18  Breast Cancer
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.

**CHEESE TORTELLINI:** 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.
Contents

04 Editor’s Note
05 From the Publisher’s Desk

FOOD TRENDS
06 Food on Wheels
10 Alternative Sugars

HEALTH & NUTRITION
14 Gut Health
18 Breast Cancer

QURANIC & PROPHETIC FOODS
22 Salt

RECIPES
24 “Dodo” (aka “Fried Plantains”)
25 Persimmon Fruit Salad
26 Herb & Veggie-Baked Spicy Mackerel

A CLOSER LOOK AT LABELS
28 Sodium: Sneaky Villain & Hidden Hero

FEATURES
30 Aromatics
32 Swimming

36 Halal-Certified Product Locator
Salaam Readers,

Ramadan Mubarak and Eid Mubarak. We hope you had a rewarding Ramadan and we wish you Eid Mubarak. May you enjoy, tranquility, joy, and success throughout the year.

As we head into summer, we need to keep hydrated. Maintaining the proper electrolyte balance is important. That means getting enough minerals, including sodium; but it doesn’t have to all come from salt. Check out “Salt” and “Sodium” to learn about the various forms and how much is enough!

Getting your share of outdoor exercise may mean visiting your local pool or lake. In “Swimming” we share the benefits of that specific way to exercise. You may be surprised it affects more than our muscles.

With warmer temperatures, we may be on the go more. That may lead to more snacking on sweets for a quick energy jolt. “Alternate Sugars” provides insights into satisfying that ‘sweet tooth’ without having to add sugar. Do you find it difficult to prepare a healthy, nutritious meal because you are busier now? You may find some tips in “Food on Wheels”. There may not be a lot of ‘mobile’ halal options now, but you can probably find some.

If your stomach sometimes does the talking, like mine likes to do, “Gut Health” is a must read. There you will learn about all the activity happening down there and how you can support a healthier ecosystem.

One of my favorite aromas is the one around bakeries. Read about different aromas in various ethnic cuisines in “Aromatics”. It may just make your mouth water.

Finally, we hope you never have a loved one afflicted with cancer. “Breast Cancer” examines some preventive measures, treatment methods, and how this ailment that affects 12% of women in America impacts families. May God protect us.

As always, enjoy the new recipes in this issue. We look forward to your comments and suggestions. Also, if you have a favorite original recipe you would like to share with our readers, please send it to us. If we print it, you may be eligible to receive a gift. Please send your feedback and ideas, whether via email, Facebook, or Twitter.

Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Roger Othman content manager
Assalamu Alaikum,

As we just bid farewell to the blessed month of Ramadan, we hope to have emerged with a renewed energy and commitment to maintain those blessings we enjoyed throughout the month. After a month of fasting, we hope to have attained the taqwa which the fast was intended to afford us.

As part of attaining taqwa, we hope to have developed habits that will survive the year and stay with us if we are fortunate to witness the next Ramadan. First among these habits may be a commitment to fasting other days throughout the year. Some recommended fasts include: the day of Arafat for those not performing Hajj, the day of Ashura and a day before or after, the middle three days of every lunar month, every Monday and Thursday, or every other day as Prophet Dawud (David, Peace Be Upon Him) practiced. Remembering that the best deeds are those that are followed continuously, we should select a fast that we think we can adhere to for the long term.

The next habit would be a commitment to continuing the night prayers. While we may have offered eleven, thirteen, twenty three, or another number of rakas of night prayers during the month, we should try to offer some number throughout the year. This may be as few as one raka or as many as we feel inclined to offer, capping them off with one raka of witr. We can combine this with offering dua during the night.

Another habit is the commitment to continue reciting the Quran every day. Without limits, make time every day to recite any number of ayat from the Quran. Going beyond recitation, try to spend time understanding and contemplating the meaning and practicing the guidance.

Many of us take advantage of Ramadan to distribute our zakat. While we may have met that obligation, let us not lose sight that need exists throughout the year and having met our zakat obligation, the opportunities for sadaqa can be found all around us. Don't hesitate to lend a hand to those in need.

Finally, with the discipline practiced during Ramadan, consider moderating our food consumption, eliminating poor habits like smoking, including exercise in our daily routine, and maintaining that cheery demeanor so evident during Ramadan! May God help us in these efforts.

Sincerely,

Roger M. Othman  
director or consumer relations
FOOD ON WHEELS

By Afreen Syed
Ring! Ring! I open the door to a huge package on my porch and get excited to see what’s inside. Lately, my husband has been constantly working while I’m chasing after two kids under two. I barely have time to go grocery shopping and am worried about my family getting proper, nutritious meals. Inside the box, I find fresh groceries and products that I ordered from Whole Foods only two hours ago through an online delivery service called Instacart. I was even able to get a few Saffron Road halal frozen meals, including my daughter’s favorite Chicken Tikka Masala. My dinner was ready within a few minutes!

Grocery and Food Delivery Services

Like Instacart, there are so many delivery services available now throughout the US. Mobile vending alone contributes around $650 million a year, and halal food is a huge contributor. Due to fast paced lifestyles, many people are not able to shop for food or cook at home. These services help deliver meals and groceries quickly to the individual’s doorstep. There are so many stores that provide these options now, such as Whole Foods, Costco, Kroger, and more. There are also options for picking up groceries outside of the store, some with special parking spots. Walmart, for example, has free pickup and an associate will come outside to delivery the groceries and help put them in the car if needed. When I was in college, food delivery services such as Grubhub and DoorDash saved the day when I was struggling to study for finals and think of how I can possibly cook a meal or even make it to the cafeteria on time. I would order from various restaurants that were around the area and open. The service was always quick and my meal hot and fresh. Food delivery services are easy to use and a great option when cooking seems impossible or it’s hard to find time to go out and eat or pick up food.

Meal Prep Kits

Prepping meals ahead of time is a great way to save time and energy, while also making healthy meals for the week. Meal prep kits help take care of this without the extra work. There are easy instructions of how to make the meals and it’s exciting to follow along without wasting time and ingredients. It’s perfect to control the amount of sodium, oil, sugar, and other items being put into the food, especially for those with medical conditions. Many services offer nutritionist approved organic vegetarian and vegan meals as well. With the demand of halal food in the market, we can only hope that these companies provide halal options or that we can have official halal meal delivery services in the near future.

Food On-The-Go

The food truck craze has been a hit across the nation in cities and work areas. Now, it’s starting to become very popular among hungry students looking for more options in universities and colleges. At Michigan State University, there is an Eat at State ON-THE-GO Food Truck that is convenient for students who need to grab a
quick bite to eat or want to relax and eat outside with friends. For students who have a dining plan, they can actually use a meal access for a combo at the Food Truck instead. This is called the Combo-X-Change, which can also be used to purchase a meal combo at the university food court, market, or store. It allows the student to pick up quick meals they can heat up or even healthy snacks in replacement of the cafeteria meal. Asim Ghani is a senior at Michigan State and chooses this option often. “I love using the combo when I am studying or just too tired to go eat in the cafeteria. I also love that they give us a halal option, as long as we notify them ahead of time,” says Ghani.

Ever heard of a “student biryani?” Najma Sultana of Teaneck, New Jersey is a full time chef and biryani expert at a small carry out halal Indian restaurant. Biryani is a one-pot meal full of rice, meat, and fragrant spices and flavors. Sultana says: “I specialize in making Hyderabadi (South Indian) style biryani and have people who are working, international students, or even tourists call and place orders for it to be delivered to them. I had many hungry students from Fairleigh Dickinson University, which is right next to the restaurant, come asking for any special deals on biryani. So I started one called student biryani, which is a smaller portion but has bread and chutney with a drink included, and is also affordable. This is the most popular item and our delivery man brings it right to their dorm or apartment.”

Urusa Naqui started a small catering business from her home called S & S Catering and delivers to the metro Detroit area in Michigan. Surprisingly, most of her customers are employees at General Motors. She mainly cooks halal Indian and Pakistani cuisine, but also takes requests for other food items. “I love seeing the smiles and excitement on my customers’ faces when they receive home cooked meals they may not get or crave. Especially for those who have left families back home and are missing them a lot. It’s a beautiful feeling,” says Naqui.

Supporting the Less Fortunate

“Never will you attain the good [reward] until you spend [in the way of God] from that which you love. And whatever you spend — indeed, God is Knowing of it.”

(Quran 3:92)

How can we help those who are less fortunate to make a proper living for themselves? Through the Dallas Refugee Services, I was able to locate women refugees who are making home cooked food with donated ingredients to

Mobile vending alone contributes around $650 million a year, and halal food is a huge contributor.
sell to the community. Many of these refugees are from Afghanistan and Iraq and have left much of their life back home. As Ramadan approaches, some women are offering larger catering services. This is perfect for people who want to do iftar parties at home or are not able to cook at times during the blessed month. They offer Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisine, which include vegetarian and gluten free options. The customer can make special requests as well. This is a great opportunity to give back to those who need a stable income and better life for their families.

With the availability of online ordering and social media, it is much easier to access healthy and halal foods. Home delivery services are taking note of trends in society and competition has increased to provide the best service and food quality.

**Vending Machines and the Future**

Vending machines have always been convenient and a low cost option for accessing various food and drinks. However, with the rise of obesity among both adults and children, regulations have been changing with what vending machines should offer. For example, in Glendale, California, the City Council voted on replacing unhealthy snacks in vending machines on city property, such as chips and candy with nuts, vegetables, and fruits. This would help tackle obesity in children, especially since in Los Angeles County over 20% of children are obese.

**Trends in Vending Machines:**

- **Health Conscious Vending Machines:** H.U.M.A.N Healthy Vending, or Helping Unite Mankind and Nutrition, is a company that sells vending machines with healthier options. Fruit and vegetable juices (e.g. POM Pomegranate juice), muscle milk, and healthy beef jerky are some of the replacements for the usual chips, cookies, and candy. They donate 10% of proceeds to fight childhood obesity as well. The Food and Drug Administration requires those who operate over 20 vending machines to provide calorie content for the food products being sold.

- **Healthy on-the-go meals:** Start up companies such as Farmer’s Fridge, are becoming popular among people who are looking for nutritious and filling meals. They sell fresh salads in jars that are loaded into the vending machines in downtown Chicago everyday. The leftover salads are donated to local food pantries. This is a great option for those looking to opt for something healthier over greasy fast food.

- **Vending machines that can cook:** With increasing advancements in technology, we may see pizza and frozen yogurt vending machines soon. 24/7 Pizza Box is a vending machine featured at a Chicago trade show that makes pizzas with dough and sauce in less than three minutes! It has not been put into the market yet, but we hope to see it in the future soon!

The concept of food on wheels has changed drastically over the years. With the availability of online ordering and social media, it is much easier to access healthy and halal foods. Home delivery services are taking note of trends in society and competition has increased to provide the best service and food quality. Busy lifestyles are causing demand for home cooked meals and easily accessible foods. The growing population of Muslims and non-Muslims choosing halal-certified food and products will hopefully let us see more halal and healthy options in the future.

AFREEN FATIMA SYED is a full time mom and public health professional living in Coppell, Texas. She has a passion for nutrition and health, and loves to explore different cuisines.
I lost my father to the fatal effects of diabetes. He suffered from Type 2 diabetes for over 2 decades, losing his quality of life over those years. Watching his health deteriorate was very hard, and it is still hard to accept that he is not with us anymore. It has been almost 9 years since he left, and I still wonder how much more we could have done to help him.

One thing we could have possibly done was to introduce alternative sugars in his diet. I did not realize this until I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes during my last pregnancy. Gestational diabetes refers to a high blood sugar state that develops at any time during pregnancy in a woman who does not have prior diabetes. It affects nearly 2% to 10% of pregnancies.

I had to change my whole lifestyle to keep the condition at bay and not let it harm my developing baby and me. By using alternative sugars and following a strict diet regimen, I was able to manage my health and not have to depend on medication during my pregnancy.
Could alternative sugars really be that effective? It got me thinking about what they are exactly and how does the body react to alternative sugars versus regular refined sugars. Even though I was able to maintain lower blood sugar levels, were the alternative sugars even good for me?

In order to appreciate what alternative sugars are, it is important to understand what makes them different than regular sugars and how to incorporate them safely into the diet. To begin, refined sugars do not contain any protein, essential fats, vitamins, or minerals. There is no real use for them in our foods except to add sweetness, but that sweet flavor comes with risks.

Sugar is addictive and known to interfere with the body’s natural hormones that regulate hunger and satisfaction, which can cause excessive cravings and overeating. It can harm one’s metabolism, leading to increased insulin and fat storage. There are many diseases linked with high sugar intake like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

So can substituting with alternative sugars reduce these potential risks? Not necessarily, as they can still perpetuate the desire for sweets and cause overconsumption. As with most things in nutrition, it is important to remember that moderation is key. Sugar alternatives, whether derived from natural sources or not, should still be used sparingly. For example, coconut sugar is extracted from the sap of the coconut palm. It has lots of nutrients and a lower glycemic index because of its increased levels of fiber. To simplify, here is a comparative breakdown of some commonly used alternative sugars:

Alternative sugars can make a nice substitute for refined sugars but should still be used sparingly. Even after my delivery, I continue to find ways to incorporate alternative sugars in the foods I cook and bake as a slightly preventative measure. Because I had gestational diabetes, my chances of developing Type 2 diabetes have greatly increased. Throw in my predetermined genes, and I have to work really hard to avoid the inevitable.

Women who have had gestational diabetes have a 35% to 60% chance of developing diabetes in the next 10–20 years, and studies show that immediately after pregnancy, 5% to 10% of women with gestational diabetes are found to have diabetes, usually Type 2.

Endocrinologist Dr. Nadia Yaqub is a mother of three girls and the Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Cincinnati in Ohio. She regularly sees patients who suffer from diabetes, sometimes as many as a dozen a day and does recommend the use of alternative sugars for them. “Dietary modification is a cornerstone of managing diabetes,” says Dr. Yaqub. “I
do recommend alternative sugars to patients in moderation in place of refined sugars and monitor their diets very carefully.”

To practice what she preaches, Dr. Yaqub maintains a low carbohydrate and low sugar regimen herself along with regular exercise. “A significant part of improving and extending your quality of life is by taking preventative measures,” advises Dr. Yaqub. “The best cure is to avoid the disease and that which can cause it. Our food is making us sick, and sugar is a big component of that. Finding alternatives is a great step towards preventative medicine.”

So using alternative sugars may not be the cure or the answer, but it is definitely a step forward in the right direction. By training our taste buds to lessen our liking of excessive refined sugars, we can feel better and do better with our health as well.

**TAYYABA SYED** is an award-winning children’s author and freelance journalist. She travels extensively to share her love for reading and writing. Her work has been featured in NPR, and she has written for more than 20 book titles including Encyclopedia Britannica. She lives with her husband and three children in Illinois.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Alternative Sugar</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coconut Sugar</strong>&lt;br&gt;extracted from coconut palm sap</td>
<td>- Contains antioxidants&lt;br&gt;- Contains nutrients like iron, zinc, calcium and potassium&lt;br&gt;- Has a lower glycemic index&lt;br&gt;- Contains a fiber called inulin</td>
<td>- High in calories&lt;br&gt;- High in fructose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honey</strong>&lt;br&gt;thick, golden syrup produced by bees</td>
<td>- Contains large amounts of vitamins and minerals&lt;br&gt;- Contains antioxidants&lt;br&gt;- May reduce cholesterol&lt;br&gt;- Metabolizes easily</td>
<td>- May increase inflammation&lt;br&gt;- May increase HbA1c blood sugar levels&lt;br&gt;- High in fructose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maple syrup</strong>&lt;br&gt;thick liquid made by cooking down sap of maple tree</td>
<td>- Contains minerals like calcium, potassium, manganese, iron and zinc&lt;br&gt;- Contains antioxidants&lt;br&gt;- Lower glycemic index</td>
<td>- High in sugar&lt;br&gt;- Will raise blood sugar levels (but slightly slower than regular sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yacon syrup</strong>&lt;br&gt;extracted from the yacon plant</td>
<td>- Contain less calories than sugar&lt;br&gt;- Can decrease hunger hormone ghrelin&lt;br&gt;- Improves healthy gut bacteria&lt;br&gt;- May help with weight loss</td>
<td>- Excessive amounts may lead to gas, diarrhea, or general digestive discomfort&lt;br&gt;- Not for cooking or baking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stevia</strong>&lt;br&gt;natural leaf extract</td>
<td>- Has zero calories&lt;br&gt;- No known links to weight gain&lt;br&gt;- May lower high blood pressure&lt;br&gt;- May lower high blood sugars and insulin levels</td>
<td>- Varies in taste&lt;br&gt;- May taste bitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Xylitol</strong>&lt;br&gt;sugar alcohol extracted from corn or birch</td>
<td>- Contains 40% fewer calories than sugar&lt;br&gt;- Does not raise blood sugar or insulin levels&lt;br&gt;- May improve dental health&lt;br&gt;- Increases body’s absorption of calcium</td>
<td>- Can cause gas, bloating and diarrhea&lt;br&gt;- May taste bitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Erythritol</strong>&lt;br&gt;sugar alcohol found in fruits</td>
<td>- Contains 6% of the calories of sugar&lt;br&gt;- Tastes closest to sugar&lt;br&gt;- Absorbed directly into bloodstream&lt;br&gt;- Does not raise blood sugar or insulin levels</td>
<td>- May taste bitter&lt;br&gt;- May cause digestive issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date sugar</strong>&lt;br&gt;dehydrated dried dates</td>
<td>- Contains no additives&lt;br&gt;- High potassium and antioxidant content</td>
<td>- High fructose content&lt;br&gt;- Clumpy texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brown rice syrup</strong>&lt;br&gt;extracted from cooked brown rice</td>
<td>- Contains no fructose</td>
<td>- Contains no nutrients&lt;br&gt;- Could possibly contain arsenic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Molasses</strong>&lt;br&gt;boiled down sugar cane or sugar beet juice</td>
<td>- Contains few vitamins and minerals like potassium and calcium&lt;br&gt;- Contains antioxidants</td>
<td>- High in sugar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your career is on track.

Are your investments?

The Amana Funds and Saturna Capital offer a variety of account types and investment strategies to fit your investing needs.

It’s easier than you think. We can help.

- Halal investment options
- Multiple fund strategies help you diversify
- IRA, ESA, HSA, 401(k), Rollovers
- America’s longest-running, Islamically acceptable mutual fund with more than 30 years of investing success

To learn more about how the Amana Funds and Saturna Capital can help you invest according to Islamic principles, visit www.amanafunds.com

Amana Mutual Funds Trust
www.amanafunds.com  1-800-728-8762

INCOME • GROWTH • DEVELOPING WORLD • PARTICIPATION

Please consider an investment’s objectives, risks, charges, and expenses carefully before investing. To obtain this and other important information about Amana Mutual Funds in a current prospectus or summary prospectus, please visit www.amanafunds.com or call toll free 1-800-728-8762. Please read the prospectus or summary prospectus carefully before investing.

Investing involves risk, including possible loss of principal. The Amana Funds limit the securities they purchase to those consistent with Islamic principles. This limits opportunities and may affect performance. Distributed by Saturna Brokerage Services, Inc., member FINRA / SIPC and a wholly-owned subsidiary of Saturna Capital, investment adviser to the Amana Funds.
Gut Health

By Nadia Malik
A healthy gut is an important component to an overall fit life. Any issues with it will have repercussions on the rest of the body. It’s a large part of what makes us feel good, energetic, and strong on a daily basis. We have a biological need to eat every single day, and that has a daily effect on how we live.

The gut is responsible for much of the immune system, helps digest food, produces vitamins, breaks down nutrients, excretes toxins, and has connections to the brain—in fact the same neurons exist in both places, and the enteric nervous system that houses these neurons is often referred to as “the second brain.” That foggy feeling, when your mind isn’t functioning clearly, may come from not properly coddling the healthy bacteria that make up the gastrointestinal tract.

The digestive tract also produces the hormones that regulate appetite, as well as serotonin, which contributes to feelings of wellbeing, and dopamine, which mediates motivation.

“Good gut health, or good digestion, is the gateway to overall health and wellbeing,” says Alina Islam, a holistic nutritionist based in Toronto. “Having good health extends beyond just having healthy bowel movements or not being bloated. It impacts our immune health, brain health, skin health, and energy levels.”

Taking care of the gut is pretty intuitive and part of a larger healthy lifestyle. It naturally contains good bacteria, or gut flora that break down food into smaller molecules, all contained within the microbiome that lines it. “These smaller molecules can be absorbed into our bloodstream and then will go to our cells to build new molecules and new chemical structures that will provide benefits to our body,” explains IFANCA food scientist Saeed Hayek, PhD. “That’s why one of the important things when we talk about gut health is to have good bacteria in your gut.”

The good bacteria can also stave off any attacks by bad bacteria before they reach the immune system. The key is to have the right balance of the good over the bad.

Maintaining these positive strains means eating items high in probiotics (good bacteria) as well as prebiotics, the nutrients that are necessary to enhance the growth of good bacteria. In essence, prebiotics, with their high fiber content, feed probiotics. They include healthy foods such as leafy greens, oats, garlic, onions, leeks, artichokes, cucumbers, and asparagus. “If you’re not feeding good bacteria, they’ll starve to death,” says Laura Rokosz, a health care practitioner and owner of Egglrock Nutrition. While advertising and mainstream culture have really pushed the idea of probiotics, prebiotics are just as important.

Even though the good strains of bacteria live naturally in the body, increasing them on a daily basis is a sound and recommended practice. That means eating fermented items with live cultures in them. Fermentation means that sugars and carbohydrates have been broken down and formed into acid. Fermentation also breaks down other components in the food and makes them easier to digest.

“In you’re not feeding good bacteria, they’ll starve to death.”

Ingesting these could be as easy as eating one unsweetened yogurt serving a day or getting more creative with food intake. (While yogurt is the most common carrier of probiotics, there are many other good fermented food items enhanced with this good bacteria.) As these items high in probiotics also vary in different cultures, they provide a chance to explore different parts of the world through the taste buds. Tempeh, a good source of protein made of soybeans; kefir, a form of drinkable yogurt that has the added benefit of calcium and vitamins; lassi, a Southeast Asian yogurt smoothie; sauerkraut, a cabbage and salt mixture; miso, a paste of soy and barley; kombucha, a fermented tea; and kimchi, Korean spicy cabbage, all afford an opportunity to bring probiotics into the body. The average healthy person needs to consume at least one serving a day of any of these items to maintain good bacteria.

Some of these sources, such as miso paste, sauerkraut, and kimchi, are also high in sodium, so those who are trying to control salt intake should avoid them.

Of course, the fermentation process makes these foods sour, so it can take some time to build up the taste for
them. Starting small can help; have a tiny portion of kimchi, for example, with rice or another grain and then add to that amount over time. Just this small addition can have a positive impact.

“Probiotics can be seen as ‘good cops’ that fight bad bacteria, the ‘bad cops,’ in the gut, and keep out infections and pathogens, while reducing inflammation, improving the immune system, and promoting bowel movements,” explains Islam.

Although most nutritionists and dietitians would recommend eating real food, probiotic supplements don’t hurt, either, especially if fermented cuisine isn’t appealing; but taking them doesn’t serve as some catchall. Processed carbohydrates that come from an excess of desserts, fried items, fast food, and other similar junk products have a negative impact on the good bacteria. So taking a plethora of probiotics but otherwise having a diet of only processed fare and a dearth of fruits and vegetables will make little to no impact on the body. One yogurt every day won’t do much to combat a steady diet of chips and soda.

“It’s not a magic pill,” Rokosz warns. “If you’re going to go to the trouble to take a probiotic into your body to help with missing good bacteria, then you have to foster their growth by managing your diet.” Those who want to improve gut health will have to put in the daily effort themselves by changing their eating habits. Be aware, also, of added sugars in probiotic items such as yogurt and kefir drinks.

Other factors that could affect the way the bacteria work include the use of antibiotics. While they are necessary to combat certain ailments, they don’t differentiate between good and bad bacteria, killing them at the same rate, so it’s recommended to up your intake of probiotics while taking and after finishing the medication.

Chris Latham, a clinical nutritionist, also points out that chronic stress can degrade the gut lining. “That could be emotional, physical stress, if you’re worried all the time, in a bad relationship, hate your job,” she expands. If chronic stress is a factor, it’s recommended to find healthy ways to deal with it, such as relaxation techniques, working out, or speaking to a therapist.

Latham also recommends, in general, just chewing more slowly and enjoying the experience of eating to aid in breaking down meals and helping with digestion. “I tell people to chew their food until it’s mush,” she expands. “It should be a fine dining experience every time you eat. The TV shouldn’t be on; you shouldn’t be looking at your cell phone.”

Not overeating is also important. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) practiced and recommended moderation in eating and said, “A human being fills no worse vessel than his stomach. It is sufficient for a human being to eat a few mouthfuls to keep his spine straight. But if he must (fill it), then one third of food, one third for drink and one third for air.” —Sunan Ibn Majah, Volume 4, Hadith 3349.
In general, the Quran prescribes to “...eat from whatever is on earth (that is) lawful and good...” (Quran 2:168), which includes the fruits and vegetables recommended by nutritionists, as well as grains and meat.

Because the body is so connected, the gastrointestinal system will have an effect on the remaining systems. Islam explains that the GI system is where the body’s raw materials are processed and assimilated into the body. If those nutrients aren’t absorbed and utilized efficiently, the rest of our organs, muscles, tissues, and cells also won’t work efficiently. “For example, if you have weak digestion, you may not be absorbing protein properly despite eating enough in your diet,” she says. “This can show up in areas that seem unrelated to gut health, such as weak nails, brittle hair, and dull skin.”

Another sign pointing to the need of a tune up can be constipation, diarrhea, or other irregularities with bowel movement, as well as constant bloating and cramping. “If you don’t have enough good bacteria, then that has negative effects,” Hayek says. “It’s different from person to person because our bodies aren’t the same.”

Islam contends good gut health contributes to daily bowel movements, feeling light after meals, and experiencing minimal gas or bloating. That will manifest in higher energy levels, a focused and sharp brain, and a strong immune system.

While there aren’t direct correlations between gut health and most chronic diseases, Hayek points out that there are many indirect relations with things like cancer, heart disease, blood pressure, and cholesterol. Irritable bowel syndrome, whose causes are largely unknown, also has been shown to be affected somewhat positively by probiotics, although studies are still examining the exact reason for this.

The presence of acne and eczema are also sometimes attributed to gut health, although the science on that isn’t firm. Many nutritionists and homeopathic healers will first work on the digestive system and take a look at the effectiveness of a diet to battle skin conditions.

“No matter what area of your health you want to improve, you will see a benefit if you start by trying to heal your gut and improve digestion,” Islam says.

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 currently in a graduate program at the University of Pennsylvania, studying social work and nonprofit leadership.
Breast Cancer

By Asma Jarad
lists three main ways that breastfeeding protects breast health:

- making milk 24/7 limits breast cells’ ability to misbehave
- most women have fewer menstrual cycles when they’re breastfeeding (added to the 9 missed periods during pregnancy) resulting in lower estrogen levels
- many women tend to eat more nutritious foods and follow healthier lifestyles while breastfeeding

Islam encourages breastfeeding infants for two years. This recommendation was revealed to us long before any medical or technological advances discovered the innumerable benefits that nursing has on the mother and child. The Quran states, "Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period]. Upon the father is the mothers’ provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable. No person is charged with more than their capacity. No mother should be harmed through her child, and no father through his child..." (Quran 2:233). This verse proves to us that through God’s infinite mercy, He has not only provided a provision for the dependent newborn, but also a shield for the mother. This is not to say that every breastfeeding mother will be completely inoculated from the disease, but it does add a substantial preventive measure. As the Quran says, “Say, ‘Never will we be struck except by what God has decreed for us; He is our protector. And upon God let the believers rely’.” (Quran 9:51).

Another preventive measure is to properly screen for the disease. In the United States, health classes for pubescent girls teach them how to perform self-exams in order to be alert for any lumps or abnormalities within the breast. Around the time of puberty, the female body develops breasts which consist of fat, lobules, connective tissue, and tiny milk glands. As the girl grows, she will be able to distinguish between normal breast growth and abnormalities within the breast. The American Cancer Society, which brands itself as being “On a mission to free the world from cancer,” by “conducting research, sharing expert information, supporting patients, and spreading the word about prevention,” says, “Finding breast cancer early and getting state-of-the-art cancer treatment are the most important strategies to prevent deaths from breast cancer. Breast cancer that’s found early, when it’s small and has not spread, is easier to treat successfully.”

According to Susan G. Komen, the world’s largest nonprofit organization that addresses breast cancer through research, outreach, and public policy initiatives,
“Mammography screening is the most effective screening tool used today to find breast cancer in most women. However, the benefits of mammography vary by age.” Women between the ages of 45-50, are encouraged to start getting a mammogram every year. Healthy women over 50 and up to 69 years of age, are advised to get a mammogram every other year. For women 70 and older, the frequency can be spaced out by 2-3 years as long as all the previous mammogram results were normal.

After a positive diagnosis of breast cancer, a team of medical professionals may include a surgeon, medical oncologist, radiation oncologist, and plastic surgeon who will explain and implement a treatment plan, that will hopefully be successful. Treatments will vary depending on the type and stage of the cancer. Generally speaking, local treatments, affecting only the breast area without disturbing the rest of the body, are the first option. This includes targeted surgery and radiation therapy to remove the tumor. The secondary treatment is systemic which involves drugs that reach cancer cells throughout the body and are given either by mouth or directly pumped into the bloodstream. The common systemic drug treatments are chemotherapy, hormone therapy, and targeted therapy. Most women receive a combination of treatments, depending on the severity of the diagnosis.

Following treatment for breast cancer, the outlook for most patients is encouraging. The 5-year survival rate for women with stage 0 or I is close to 100%, according to the American Cancer Society. This proves that early diagnosis and intervention is crucial.

Breast cancer is not exclusively a women’s disease; men can get it, too. Although rare, men who have a close relative diagnosed with breast cancer have a chance of developing the disease in advanced age. The odds of men developing male breast cancer increase if they have a history of radiation exposure to the chest, have enlarged breasts from hormone treatments, or have liver disease. Overall, breastcancer.org estimates that only 1 in 1,000 American men will develop the disease. In most cases this male diagnosis is not fatal and can readily be treated.

Although most people afflicted with breast cancer are women, it is not only she who suffers. The impact of such a diagnosis extends to the spouse, children, siblings, extended family, co-workers, and community at large. This is because cancer patients need and rely on the
Although rare, men who have a close relative diagnosed with breast cancer have a chance of developing the disease in advanced age.

Support of those around them. In addition to the medical personnel in the hospital and clinic, psychologists and social workers are also essential members of the recovery team. In his book, Breast Cancer: Real Questions, Real Answers, Dr. David Chan, an oncologist with over twenty years of experience with breast cancer patients, says, “Supportive care is now recognized as having important value in minimizing the distress that goes with the diagnosis of breast cancer. Group and individual session therapy have become widely encouraged and accepted. Such care can help patients through their treatments and have very positive effects on their interactions with family and friends.”

Breast cancer does not discriminate; it can attack any woman at any stage of her life. But there are certain risk factors that are within our control, so we should take advantage of preventive measures in order to decrease our risk of falling victim to this ugly disease. Living in the twenty-first century, we also have the advantage of innovative medical care during and after a diagnosis. Family and community support for those touched by the disease also helps cushion the negative effects associated with the disease. Finally, it is equally important for us to trust God’s plan as supreme to our intentions or wishes. Despite the harsh reality that accompanies a breast cancer diagnosis, as Muslims, we know that God does not burden us with more than we can carry. Humans are resilient creatures; we fall, we get up. In the Quran, God says, “Did We not expand for you [O Muhammad], your breast? And We removed from you your burden, Which had weighed upon your back, And raised high for you your repute. For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. So, when you have finished [your duties], then stand up for worship.” (Quran 94: 1-8).

ASMA JARAD is a writer and editor. She recently began a YouTube channel narrating children’s picture books to help instill pride and confidence in Islam and personal heritage among the youth. Catch her on YouTube and Facebook: Sami & Amro Reading Time.
Salt is essential for life. It is one of the five basic human tastes and most often used mineral for flavoring food. Although it has gotten a bad reputation as of late, this mineral is a key factor in maintaining good health. Salt is a mineral primarily composed of sodium chloride (NaCl). According to Dr. Saeed Hayek, IFANCA Food Scientist and Quality Manager, “Salt or sodium chloride, it is not just a food preservative and taste and flavor enhancer; salt has many health benefits for our bodies. Salt regulates the kidney function, helps control the body’s fluid balance, and helps nerve and muscle functions. It maintains the body’s hydration levels, electrolyte balance, and blood pressure.”

Salt has been used to preserve meats, seafood, and vegetables since the days of antiquity. Curing, pickling, and brining are different types of processes in which salt was used to draw out moisture to expand the shelf life of food. It is hard for bacteria to survive in salty environments, so salt has been useful in helping to delay or prevent bacterial growth. Most bacteria or pathogenic organisms cannot survive because living cells will either dehydrate through osmosis or become inactivated.

While refrigerators and freezers serve to preserve our food, salt remains a main ingredient for flavoring and preservation in processed foods.

There are several types of salt. We’re most familiar with table salt, which is finely refined and finely ground into small cube-shaped bits. Added anti-caking agents keep it from clumping. Most table salt has iodine added to avoid iodine deficiency, which can lead to hyperthyroidism or low levels of the thyroid hormone, a problem that affects more than a third of the world’s population. Thyroid hormones are responsible for growth, repairing damaged cells, and maintaining metabolism.

Himalayan pink salt is a trending item due to its pretty pink coloring and popularity among alternative health enthusiasts. It is harvested by hand from the Khewra Salt Mines in the Himalayan Mountains of Pakistan and is considered the purest salt in the world. Because it contains 84 minerals found in the human body, many have replaced their table salt for this more robust one. The various minerals also lend a bolder taste which makes it great for cooking.
Sea salt is made from evaporated sea water and contains zinc, potassium, and iron. These minerals give sea salt a very distinct flavor. Celtic sea salt, mined from the bottom of tidal ponds off the coast of France, is gray colored and has a briny taste. Fleur de sel, known as the caviar of salts, is mined from the coast of Brittany, France. Because of its scarcity and labor intensive harvesting methods, it can cost up to four dollars per ounce. Fleur de sel is used by master chefs worldwide and is great as a finishing salt for vegetables, meats, and even on chocolate and caramel.

Black Hawaiian salt is, of course, black, coarse-grained and chunky. It is mined from Hawaii’s volcanoes. Red Hawaiian salt resembles small red gemstones. It makes a tasty and decorative garnish on meat or seafood. Kosher salt tends to be flakier and coarser. It makes a good all-purpose cooking salt as it dissolves quickly. It has a nice burst of flavor and it is great for pretzel and bread making.

Because so much of the average American diet contains processed food, we can easily overconsume our daily allowance of salt. The World Health Organization recommends no more than 2,000 mg of sodium or five grams of salt per day. The American Health Association recommends no more than 1,500 mg of sodium. The average American consumes more than 3,500 mg of sodium a day. And while there are many types of salt to choose from, chemically they are the same. “All salt contains 40 percent sodium,” says Mandy Enright, RDN, a nutritionist and fitness trainer in New Jersey. “That means pink Himalayan salt, French sea salt, and kosher salt are all just as bad as the stuff that comes in packets at restaurants.” So just as too little salt intake can be detrimental, so is too much. When grocery shopping, check the labels, especially on processed foods. “Anything with five percent or less per serving is considered a low-sodium source, while 20 percent or more is considered a high-sodium source,” Enright says.

Too much salt consumption can cause bloating and water retention. Other tell-tale signs of high sodium intake are extreme thirst and frequent headaches. Hayek says, “High intake of salt may cause trouble for the kidneys trying to keep up with the excess sodium in the bloodstream. The accumulation of sodium in the body would increase the amount of fluid and the volume of blood. This may require more work for the heart and more pressure on blood vessels. This may also lead to high blood pressure, heart failure, or damage to the kidneys.” The American Health Association warns against “The Salty Six:” breads and rolls, cold cuts and cured meats, pizza, processed chicken, canned soups, and sandwiches.

The American Health Association warns against “The Salty Six:” breads and rolls, cold cuts and cured meats, pizza, processed chicken, canned soups, and sandwiches.

There are many ways to liven up your meals without packing on the sodium. You can choose natural herbs and spices as alternatives. Herbs and spices have moderate levels of sodium in their natural states. For meat and seafood dishes, you can trade salt for turmeric, rosemary, chives, cumin, paprika, or oregano. For salads, try mint, parsley, or basil. And for sweet dishes or desserts, use cardamom or cinnamon. Yaqutullah Ibraheem Muhammad, MS, RDN, LD, recommends, “Low sodium alternatives that are available in the marketplace. I don’t recommend potassium chloride because there are so many flavorful herb and spice alternatives including anti-inflammatory seasonings that add flavor such as turmeric, garlic, ginger, curry, and cumin.” You can enjoy healthy, flavorful foods without sacrificing taste. So watch the salt!

Kelly Crosby is an artist and a freelance writer in Atlanta, Georgia.
“Dodo” (aka “Fried Plantains”)
By: Maryam Funmilayo

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

4 ripe, bright yellow plantains
1 ½ cups of organic, cold pressed, virgin, unrefined, non-GMO avocado or coconut oil

DIRECTIONS

1. Wash the plantains and use a sharp knife to peel open the plantains.
2. One by one, slice each plantain in a crosswise manner, into a medium-sized bowl.
3. Heat up avocado oil or coconut oil in a deep fryer for 3 minutes.
4. Place 10 to 12 plantain slices at a time, turning them every 2 to 3 minutes until they are lightly brown on both sides.
5. Transfer the fried plantains with a sieve onto a paper towel, to absorb the extra oil. Then transfer to a flat dish.
6. Serve with cooked beans or lentils, vegetable stew, jollof rice, soaked cassava flour known as “garri”, or simply eat alone as a side dish!
Persimmon Fruit Salad
By: Maryam Funmilayo

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

- 5 medium-sized persimmons
- 2 green apples, diced
- 1 cup of green grapes
- 2 small dates, chopped
- ¼ cup chopped pecans or walnuts

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the persimmons and apples in small dices, and shred the dates. Add the grapes and mix all the fruits together in a medium bowl.

2. Top with either pecans or walnuts.

3. Chill and Serve!
Herb & Veggie-Baked Spicy Mackerel
By: Maryam Funmilayo

Servings: 8–10

**INGREDIENTS**

- 6 fresh, medium-sized mackerel fish
- 2 medium-sized tomatoes
- 2 medium-sized red and green bell peppers
- 1 tablespoon of turmeric
- 1 tablespoon of cumin
- 1 tablespoon of paprika
- 1 tablespoon of garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon of black powder
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- ½ piece of jalapeno
- ½ piece of habernero
- 2 medium-sized lemon fruits
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Spread the olive oil on the baking pan evenly.
3. Rinse each mackerel fish very well by de-veining all of them properly as well as cutting off their fins and gills.
4. Season them with all the spices above except for the peppers, tomatoes, and herbs (parsley and cilantro). These are chopped separately.
5. Lastly, marinate the mackerel with lemon juice and keep in the refrigerator for 20 minutes.
6. After 20 minutes, spread the mackerel in the baking pan, add the chopped tomatoes, peppers, parsley, and cilantro on top of the mackerel, and place in the preheated oven.
7. Bake at 350°F for 60 minutes.
8. Serve with beans, pasta, rice, fried plantain, grated, soaked cassava flour (known as ‘garri’) or simply eat alone.
From all of us at the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA®) and Halal Consumer© Magazine, we hope you had a peaceful and rewarding Ramadan and we wish you Eid Mubarak. May the days ahead bring you tranquility and joy.
Sodium: Sneaky Villain & Hidden Hero

By Linda Gardner Phillips

Sodium gets a bad rap from dieticians, but this simple element also plays a heroic role in our health. It’s true that sodium imbalances factor into serious health problems, from high blood pressure to heart failure; but plants, animals, and people all need sodium to survive. It helps keep fluids balanced and flowing and is essential to life (Scientific American).

Always Present, Never Seen

Silvery white sodium hides in plain sight. Few people have ever seen this soft reactive mineral (Na) because it always bonds with other elements to form compounds or salts, that dissolve easily in water. Streams and rivers absorb salts as they move across the earth on their journeys to the sea. Over time, as seawater evaporates, the salts remain—giving the ocean its salty taste and making it easier for objects to float (Britannica.com).

Most sodium enters our diet via food salt, also known as sodium chloride (NaCl). People everywhere cook with salt and shake it onto food to make it tastier. Traditional cuisines preserve food with salt to slow toxic bacterial growth and to create fermented vegetables such as kimchee and sauerkraut. During fermentation, sodium pulls water from the plant tissues. As liquid fills the container, air bubbles rise to the surface, leaving behind the right low-oxygen environment for lactic fermentation. Sodium also sneaks into modern diets through baking soda, artificial sweeteners, and fizzy medications.

Beyond the kitchen, sodium ushers energy, beauty, and light into our lives. Ancient people discovered glass by burning sodium carbonate with unslaked lime (calcium oxide). Today, glass windows bring bright daylight into homes, and reflective glass-walled skyscrapers define modern architecture. Streetlamps glow golden from pure sodium, which also helps move heat in nuclear power plants.

The Potassium Connection

In 1807, Sir Humphrey Davy isolated pure sodium and discovered potassium, sodium’s hard working health
partner. These two nutrients delicately maintain crucial fluid balances in the body. At a cellular level, molecular pumps pull in potassium and force out sodium. The resulting chemical battery powers nerve signals and muscle contractions.

Biology’s fine-tuning should harmonize sodium and potassium levels, but our modern diet wreaks havoc with the original plan. Paleolithic hunter-gatherers ate lots of potassium (via fruits and vegetables) but lacked abundant salt sources. Human bodies evolved to retain precious sodium but easily release more abundant nutrients like potassium and Vitamin C. Modern people still favor salty flavors, but in an era of cheap salt, tend to eat too much sodium and not enough potassium. These low potassium levels can backfire, signaling the body to hoard even more sodium—a potentially dangerous health situation that overworks the kidneys.

A Sneaky Villain

Policy-makers blame excess sodium for public health problems, and urge cutting back on dietary sodium (Scientific American). The CDC notes that “when salt intake is reduced, blood pressure begins falling within weeks on average.” The FDA recommends a daily intake of no more than 2,300 mg of sodium for adults, but most Americans eat over 3,400 mg per day, with 75% of this coming from restaurant and packaged foods. Only 11% arrives from natural sources, including the salt used in home cooking.

Cutting back on sodium intake can be tricky because it’s not always an obvious ingredient, and high-sodium foods may not taste salty. Restaurant diners eat six times more sodium than they realize (according to new research published by the journal Appetite). Processed foods tip the sodium scale because commercial food producers depend on salt to intensify flavors and protect against spoilage.

Product labels often list common hidden sources of sodium, including flavor enhancers (monosodium glutamate/MSG), artificial sweeteners (sodium saccharin), leavening agents (baking soda), and prepared ingredients such as Worcestershire sauce, garlic salt, and bouillon. Other notorious offenders include fast foods and canned products.

Today’s consumers demand lower sodium food, so researchers continue to explore ways to replace salt preservation with safe new technologies, including heat, irradiation, and pulsed electric fields (New Food Magazine).

It’s a snap to manage sodium intake by cooking food from scratch at home. Many fresh ingredients, such as vegetables, grains, and meats, sport reasonable amounts of sodium. More sodium-dense natural foods include cottage cheese (1,000 mg per cup), cooked spinach and collard greens, and raw celery and carrots (75 mg per serving). Most fruits offer less than 50 mg per serving (livestrong.com).

Clever cooks tip the scales towards healthy sodium balance by including potassium rich ingredients, such as yogurt, lentils, and tomatoes. The average adult should eat at least 4,700 mg of potassium per day, but most people get less than 2,700 mg. Cooked sweet potatoes and beet greens include 75 mg of sodium, but come out ahead with a generous 448 mg of potassium. A medium banana delivers 423 mg of potassium but only one mg of sodium (USDA).

If your doctor says you must reduce sodium, don’t despair. Fresh food tastes great. The Mayo Clinic notes that the less salt you use, the less you’ll crave it, and the more you’ll enjoy the real flavor of the food and its health benefits.

LINDA GARDNER PHILLIPS is a writer and creative director living at the Deerpath Farm Conservation Community in Lake County, Illinois. Her specialties include food, healthy living, and transformative design thinking. She can be reached at lgardnerphillips@gmail.com.
If you have a distinct memory of the smell of your mom’s kitchen, the scents and fond recollections that make up the background of your childhood are likely due to her use of aromatics. Whether your grandmother started off her meal by chopping up some garlic and ginger and heating it up in ghee or your father was sure to begin his signature dish with onions and bell papers in olive oil, they were sticking to the age-old cooking staple: The aroma and appearance of food is just as important as its taste.

“Smells are the first thing you come into contact before you’ve even seen the food,” says Shahana Khan, a registered and licensed dietitian. “It makes it more desirable.”

The whiffs coming off food also signal the brain to start the digestion process, making us salivate.

Aromatics give meals the sight and scent that make them appealing. They’re created by combining finely diced vegetables and herbs and heating them in some form of fat at the culmination of a dish. They’re the first step in most soups, stews, and sauces. They are also the key for cooks to understand how to make fare without recipes, as mastering them and then building on the flavors can lead to experimentation and a larger grasp of cuisine. Most cooks innately use the process without even knowing it has a name or its importance in creating local flavors. Those same combinations are often passed down along generations.

“Aromatics are used all over the world,” explains Christine Janae-Leoniak, founder of Culture Aromatics. “Different cultures use different blends of vegetables, herbs, spice, and even sometimes meats to build their own special regional flavor base.”

For example, in French cooking, the most common combination is a mirepoix, two parts onion and one part carrot and celery diced very finely. This, cooked in butter, will start off many soups, broths, and other bases for classic dishes. Anyone who has made chicken noodle soup when ill will recognize the mix.

In most cultures, something from the onion family is the traditional start, and then other greens, herbs, and spices are added in. A Spanish sofrito, for example, will have garlic, onions, green bell peppers, and tomatoes cooked in olive oil, with variations including cilantro, cumin, paprika, or all three added in. Italians have their own soffritto with
onions, carrots, and celery. Thai curry bases will start off with shallots, garlic, and chilies cooked in oil and coconut milk. Cajun cooking swears by onion, celery, and peppers, and Germans have their suppengrün with leeks, carrots, and celery.

There’s an array of other additions that vary dish by dish, such as lemongrass, chives, star anise, parsley, thyme, coriander, turmeric, and bay leaves.

Those flavors become distinct by region and instantly recognizable, Khan expands. “You can tell, oh, this is Mexican food just because of the seasoning. I’m Indian, so we use the onions, garlic, chili peppers. You can tell something is Chinese because they add a lot of ginger to their foods,” she says.

However, because so many bases from different countries can overlap or complement one another, it gives way to fusion cuisine, which starts at the roots of the dishes in aromatics. French herbs de Provence include thyme, but the short-leafed stalks are also essential in Middle Eastern cuisine. Southeast Asian and Latin American cooking both rely on cumin.

“Even though cultures do this all over the world, you can get creative and do your own,” Janae-Leoniak says. This takes some practice and understanding the properties and flavors of what you’re cooking. For example, adding more carrots to a mirepoix, she explains, will make the mix sweeter, which may work in some instances. Garlic can always be overdone, and a heavy hand with spices may overpower a dish. “I think there’s an art and a skill that comes from balancing these flavors,” Janea-Leoniak says.

In general, foods, especially vegetables, change their chemistry when cooked in different ways. You sauté onions long enough, they’ll first get a little sweet and then eventually caramelize. Roasted garlic loses its pungent flavor, but raw garlic pureed with potatoes is preferred in dishes such as the Arab muthawama.

Produce may lose some of its nutritional value when cooked, but using aromatics is an easy way to get it into diets, especially as it’s diced so finely. “They almost dissolve into the food, and so kids will often enjoy the flavor but not the texture or the visual of the food,” Janae-Leoniak expands. “In the future, when they have a more developed palate, the idea behind the flavors will be there, building this amazing ability for kids to understand they do love these vegetables.”

Herbs and spices also have a range of nutritional value, with vitamins and minerals, such as zinc, iron, and magnesium. Garlic and onions have antioxidants, and ginger helps prevent colds and the flu. Spices have been shown to lower inflammation, help with digestion, boost metabolism, and aid with cholesterol.

Janae-Leoniak suspects the natural inclination to blend these vegetables, spices, and herbs stemmed from a notion that they would lead to better health. Khan believes that scientists will unlock myriad benefits to spices that cooks had innately just been adding to cuisine.

Plus, for those who are trying to control their intake of salt, beginning meal preparation with aromatics can increase flavor without relying on sodium as the only enhancer.

“When I talk to hypertensive patients or diabetic patients, I tell them instead of using fat, sugar, and salt, you need to use these kinds of herbs and spices,” Khan elaborates. “Using these fresh herbs and vegetables and sautéing them in a little bit of oil or butter is fine if that helps you reduce your salt and sugar intake overall.”

Of course, like anything else, it can be possible to overdo it on aromatics, but our taste buds are set up to let us know when we’ve had enough of a good thing. Sage, for example, can add great flavor, but it is extremely strong in bulk. Experimenting with different combinations lets us curate our palates.

“I think it’s possible to overdo in some areas, but I believe in exploration when it comes to food,” Janae-Leoniak says.

Food will still taste good without the associated smell that aromatics bring, but they really act as a base to build on. “The idea is that you can use them not just for developing the overall structure of the dish, but it creates this whole personality to the food,” Janae-Leoniak adds. “They add a layer to the food that is strong and filled with character for your dish.”

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 currently in a graduate program at the University of Pennsylvania, studying social work and nonprofit leadership.
Swimming

By Kiran Ansari
Being a national champion in a sport you love is an incredible feat. Achieving that title as a teenager makes it even more admirable. For around four years, Kamal Nasser was Pakistan’s best swimmer until the rigors of medical school took over. And the rest as they say is history. Or is it?

Even though it has been several years since he swam competitively, Nasser, now a physician in Ann Arbor, Michigan, believes that the rigorous discipline he learned from swimming are lessons he hopes to pass on to his two sons. His interest in swimming and fitness started by seeing his father as a great role model.

“I remember my Dad waking up at 4:00 a.m. to go for a brisk walk or play tennis or squash, and that was something my sister Saira and I both learned from him.”

Starting early and being consistent seem to be the top two contributors to swimming success according to experts and parents alike. Gabriel Rivera, a high school senior from Elgin, Illinois agrees. He always loved the water and began swimming competitively when he was eight years old. He was part of the swim team at his local park district and competed against other clubs and towns for around eight years. Multiply that by five days every school week and nearly every day in the summer and you can tell how much he loves the water. He gives his parents a lot of credit for driving him to swim meets and practices and always being there to cheer him on.

“Swimming is not just great physical exercise,” Rivera said. “It is great for mental health too. If I am ever upset or anxious, I know I can release my feelings into the pool and that is awesome therapy.”

Hafsa Rana, a blogger and entrepreneur from the Chicago area wants to instill these skills in her children and therefore makes it a priority for her six and four-year-olds to take regular swim lessons. She shopped around in her vicinity and found that the Goldfish Swim School in Glen Ellyn was the perfect fit for her family. “Not only do I love the beautiful facility at Goldfish with big changing rooms and a sitting area for parents,” Rana said. “The best part is how the instructor gives me a recap after every 45-minute swim lesson so that parents are apprised of what the kids are learning.”

Rana suggests that parents try out different swim schools in their area as most offer a first free session before making up their mind. They can try to find the best choice for their family, but if their child is still not enjoying it after a few classes, they might want to take a break and reintroduce swimming after a while. Her older son did not enjoy swimming at first, so she decided to give him a break rather than push it. After a year or so she tried again and now he loves the pool. She started her younger son at an earlier age, before he turned three, and finds that he has fewer inhibitions and has shown tremendous progress for his age.

Rana’s boys go for their swim lesson after school, so they have a snack like an apple or banana before swimming. Nasser also recommends a snack or light meal higher in carbohydrates such as a cereal bar, before swimming. That can give you a quick rush of energy. After a good workout in the pool, he encourages a meal high in lean protein within 30-60 minutes of swimming.

Swimming can be fun and great exercise, but this life skill can also equip you with the know how to save your life and the lives of others in the case of an emergency. As we learn in Islam, saving one life is like saving all of humanity. Thus it is definitely a skill worth honing.

[Gabriel Rivera] believes that if you have had a tough day at work or school, a few laps at night followed by a nice shower guarantees a great night’s sleep.

During the summer, Rivera has worked as a lifeguard and knows firsthand that it is a huge responsibility. In fact, lifeguards have to take a test every year before they are hired for the season. “I try not to spend my summer as a lifeguard sitting on a chair. I walk around the pool—sometimes for two hours at a time,” Rivera said. “There have been four instances when I have had to jump into the pool to save a life. Each time it has been a child who has still not mastered swimming and went into the deep end of the pool.”

Soon graduating high school, Rivera sees the benefits of swimming to stay with him forever. Even though he agrees that some people love to swim bright and early, he believes that if you have had a tough day at work or school, a few laps at night followed by a nice shower
guarantees a great night’s sleep. If a child enjoys a sport, any sport, its ripples can be seen in other parts of his life too. Rivera, for instance, took up track and field in high school and plans on continuing that in college.

Swimming is one of the three sports, along with horseback riding and archery that are encouraged in our Islamic tradition. “Not only does swimming provide fantastic cardiovascular activity, it aids in weight loss without added pressure on the back or knees,” Nasser said. “One mile of swimming is equivalent to four miles of walking since you swim against a resistance so you can see results sooner.” He recommends swimming for at least 45 minutes three times a week for it to be effective. One can increase the intensity and duration as time goes on. The bottom line is to push yourself a little so that you go out of your comfort zone and feel a little out of breath, not just like a leisurely splash in the pool.

Nasser said it is hard to compare swimming in a pool to the ocean. “The open ocean is a completely different beast. It is nearly impossible to train competitively in salt water plus the water buoyancy is very different too,” Nasser said. “But as far as pools are concerned, indoor and outdoor are equally good provided you apply a good sunscreen when swimming outdoors.”

Experts recommend using a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 50. When choosing a brand, also look for one that protects from both UVA and UVB rays. Once you have the right sunscreen, it is equally important to re-apply it if you swim outdoors for a longer period of time. It is recommended to apply one ounce of sunscreen every hour you are outdoors. Professional swimmers prefer sunscreen lotion to sprays as lotions can provide more even coverage. They feel “waterproof sunscreen” is an urban myth which makes people believe that they do not have to reapply the lotion. This can lead to burning, skin damage, and worse consequences. In addition to sunscreen, especially if you plan to surf or swim for longer

Swimming is one of the three sports, along with horseback riding and archery that are encouraged in our Islamic tradition.
The IFANCA app is now available for Android and iPhone/iPad. Just search for the Android app in the Google Play Store and the iPhone/iPad app in the Apple App Store using your device.

The IFANCA app will allow you to:

- Read the latest issue of Halal Consumer® magazine
- Access the Halal Consumer® Facebook page
- Read the latest issue of Halal Digest® newsletter
- Contact IFANCA
- Search the certified product database
- Follow IFANCA on Twitter
- Learn more about IFANCA

Go ahead and download the app and send us your feedback.

It is recommended to apply one ounce of sunscreen every hour you are outdoors. Professional swimmers prefer sunscreen lotion to sprays as lotions can provide more even coverage. They feel “waterproof sunscreen” is an urban myth which makes people believe that they do not have to reapply the lotion.

periods outdoors, protective swim clothing is a great addition for increased safety.

Nasser wishes he had the opportunity to represent Pakistan in Olympic-level swimming. But, like Rivera, he enjoys watching the Olympic swimmers on television. They both love analyzing techniques and marveling at their every stroke. They find it amazing how winners can be decided by as little as one-tenth of a second.

They agree that there is no guarantee that your kids will love swimming, but as parents it is our job to at least provide them with the opportunity. Just like sometimes it takes a few patient tries before a child enjoys a new food, it might take a new instructor, time of day, weather, or facility before a child takes to the water.

Some children might excel naturally while others may need a nudge now and then. Still others would rather dribble a basketball or enjoy cross country running.

“The important thing is for them to love some sport, especially in this era of video games and gadgets,” Nasser said. “The actual sport may vary, but if they are enjoying an activity rather than being plopped in front of a screen, you are doing something right and will see the results both in the short and long run.”

KIRAN ANSARI is a writer and entrepreneur in the suburbs of Chicago. To read her previous work, visit www.kiran-ansari.com

It is recommended to apply one ounce of sunscreen every hour you are outdoors. Professional swimmers prefer sunscreen lotion to sprays as lotions can provide more even coverage. They feel “waterproof sunscreen” is an urban myth which makes people believe that they do not have to reapply the lotion.

periods outdoors, protective swim clothing is a great addition for increased safety.

Nasser wishes he had the opportunity to represent Pakistan in Olympic-level swimming. But, like Rivera, he enjoys watching the Olympic swimmers on television. They both love analyzing techniques and marveling at their every stroke. They find it amazing how winners can be decided by as little as one-tenth of a second.

They agree that there is no guarantee that your kids will love swimming, but as parents it is our job to at least provide them with the opportunity. Just like sometimes it takes a few patient tries before a child enjoys a new food, it might take a new instructor, time of day, weather, or facility before a child takes to the water.

Some children might excel naturally while others may need a nudge now and then. Still others would rather dribble a basketball or enjoy cross country running.

“The important thing is for them to love some sport, especially in this era of video games and gadgets,” Nasser said. “The actual sport may vary, but if they are enjoying an activity rather than being plopped in front of a screen, you are doing something right and will see the results both in the short and long run.”

KIRAN ANSARI is a writer and entrepreneur in the suburbs of Chicago. To read her previous work, visit www.kiran-ansari.com
HALAL-CERTIFIED PRODUCT LOCATOR

Not all of the company products are halal-certified. Look for the Crescent-M logo on the product label or verify the certification using the Certified Products listing on www.ifanca.org.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Product Type</th>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Available At</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott</td>
<td>Nutritional Products</td>
<td>Abbott Nutrition</td>
<td>Supermarkets and drugstores throughout the United States and Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infant/Baby Food Products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amara</td>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td>Baqi Inc.</td>
<td>Visit their website: <a href="http://www.amaracosmetics.com">www.amaracosmetics.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bard Valley</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>Bard Valley Natural Delights</td>
<td>Kroger, Publix, Meijer, Walmart, Whole Foods, and various markets throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabot</td>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>Cabot Creamery</td>
<td>Supermarkets throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>Campbell Company of Canada</td>
<td>Supermarkets throughout Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carole's Cheesecake</td>
<td>Bakery Item</td>
<td>Carole's Cheesecake Company Ltd.</td>
<td>Select markets, restaurants, and bakeries throughout Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Biscuits</td>
<td>Bakery Items</td>
<td>English Biscuit Manufacturers (Pvt.) Ltd.</td>
<td>Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States and Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godiva</td>
<td>Candy / Chocolate</td>
<td>Godiva Chocolatier</td>
<td>Company stores, department stores, supermarkets, gift shops, and drugstores throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Bonbon</td>
<td>Candy / Chocolate</td>
<td>Asti Holdings Ltd.</td>
<td>Visit their website: <a href="http://www.goldenbonbon.com">www.goldenbonbon.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J&amp;M Food Products</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>J&amp;M Food Products</td>
<td>Visit their website: <a href="http://www.halalcertified.com">www.halalcertified.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontos</td>
<td>Bakery Items, Bread</td>
<td>Kontos Foods, Inc.</td>
<td>Ethnic (Arab, Indo/Pak) stores and fruit &amp; vegetable markets throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; Quiches</td>
<td>Brownies and Cakes</td>
<td>Love and Quiches Desserts</td>
<td>Visit their website for outlets: <a href="http://www.loveandquiches.com">www.loveandquiches.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>Product Type</td>
<td>Company Name</td>
<td>Available At</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mead Johnson</td>
<td>Infant/Baby Food Products</td>
<td>Mead Johnson Nutritionals</td>
<td>Department stores, supermarkets, and drugstores throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melaleuca</td>
<td>Personal Care Products</td>
<td>Melaleuca, Inc.</td>
<td>Visit their website for distributors: <a href="http://www.melaleuca.com">www.melaleuca.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Own Meals</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>My Own Meals</td>
<td>Visit their website: <a href="http://www.myownmeals.com">www.myownmeals.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Food Products, Sauces &amp; Dressings, Condiments, Dessert Mixes, Spices &amp; Seasonings</td>
<td>National Foods Limited</td>
<td>Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States and Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nestle</td>
<td>Food Products, Beverages / Beverage Concentrates, Dairy Products, Drink Mixes, Dessert Mixes</td>
<td>Nestle Pakistan Ltd.</td>
<td>Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrilite</td>
<td>Nutritional Supplements</td>
<td>Access Business Group, LLC</td>
<td>Visit their website for distributors: <a href="http://www.nutrilite.com">www.nutrilite.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympia</td>
<td>Gyros, Flat Bread</td>
<td>Olympia Food Industries, Inc.</td>
<td>Ethnic (Arab, Indo/Pak) stores and restaurants throughout the United States and Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OneCoffee</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Canterbury Coffee</td>
<td>Supermarkets throughout Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>Product Type</td>
<td>Company Name</td>
<td>Available At</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Valley</td>
<td>Dairy Products</td>
<td>Cropp Cooperative/Organic Valley</td>
<td>Supermarkets throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POM Wonderful</td>
<td>Beverages / Beverage</td>
<td>POM Wonderful, LLC</td>
<td>Supermarkets throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concentrates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruits Processed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saffron Road</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>American Halal Co., Inc.</td>
<td>Target, Whole Foods, Kroger, Publix, HEB, and various markets throughout the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snack Food</td>
<td></td>
<td>Visit their website to locate a store near you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appetizers</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.saffronroadfood.com">www.saffronroadfood.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunrider</td>
<td>Personal Care Products</td>
<td>Sunrider International</td>
<td>Visit their website for distributors:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.sunrider.com">www.sunrider.com</a></td>
</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>
WE MAKE SURE THE FOOD YOU SERVE IS HALAL.

ISLAMIC FOOD AND NUTRITION COUNCIL OF AMERICA:
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.

www.facebook.com/halalconsumer  www.twitter.com/ifanca
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.*
Halal Consumer is a quarterly publication of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA)

www.ifanca.org

IFANCA's registered halal-certification logo is the Crescent-M. IFANCA halal-certified products are authorized to display the Crescent-M logo on the halal-certified product labels. The Crescent-M logo may appear alone or with additional information as shown above. All forms displayed are registered trademarks of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America.