that make Monday mornings more bearable are bad for your teeth. Instead, let’s focus on moderation (we really don’t need an entire chocolate bar…daily). We should make sure we brush at minimum twice a day and floss at night and visit the dentist every six months. Oh, and most importantly with that, don’t forget to smile…it’s a sunnah!

HUSNA T. GHANI has an MSEd and an MBA. She has taught health and science for years. When she’s not working, she reads, writes, sketches, and tries to save the world (or something like that).
The Mysterious Quince
By Nadia Malik
Quince fruit are a mystery, just waiting to be unlocked. They don’t exactly make it easy to reap their benefits. There are hints that the fruit holds a secret; when ripe, they have the inviting perfume of vanilla, pineapple, and citrus. They look like a mix between apples and pears, but don’t expect them to resemble their siblings in flavor, at least when eaten raw. They’re surrounded by a fuzzy exterior and, when bitten into, quince are unappealingly sour. The only way to truly get to their flavor is to cook them down.

This process can take a few hours, especially as the texture is tough and spongy, making it hard to cut through. Cooks will often warn to keep fingers safe when trying to battle through a quince’s interiors. Use a level surface and cut off the bottom if it wobbles around too much.

The produce isn’t an easy find, either. It’s commonly used in Africa, Asia, and the Mediterranean, but in North America you’ll likely have to search specialty food stores or a local farmers market in the fall. Because it’s an autumn specialty, it also comes in handy for pairing with traditional Thanksgiving holiday spices, such as cinnamon and cardamom, in baking, such as in a crisp or as an added twist to apple pie, or in savory dishes, paired with butternut squash or other holiday flavors.

Despite the difficulties cutting it, finding it, and preparing it, the hard-won treasure is worth the effort. “(The cooking) brings out some of the natural sweetness,” says Kerri-Ann Jennings, a registered dietitian and nutritionist. “They can be fun to cook with.” The flesh becomes much more tender, and it changes from light yellow to a rosy pink.

Quince appear to be indigenous to the Eurasian area, including Uzbekistan, Armenia, Turkey, Hungary, and Macedonia. Organicfacts.net states that, “Historically, it may have played a much larger role than most people expect. Some researchers actually think that when apples were referenced in ancient history, they were more likely talking about quince, which were much more common in those areas.” They are suspected to be one of the fruits in the Garden of Eden, and they also appear in Greek mythology, especially in the story of the Trojan War.
ancient Athens, according to the laws of Solon, it was given to a bride as a symbol of fruitfulness.

The Eastern specialty also shows up in Islamic history. There are some hadith that report the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]) eating the fruit. Talhah narrated, “I entered upon the Prophet (PBUH) and in his hand was some quince. He said, ‘Take it, O Talhah, for it soothes the heart.’” —Sunan Ibn Majah, Volume 4, Hadith 3369.

Although the hadith, and others similar to it, has a weak line of narration, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, a renowned Muslim theologian, included a section on the product in his book Al-Tibb al-Nawawi, which focuses on Prophetic medicine. He also endorses the fruit for its benefits to the stomach and the heart. His recommendation was to cook it down with honey.

Nutritionist Farheen Farooq tries to tie in Prophetic foods in her recommendations if her clientele is Muslim. Even though the hadith about quince cannot be attributed to the Prophet (PBUH), the writing of al-Jawziyya gave Farooq a reason to give it a second look, and she doesn’t doubt that it has many benefits.

“Of course it has a lot of fiber because its skin is eaten,” she explains. “Any time where you have a fruit where you can eat the skin or the seeds, it’s automatically a good source of soluble fiber.” That fiber, of course, helps with digestion. “It adds bulk to your stool and is helpful for keeping people regular,” Jennings explains. “It’s also the type of fiber that’s linked to cholesterol-lowering benefits,” she adds. That’s how Farooq explains al-Jawziyya’s assertion that the produce benefits the stomach, the heart, and opens up blood passages. It also has a high vitamin C content.

Jennings said there has been historical use in powdered form as a tea to aid digestion. It also has high pectin content, which is why it’s traditionally used in jams and jellies. Pectin is a starch that occurs naturally in some produce, and when it’s cooked at a high temperature with sugar and acid, it forms into a gel. Pectin gives fruit its rigidity, and it makes sense that quince would have a high content, since it has a tough texture.

Because it has to be boiled down anyway, Spaniards use it in a dish called “membrillo,” a combination with sugar and lemon that becomes a dense paste, normally paired with Manchego cheese. The safarjal, as it’s called in Arabic, is also a staple with meats in several countries, such as with Moroccan tagines. As it’s become more popular and available in the West, chefs have included it in cuisine like compote for pancakes and in soups. Well then, this issue’s quince recipe might well be worth a try.

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. She is a current graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania.

Quince is great for baking. See recipe on page 24.
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What’s Nice About Niacin?

By Kelly Crosby
We are all too familiar with vitamin commercials that encourage us to take our daily one-a-day tablet, filled with the combined essential minerals for health and growth. The most popular belong to a group known as the vitamin B complex. There are eight within this set, out of which, vitamin B3, is known as niacin.

So why is niacin so important in maintaining our overall health and well-being? Primarily, B vitamins are the key players in cell metabolism. According to the University of Maryland Health Center, “All B vitamins help the body convert food (carbohydrates) into fuel (glucose), which the body uses to produce energy. These B vitamins, often referred to as B-complex vitamins, also help the body use fats and protein. B-complex vitamins are needed for a healthy liver, healthy skin, hair, and eyes, and to help the nervous system function properly.”

Also, “Niacin helps the body produce various sex and stress-related hormones in the adrenal glands and other parts of the body. Niacin helps improve circulation, and it has been shown to suppress inflammation.”

It is prescribed for patients to lower elevated LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglyceride (fat) levels in the blood and has been used for this since the 1950s. However, those already on a statin or a drug used to lower cholesterol levels in the blood don’t seem to benefit from its intake. It does appear to be effective in those who are not taking statins. Niacin can interact with other cholesterol-lowering medicines so doctor’s supervision is important.

A study conducted by the Rush Institute for Healthy Aging in Chicago, from 1993 to 2002, concluded dietary niacin may also protect against Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) and age related cognitive decline. The study showed that participants, aged 65 and older, with a high daily intake of 22.4 mg in their diet, had a slower annual rate of cognitive decline.

So, what does it not work on? While niacin and other B vitamins are crucial to producing brain chemicals that affect mood and other brain functions, there hasn’t been an established link between depression and niacin as a treatment. Dr. Daniel Hall-Flavin of the Mayo Clinic says, “Keep in mind, the role of B vitamins in depression isn’t clear. But no supplement can replace proven depression treatments such as antidepressants and psychological counseling.” As for treatment for acne, some choose to use niacin amide for treating a skin condition called inflammatory acne vulgaris. However, this is considered an alternative medicine treatment. Using niacin to treat asthma is also considered the same.

Fortunately, eating a healthy diet is the easiest way to get your daily intake of niacin. According to the organization, Dieticians of Canada, “Niacin is water-soluble. This means that niacin is not stored in the body. You need to eat foods rich in niacin every day.”

“Niacin is water-soluble. This means that niacin is not stored in the body. You need to eat foods rich in niacin every day.” Many delicious, heart-healthy foods are already included in the typical American diet. Meats and seafood are the richest sources followed by fortified, enriched grains. For vegetarians and vegans, there are many soy-based alternatives such as tempeh and tofu. You can also eat pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, lentils, almonds, and eggs. The U.S. Recommended Daily Allowance for adults is between 16 and 18 mg daily, with a maximum intake of 35 mg daily. Excess niacin gets mostly excreted from the body. Luckily, IFANCA halal-certified vitamin B supplements from Nutratite and Solgar are available in the market along with general, multi-vitamin supplements by Pharmavite LLC, Herbalife, Melaleuca, Noor Vitamins, Salaam Nutritionals, Boscogen, and Greens Best Nutrition. (Look for the Crescent-M logo.)

While it is almost impossible to overdose on niacin by eating too many niacin-rich foods, it can happen by ingesting excessive supplements. Symptoms may include severe skin flushing combined with dizziness, rapid heartbeat, itching, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and gout. Katherine Zeratsky, R.D., L.D. of the Mayo Clinic advises the following, “Because niacin has also been linked to liver damage and strokes, most doctors now recommend it for treating high triglyceride levels in people who can’t take statins. If you’re thinking of niacin, it may not be a bad idea but do talk to your doctor. Also, don’t follow Google blindly, always double check with a licensed GP!

KELLY IZDIHAR CROSBY is an artist and freelance writer in Atlanta, Georgia.
Baked Quince
By: Kira Fomenko

Servings: 4-5

INGREDIENTS
4-5 quinces unpeeled, washed, halved, and cored
4-5 whole cloves per each quince
2-3 cinnamon sticks
1½ cups water
½ cup brown sugar (or more if you want it sweeter)

DIRECTIONS
1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Press cloves into each quince half. Place the fruit in a roasting pan cut-side down.
Add the water, cinnamon sticks and sugar to the baking tray, sprinkle some sugar over the quince halves.
3. Bake for 45-50 minutes until fruit starts changing color to red and the syrup in the baking tray thickens.
4. Remove from the oven and let cool slightly. Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.
Drizzle some syrup over it from the baking tray. Enjoy! 😊
Creamy Cauliflower Soup
By: Allison Brustin

Servings: 8–10

INGREDIENTS
- 2 tablespoons avocado butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 6-8 scallions, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 medium cauliflowers, cored and coarsely chopped
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh basil
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried marjoram or savory
- 6 cups water
- 2 tablespoons white miso
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

DIRECTIONS
1. In a heavy soup kettle, add avocado butter and olive oil. Add onion, scallions, garlic, celery, cauliflower, and all the seasonings (except nutmeg).
2. Mix well and cook uncovered over medium heat for several minutes, stirring often. Add water and miso and bring to boil.
3. Let simmer, keep covered, over medium heat for 15 minutes or until cauliflower is tender.
4. Remove cover, let it cool, and then puree it. Immersion blender is very helpful here. When ready to serve, heat as desired and sprinkle on nutmeg.
Macedonian Eggplant Salad
By: Habibe Rexhepi

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ pounds eggplants
3 cloves garlic (finely chopped)
½ cup parsley (finely chopped)
⅓ cup olive oil
⅛ cup apple cider vinegar
½ teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Poke each eggplant in three spots and place all of them in a baking pan. Put them in the oven at 380°F and bake for 30 to 40 minutes until they become very soft.

2. Take them out of the oven and let them cool. Peel the skin off and tear into long, thin vertical strips.

3. Put one layer of the strips in the dish. Add some salt, sprinkle chopped garlic and chopped parsley. Repeat this steps until you have at least three layers, one on top of the other.

4. Pour olive oil all over the salad and do the same with the vinegar. Using a fork, wiggle/move the contents on all sides, so that the oil and vinegar seeps through.

5. Let it sit for three hours at room temperature before serving. It’s that easy and good in the fridge for almost 10 days.
**A Quick Quesadilla**

By: Bisma T. Ahmed

**Servings: 6**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 9 ounces shredded, cooked chicken breast
- 3 tablespoons minced pickled green chillies
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro leaves
- 12 ounces shredded IFANCA halal certified cheese by Cabot Creamery or Whitehall Specialties
- 6 whole flour tortillas
- 6 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon salt

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Combine chicken, green chillies, cilantro, and cheese in a medium bowl and mix well.
2. Spread one sixth of mixture evenly over half of one tortilla, leaving a ½-inch border. Fold tortilla over and seal edges by pressing down firmly, sealing with cheese if necessary. Repeat with the remaining filling on the rest of the tortillas.
3. Heat oil in a heavy lidded frying pan, over medium heat. Carefully add two folded tortillas until golden brown and a little crispy on both sides. Transfer quesadillas to a paper towel to blot.
4. Cut into triangles and serve immediately with IFANCA halal certified sour cream from Organic Valley. Yogurt can be used as a sour cream substitute. There is a wide range of IFANCA halal certified yogurts to choose from by companies like Nestle Pakistan, Cabot, and Baskin Robbins.
5. For extra flavor add salsa. You can make your own salsa by combining 2 finely diced medium sized tomatoes, ½ cup finely chopped cilantro, ¼ cup finely chopped white onion, 1 small green chilly finely chopped, salt to taste, and lemon juice.
YOUR FOOD IS BETTER TRAVELED THAN YOU

By Naazish YarKhan
If you heard that your food is better traveled than you are, would you be surprised? Fact is, it is. The slogan ‘Farm to Fork’ leaves out the detail that oceans may have been crossed in between. Yes, it is very likely that the produce that constitutes your food has crossed borders between states, if not countries and continents.

Seasonal fruits? What’s that?

Consumers, today, expect to have all kinds of fruit and veggies available, year round. That demand shapes how grocery stores shop for their produce. Small, local farmers, by themselves, aren’t going to grow that kind of volume, to meet that kind of demand and definitely not year round, especially in cold regions. As a result, middle men called distributors, scout for multiple sources of produce, further and further away; store the fruit in temperature controlled local warehouses; and truck an order over when a local grocery store has a request. In your grocery stores today, the peaches, plums, and nectarines may be from south america, the kiwis may have flown in from Italy, and the grapes crossed over from Chile. And that’s just the beginning.

You’ve got to be kidding!

Unfortunately, all it takes is three days after harvest for most produce to begin losing as much as 30 percent of its nutrients. Chicago Tribune’s Monica Eng reports that, “University of California studies show that vegetables can lose 15 to 55 percent of vitamin C, for instance, within a week. Some spinach can lose 90 percent within the first 24 hours after harvest.” So just how nutritious are those peaches, plums, and nectarines from South America?

But that’s not half as surprising as what you’re about to learn. Produce like apples ripen from August to September in the United States so if you see them year-round that’s thanks to chemicals and cold storage in a warehouse for nine to twelve months. Yes, you read that right! According to Delish.com, “one investigation showed that, on average, apples are fourteen months old.”

Not only does it have consequences for our health, but also the environment. Natural Resources Defense Council’s (a New York based advocacy group) November 2007 publication reports, “In 2005, the import of fruits, nuts, and vegetables into California by airplane released more than 70,000 tons of CO2, which is equivalent to more than 12,000 cars on the road.”

To have produce last that long a couple of things are at play. Farmers have to ensure that produce travels all those miles without turning to mush. One solution is picking the produce well before it’s ripe. To lengthen their shelf life, produce such as bananas, avocados, mangoes, and...to lengthen their shelf life, produce...are picked when they are still green and distributors ‘gas’ them with ethylene in warehouses in time for stocking on grocery shelves.
tomatoes are picked when they are still green and distributors ‘gas’ them with ethylene in warehouses in time for stocking on grocery shelves. “What happens next is similar to placing green mangoes in a closed rice bin to ripen, like we did back in India,” says Smitha Patel, a San Francisco-based nutritionist and foodie. “The uncooked rice traps the ethylene, a natural plant hormone, released by the mangoes and that quickens the ripening process. The idiom ‘one bad apple spoils the barrel’ is based on the scientific fact that a rotting apple emits excessive ethylene, which accelerates the ripening of other apples stored with it. There are no known food safety concerns associated with this process, as commercial ethylene mimics its natural version in its molecular structure.

There is another way of making it look appetizing and keeping it from spoiling. It sometimes makes it look prettier than it does on a tree. Produce is sprayed with food-grade wax that contains fungicides that nip mold growth in the bud and “controls fruit respiration to delay ripening” and “protects from bruising while the fruit travels,” according to The Atlantic. Before the idea of fruit wax makes you gag, the tradition of waxing fruit to preserve its condition goes back even as far as the 12th and 13th century in Southern China!

Given the consumer’s demand for year-round available, cosmetically perfect, bruise-free produce, what are grocery stores to do? You and I, apparently, are so picky about how our produce looks that grocery stores have to discard as much as 10 percent of their food annually, contributing to the 133 billion pounds—one third of all food produced—of food thrown away in the United States each year, according to the USDA.

Buy local

‘Buy Local’ enthusiasts decry the global carbon footprint left by all those trucks, ships, and other means of refrigerated foods transportation, and rightly so. But isn’t fresh produce a better alternative to processed foods? There is a middle ground, according to the CUESA, (Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture), an organization “dedicated to cultivating a sustainable food system through the operation of farmers markets and educational programs.”

“Rebuilding a local food system doesn’t mean you never eat anything that has flown overseas, it just means that you start with what is fresh, local, and seasonal,” is the CUESA approach. There’s no harm in having mangoes flown in from India, if the ice-cream it’s served with in Chicago is made with milk from local dairy farmers across the border in Wisconsin.

Towards this end, the CUESA manages farmers markets in San Francisco and Oakland. It also offers research and teacher’s resources on garden based learning so schools can learn what makes for more nutritious and tastier eating and get kids to recognize what their food chain actually comprises. Teaching them while they are still young about their food, and doing it hands-on through programs such as Foodwise Kids and Schoolyard to Market, is one approach CUESA takes to instill awareness and appreciation for what goes into their bellies.

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Teach them young

Many kids today don’t know that pasta and pizza are both made from wheat that’s grown on a farm or that apples are fall fruits. One school district that teaches through gardening is Glen Ellyn, Illinois, school district 41. One of the school district’s most successful Problem-Based Learning Initiative was when Ms. Heidi Hann’s seventh graders turned to vegetable gardening to solve a problem—hunger. The kids created a vegetable patch to grow organic produce for their local food pantry and, in 2016, their first year had 400 pounds of produce! The students researched how to keep the rabbits away and eliminated tarp so plastic didn’t go into the environment. They used twine products to hold up teepees for vine-type plants so they could be reused or break down naturally. Not only did they learn what went into growing food, which wasn’t just something that came out of a box, but also that giving back to the community was important. Given the miles it takes for our food to get to us, and its impact on nutrition and the environment, it may not be a bad idea for adults to do the same.

NAAZISH YARKHAN (www.writersstudio.us) is a writer, editor and a college essay coach and has contributed to NPR, PRI and more.
The Color Wheel

By Taskeen Khan
However, food color does more than signify the taste of a food, it also helps us differentiate between what is safe to eat, and what is not. Without food color, a food may be covered in dark speckles, multicolored spots, or be uneven in color which would often be mistaken as signs of spoilage. However, add some food color, and the food no longer has an appearance associated with mold and spoiled food. The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) explains that food colors also work to offset changes “due to exposure to light, air, temperature extremes, moisture, and storage conditions”. Processed foods are especially reliant on food colors, as the many steps they go through before reaching the store would otherwise leave them with unappetizing colors.

The world of food dyes is vast, with ingredients found everywhere from the Canary Islands to South America. However, all food colors can be sorted into two categories, natural and synthetic. The FDA states that natural colors are derived from natural sources, such as fruits and vegetables. Used by the ancient Egyptians and Mayans, food dyes are nothing new. Today, the most common natural dyes include carotenoids (for red and orange colors), chlorophyll (greens), anthocyanin (blues), and turmeric (oranges). The seeds of the achiote tree, rich in carotenoids, are used to derive Annatto, a red-orange food color in sherbet ice creams. A natural colorant that has made the front page is Natural Red 4, also labeled as carmine, carminic acid, or cochineal. This color, derived from the cochineal insect and used in red coloring, made headlines after customer reaction prompted Starbucks to remove it from all strawberry flavored products.

Additionally, because cochineal can cause a severe allergic reaction in those sensitive to it, it must be explicitly listed as an ingredient, if present. For other natural colors, the FDA considers a simple “colorings” or “color added” on the label as adequate. In addition to being derived from sources consumer may feel uncomfortable with, such as insects and animals, natural dyes have a few other drawbacks. Compared to their synthetic counterparts, natural colors are far more expensive to harvest and process. Their shelf life may also be shorter than synthetic colors. For these reasons, many companies choose to use synthetic food colors.

Synthetic dyes are any colorants that are man-made. The FDA has certified nine color additives for use in the United States. This surprisingly short list is composed of FD&C Blue Nos. 1 and 2, FD&C Green No. 3, FD&C Red Nos. 3 and 40, FD&C Yellow Nos. 5 and 6, Orange B, and Citrus Red No. 2.

There are two main reasons artificial food colors raise concern. One is the presence of a low level of carcinogens. Red 40, Yellow 5, and Yellow 6 contain benzene, a human
and animal carcinogen permitted in low, safe levels. The FDA believes the levels found in food dye are safe, however, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and other organization believe that the levels of benzene absorbed by the body through food color are higher than the FDA believes. The CSPI has also released reports that in addition to likely being carcinogenic, the artificial dyes allowed by the FDA likely cause hypersensitivity reactions and behavioral problems, or are inadequately tested. This link to behavioral problems is another cause for concern related to artificial colors.

The FDA states that natural colors are derived from natural sources, such as fruits and vegetables...Synthetic dyes are any colorants that are man-made. The FDA has certified nine color additives for use in the United States.

Certification of food colors varies globally, with Red Dye No. 2 being a prime example. The LiveScience piece The Truth About Red Dye No. 2 reports that in 1971 public outcry against Red No. 2, which had been linked to cancer by a soviet scientist, resulted in the FDA declaring the colorant illegal. Mars even temporarily paused production of red M&Ms though they did not contain any Red No. 2. However, the European Food Safety Authority did not do the same, and as recently as 2010 has declared Red No. 2 harmless. This is the exact opposite of Red No. 40, certified and commonly used in America, but due to concerns voiced by the European Food Safety Authority, rarely found in Europe. However, the general trend, as described by the WBUR News article Why M&M's Are Made With Natural Coloring In The EU And Not The U.S. is for American products to be more likely to contain artificial colors than European products. This is largely due to difference in how artificial colors must be labeled. As described by the study Diet and Nutrition: The Artificial Food Dye Blues, “In Europe, as of July 2010 most foods that contain artificial dyes must carry labels warning they may cause hyperactivity in children.”

Though the FDA has stated that all the colorants certified are safe, the National Geographic article Scientists Make Red Food Dye From Potatoes, Not Bugs explains that the demand for natural colors has risen as artificial food dyes are “linked to allergies and behavioral problems such as hyperactivity in children.” Both producers and scientists
have begun responding to this. In 2015, General Mills released a decision to remove all artificial ingredients, including colors. A year later, Mars declared a five year plan to phase out all artificial colors from its human food products. However, consumer demands are also resulting in changes to natural dyes. Customer dismay at the thought of insect derived red food has helped fuel research into how Purple Sweet Potatoes can be used as an alternative source for red food color.

Eating is a sensory experience. What would a delicious chocolate cake be without the moist texture, amazing smell, and of course the signature dark brown color? However, when it comes to the appearance of our food, it is important to look past the exterior and understand what truly goes into it. Do we really want to add color to our lives?

**TASKEEN KHAN** currently attends UIUC. She has previously written for Huffington Post Teen and Islamic Horizons Magazine. Khan has also won several Silver Keys and honorable mentions in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.

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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nutritional Supplements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom’s 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonderful</td>
<td>Pistachios and Almonds</td>
<td>Paramount Farms</td>
<td>Supermarkets and drugstores throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
100 YEARS OF THE Coca-Cola® BOTTLE
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