6  Super Powders to the Rescue
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.
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Editor’s Note

Assalaamu alaikum,

We trust those blessed with performing Hajj this year had a rewarding and fulfilling experience and returned home safely and those who missed the blessing this year enjoyed a joyous Eid. Eid Mubarak to all! And Happy New Hijra Year 1441!

We welcome Kontos Executive Chef Demetrios Haralambatos who has graciously consented to provide a series of articles for the magazine. This first article, “Food Handling Basics” reminds us of the importance of sanitation and proper food handling as well as providing pointers on the do’s (and don’ts). Thank you Chef for your contribution. Chef Demetrios and Kontos have been great supporters of IFANCA and halal for many years.

While proper food handling can keep us safe from bacteria, “What’s In A Name: Food Label Laws” discusses the information on food labels and the government mandated changes that are coming.

One of the newer, improved foods available these days are meatless meats! In “The Rise of Plant-Based Meat” we learn about the faux meat products that rival the real thing in appearance and taste. And the bigger names in the category are certified halal by IFANCA!

This issue’s Quranic food is onions and “Onions: Where Sweet Meets Tangy” explores the history, variety, and characteristics of the variety of onions.

With the growing world population, will we be able to insure there is enough food to go around? “Feeding Nine Billion People” looks at agricultural trends and what needs to happen to insure everyone has access to their required daily nutrition needs.

Whether it is the rigors of Hajj or those of daily life, we need to consume sufficient nutrients to get us through the day. “Super Powders to the Rescue” offers an insight into some highly nutritious foods that can help.

In “What’s Your Major Mal-function?” we learn functional training techniques to help us maintain functionality through the demands of pregnancy, after the trauma of surgery, and in the case of suffering a stroke.

Finally, be sure to try out the recipes and share your comments with us via email, Facebook, or Twitter.

Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Roger Othman editor
Assalaamu alaikum,

“...and [that] We made out of water every living thing?...” (Quran 21:30)

Water is essential for life on earth. You might think that since 71% of the surface of our planet is covered with water, we have plenty. However, 96% of that water is in the oceans and less than 3% of all the water is fresh water. Overall, less than 1% of the fresh water is readily accessible and that has to meet the needs of nearly 8 billion people as well as all the other creatures, agriculture, and industry in our expanding ecosystem. Makes you wonder if we should be watering our lawns!

According to the United Nations, over 2 billion people live in countries experiencing high water stress. It is reported over 800 million of our fellow humans do not have access to clean water. Limited access to clean water means poor hygiene, which leads to disease and death.

Agriculture uses 70% of the fresh water, so not wasting food means not wasting water.

Sometimes we may think water comes from a tap or a bottle but millions of people must go out every day to gather water from near or distant sources, and carry it home to drink, cook, and clean. In many cases, children are assigned this task, meaning they are not able to go to school, resulting in poor literacy and less opportunity.

In Chicago, we are fortunate to be on the shores of the Great Lakes, which contain 20% of the world’s fresh surface water and 95% of the United States’ fresh surface water. This great fortune comes with great responsibility to properly manage our water use.

There are many simple, everyday things we can do to conserve water. Don’t run the water while brushing teeth (save 4 gallons a day); fix leaky faucets (10 gallons a day); fix a leaky toilet (60 gallons a day); use a fully loaded, energy efficient dishwasher rather than hand washing (20 gallons a day); and don’t waste water performing wudu (2-6 gallons a day).

We must adopt sustainable practices if we are to fulfill our responsibilities to our home planet!

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry president

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

By Asma Jarad
Have you heard of super powders? No, it’s not a powder that will give you special abilities, but it will help you achieve a nutritious diet rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants promoting a healthy lifestyle. So, although you won’t get the flying powers of Superman or indestructible ability of the Hulk, science says eating a nutritious diet may reduce your risk of chronic health conditions and provide you with other health benefits.

Super powders are dried food blends of grains, fruit, and vegetables. The concentrated blend forms an overall nutrient-dense product that aims to support optimum health in a portable design. Super powders are packed with flavor yet are low in calories, high in vitamins & minerals, and contain anti-inflammatory and antioxidant capacities. Everyone from social media influencers to fitness gurus are promoting super powders for boosting metabolism, improving hair and skin strength, preventing tumor growth, and enhancing memory skills, all the while providing the convenience and instant gratification that people today expect.

Check That Label
One thing to keep in mind when shopping for super powders is to know the difference between organic and conventional. Most conventional super powders are not gluten-free and likely contain additives and fillers used to enhance flavor or texture. Examples of additives and fillers are carrageenan which is used as a thickener and preservative, and artificial food colorings/flavorings/sweeteners which are used to enhance the look and taste. Furthermore, most super powders are fortified with synthetic ingredients and manufactured with a heating process that reduces their nutrient content. On the other hand, organic super powders use certified organic produce which contain more nutrients and are not processed with toxins or pesticides.

Author, classically trained chef, nutritionist, and fitness trainer, Teresa Cutter says there are specific ingredients that should never be in your super powder: artificial sweeteners, artificial flavors, and dextrin & fillers. Cutter, who also holds a certificate in nutrition from Deakin University, goes on to explain to me the reasons these ingredients should not be super powders:
Author, classically trained chef, nutritionist, and fitness trainer, Teresa Cutter says there are specific ingredients that should never be in your super powder: artificial sweeteners, artificial flavors, and dextrin & fillers.

Artificial sweeteners: Some negative side effects can come from ingesting these ingredients, including headaches, migraines, and gastric distress, such as bloating and acid reflux.

Artificial flavors: Food sensitivities to artificial flavors can cause a range of health problems including skin conditions, mood swings, and headaches.

Dextrin & Fillers: These ingredients can raise glycemic load, which may contribute to digestive disturbances. Most are processed with GMO corn and they can also cause gastrointestinal distress in some people.

Let’s be honest, most people don’t eat enough healthy grains, vegetables, and fruits every day. Our lives are hectic, and we don’t always have time to plan and execute healthy meals and snacks. For this reason, super powders come in handy and help fill in the gap with convenience and nutritional value. Super powders are designed to help us reach our daily recommended fruit, grain, and vegetable intake. The labels on super powders indicate they can support the body’s immunity, digestive health, detoxification, energy levels, and more. Super powders that are sourced from organic foods and are made from dried leafy greens, other vegetables, fruits, and herbs with added probiotics have varied nutritional levels, but nonetheless provide a quick and convenient solution as a low calorie, high nutrition addition to our diets. Some ways to add super powders to your daily meal plan include: mixing with almond milk and consuming as a drink, sprinkling on a bowl of popcorn for a sweet/savory flavor, shaking on top of eggs for a peppery kick, using as a topping for oatmeal for added nutrition, blending into your choice of baking recipe to sneakily add some fiber, or mixing with lemon juice and olive oil and drizzling on salad for added flavor. Another option is to consume super powders as a pre-made drink.

When combined with an overall healthy diet and lifestyle, super powders have the potential to prevent chronic diseases such as cancer and high blood pressure. Here are five benefits of super powders:

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When combined with an overall healthy diet and lifestyle, super powders have the potential to prevent chronic diseases such as cancer and high blood pressure. Here are five benefits of super powders:
1. **Weight loss**: when combined with protein, super powders regulate the appetite by increasing satiety.

2. **Strengthening immune function**: the boost in antioxidants from super powders are quickly absorbed by the body to nourish immunity cells and help produce antibodies.

3. **Support digestive health**: super powders are rich in probiotics which promote a balanced gut flora and bowel function.

4. **Energy booster**: super powder drinks provide a nutritious and delicious energy boost before and after a physically arduous day.

5. **Anti-aging properties**: super powders improve hair and skin health by providing hydration and elasticity.

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**If it's too good to be true...**

We’re all familiar with the saying that when it’s too good to be true, it must not be. However, when it comes to super powders, Jamie Hergenrader from Women’s Health Magazine argues that certain superfood powders actually deliver some major benefits with few drawbacks. Hergengrader recommends these 5 super powders:

1. **Moringa**: benefits of this detoxifying nutrient-rich super leaf include reducing pain, improving immunity, protecting the liver, kidneys, and heart.

2. **Ashwagandha**: also known as Indian Ginseng, this super powder is thought to help reduce stress and aid in brain function by preventing symptoms of Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases.

3. **Maca**: research suggests that this malt-flavored energizing super powder helps promote sound sleep.

4. **Curcumin**: this super powder is well known as a powerful anti-inflammatory antioxidant that reduces symptoms of arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease.

5. **Schisandra**: in one study, mice that were given this super powder regularly showed enhanced skills for navigation.

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Despite all the hype surrounding super powders, there are some which should be avoided. Nootropics, for example, claim to heighten cognition and imagination when in fact they do little more than a placebo pill or caffeine boost. Medical professionals also caution patients from relying on super powders because they may interfere with other medications. For example, green powders are generally high in vitamin K which interacts with medications such as blood thinners. Also, according to registered dietitian Marsha McCulloch, MS, RD, super powders “can contain harmful contaminants, such as lead and other heavy metals. One lab analysis found contaminants in four of the thirteen products tested.” McCulloch warns that children, pregnant or breastfeeding women, and patients taking medications should not use super powders as they often contain herbs and concentrated extracts that may pose risks or interactions.

Whether we like it or not, food is evolving before our eyes. These days, food that is ready on the go is in high demand. This is where super powders fit in. Research has not confirmed that super powders are a replacement for whole vegetables. The best way to achieve a nutritionally balanced diet is still the same as it was for our ancestors: eat a wide variety of whole vegetables and other natural products which requires you to chew and allows your body to absorb the natural water, fiber, and flavor of whole foods. Although the name of super powders alludes to them being an excellent source for nutrition, most experts will agree that there is no one type of food that can replace a well-balanced diet. In fact, it is unhealthy to focus on one type of food while excluding others since our bodies require a variety of vitamins and minerals to properly function.

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**ASMA JARAD** works for the national non-profit, ICNA Relief, promoting the Islamic concept that charity begins at home. Her writing is published across multiple forums and ranges in topic from health and food trends, to Islam in America.
Sanitation and Food Handling
We must begin by understanding . . . there is an invisible menace to your food that could be lingering in your home. This menace cannot be seen—you cannot smell it—or feel it. This menace is called bacteria. Bacteria can already be invading; food products, kitchen surfaces, knives, and other utensils. Bacteria can make you very sick. By controlling bacteria, you will reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

You have the capability to control this menace from contaminating your food, thereby reducing your risk of foodborne illness. This can be accomplished by following a few basic rules of Sanitation and Food Handling:

- **Sanitize/Clean**
- **Temperature Control**
- **Separate/Store**
- **Prepare/Cook**
- **Chill**

**Sanitize/Clean**
Bacteria spreads throughout your kitchen and onto your hands; onto cutting boards, utensils, counter tops, and ultimately your food. Wash surfaces and hands often.

- Wash hands with warm water and soap, for at least 20-seconds, before and after handling food, changing diapers, and after using the bathroom. A simple way, to make certain you have washed your hands for the proper amount of time is to sing ‘Happy Birthday’ to yourself.
- Wash and scrub cutting boards, counter tops, utensils, and dishes, using hot soapy water, after preparing each type of food item, as well as before you proceed to the next food item (see **Separate/Store** below.)
- Fresh fruits and vegetables, including those with skins and rinds, should be rinsed under running tap water, even though the outer surfaces are not eaten.
- Firm-skin fruits and vegetables should be rubbed under running tap water, or scrubbed with a clean vegetable brush, as they are rinsed under running water.
- Clean up kitchen surfaces (counter tops, bowls, dishes) with paper towels. When using cloth kitchen towels, be sure to wash them often, using the hot water cycle of your washing machine, and do not wash them in your dish washer.

**Temperature Control**
By being aware of temperature, you have the power over bacteria.
After cooking to the proper temperature and serving your family and guests, any leftover food will begin to allow bacteria to grow as it cools below 140°F. The longer food stays out on your counter and the temperature gradually decreases, the faster bacteria will grow.

It is imperative that you reduce the temperature of the food to below 40°F in less than one hour.

Separate/Store
Bacteria spreads by cross-contamination and this takes place where you purchase your food, on your kitchen surfaces, as you prepare food, and in your refrigerator. Improper handling of raw meat, poultry, fish, and eggs, can create an inviting atmosphere for cross-contamination, causing harmful bacteria that could spread to food and throughout the kitchen.

• Separate raw meat, poultry, fish, and eggs from other foods; in your grocery shopping cart, grocery bags, as well as in your refrigerator.
• Caution should be taken when storing fresh groceries once you have arrived home. Do not place vegetables on the same shelf or drawer, or below raw meat and fish, as you do not want the meat and fish or their juices to come in contact with the vegetables.
• Do not store meat and poultry in the original packages; repack them in ‘air-tight containers’ or zipper-type bags.
• Recommended refrigerated storage temperatures are:
  - Fruits and vegetables at 36-38°F.
  - Meat, poultry, and fish at 33-36°F.
  - Frozen food at 0-15°F.
  - Beverages at 53°F.
• Never, never place cooked food on a cutting board or on a plate, which previously held raw meat, poultry, fish, or eggs without having thoroughly cleaned the board or plate first.
• Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and fish. Avoid using older wooden cutting boards; they may look good, but frequent use will result in creating splitters, and inadequate cleaning and drying, will cause cross-contamination. Many families will use different colored cutting boards; green for vegetables, and red for meat and fish, etc. Caution should be taken using cutting boards made of glass as they can chip, crack, and break, allowing glass fragments to be transferred to your food.

Prepare/Cook
Food will safely be cooked when it has reached an internal temperature, high enough to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses. Use an ‘instant read’ food thermometer (available at most supermarkets) to measure the internal temperature of cooked foods.

By being aware of temperature, you have the power over bacteria.

After cooking to the proper temperature and serving your family and guests, any leftover food will begin to allow bacteria to grow as it cools below 140°F. The longer food stays out on your counter and the temperature gradually decreases, the faster bacteria will grow.
Use a thermometer which measures the internal temperature of cooked food products to assure yourself that the food has been cooked to a safe internal temperature. Always insert the thermometer into the middle of the food, taking care not to go all the way through, as you will be reading the temperature of the cooking vessel rather than the food item. Proper cooking temperatures are:

- Roasts and steaks should be cooked to a minimum of 145°F.
- Poultry (chicken, capons, turkey, etc.) should reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F. (Place the temperature at the innermost part of the thigh and wing, as well as, at the thickest part of the breast.)
- Ground meat (burgers, meatballs, etc.) should be cooked to a minimum temperature of 160°F. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), eating undercooked ground beef provides a higher risk of illness. The color of the ground meat is not a reliable factor of doneness.
- Eggs should be cooked to a minimum temperature of 160°F or until the yolk and white are firm, and not runny. Avoid using recipes where eggs are only partially cooked or remain raw.
- Fish should be cooked to a minimum temperature of 145°F. The flesh should be opaque and separate easily from the skin or flakes, when using a fork.

Once roasts, steaks, and poultry have reached the proper temperature, and have been removed from the heat, allow to sit for about three minutes before serving. This will allow the juices within to congeal; otherwise when you slice into them, all the juices will ‘run out’.

Make sure there are no cold spots in food (this is where bacteria may survive), particularly when cooking in a microwave oven. For the best microwave results: cover the food, and stir and rotate for even cooking. If your microwave does not have a turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice, during the cooking process.

Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a boil when reheating.

Reheat other leftovers thoroughly to 165°F.

According to the CDC, eating undercooked ground beef and eggs, provides a higher risk of illness.

**Chill**

Refrigerate foods quickly, because cold temperatures reduce the growth of harmful bacteria. Do not over-stuff the refrigerator.

- Cold air must circulate, to help keep food safe.
- The most effective way to reduce the risk of foodborne illness is to keep the refrigerator temperature at a constant 39°F or below. Use a refrigerator thermometer, to verify your refrigerator temperature.

**Observations:**

Many of us have been to public restrooms and have used the ‘hand dryers’ that blow forced-air to dry your hands. I keep away from them!!!!! Why you may ask? Stop and think: the air they are blowing water (and soap . . . and bacteria . . . from the person who dried their hands before you).

In a recent trip to Chicago, I was in a restaurant and I smiled as I left the restroom. There was a sign that read: ALWAYS, grab a hand towel and open the door with the hand towel. How many times have you been to a restroom and observed people leaving WITHOUT washing their hands? Food Safety is in your hands. Good Cooking . . . Good Eating . . .

**CHEF DEMETRIOS HARALAMBATOS** has been the Corporate Executive Chef at Kontos Foods for over 23 years. He is a classically trained chef, historian, food writer, lecturer, and culinary judge. He has earned the title Archimagiros and is a member and volunteer with numerous organizations. Chef Demetrios has been a demonstrator at the I Heart Halal™ Festival the past two years.

**Editors’ note:** When asked to contribute to Halal Consumer© magazine he stated: “I was honored when asked to join the editorial staff of Halal Consumer, to prepare food related articles for upcoming issues. After discussing with several individuals of the Halal Consumer staff, it is planned that this will not be a one-time contribution, but a continuing series.”
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An Initiative of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA®)
America to Zanzibar: Muslim Cultures Near and Far was developed by the Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) in NYC
THE RISE OF PLANT-BASED MEAT

By Greg Carr
A meat which you don’t have to worry about the method of slaughtering, plant-based meat is a fast-growing alternative to conventional meat. It is made from vegetarian ingredients, but is designed to mimic the flavor, texture, and appearance of regular meat.

Veggie burgers have been around for a long time, but the products on the market today are different. Veggie burgers have a vegetable flavor and are usually marketed for vegetarians. Two of the major entrants in this market are Impossible™ Foods and Beyond Meat. Impossible™ Foods products are halal certified by IFANCA. Both company products are designed to taste like meat and are marketed to both vegetarians and meat consumers. Imitation meat, such as tofu in China (“the meat without bones”), has been around for centuries, but such uncannily realistic plant-based meat products are new. In addition to mimicking the appearance of meat, they contain the same grams of protein and exhibit the same cooking characteristics. The Impossible™ Burger, for example, is even pink in the middle and appears to bleed. This impressive feat was achieved with heme produced sustainably from yeast. This also has the added benefit of being nature’s most readily absorbed form of iron, which is the most common nutrient deficiency in the world.

The proteins in the Impossible Foods burger come from soy while those in the Beyond Meat burger come from peas. Soy and peas are some of the best plant sources of protein and are complete proteins. By comparison, the protein digestibility-corrected amino acid score (PDCAAS), the current standard for measuring protein quality, is 0.92 for beef protein, 1.0 for soy protein, and 0.89 for pea protein. The maximum PDCAAS score is 1.0, indicating that it provides 100% or more of the essential amino acids. Plant-based chicken, such as the Beyond Grilled Chicken Strips, are also made from similar ingredients as the beef.

Plant-based seafood is also up-and-coming. They are made from a variety of plant ingredients, such as peas, soy, chickpeas, tomatoes, lentils, algae oil (for omega-3s), rice flakes, konjac powder (a gelatin substitute), seaweed, turmeric, and ginger. Legumes are a powerhouse for nutrition, providing fiber, protein, vitamins, and minerals. Algae oil is high in the omega-3 DHA, which fish absorb when they eat microalgae. This source comes straight from the bottom of the food chain, skipping common fish contaminants like mercury, a major problem with albacore tuna, swordfish, and king mackerel. Algae oil lacks odor as well, so we can safely crack open our faux seafood around co-workers (ahem, this was a major issue of mine years ago). The production of algae is easier, gives higher yields, and is more environmentally friendly than fish oil.

I asked Matt Ball from the Good Food Institute, a nonprofit for meat substitutes, about the goals behind these new plant-based meat movements, and he replied: “I will make the point that The Good Food Institute is not about getting people to reduce their meat consumption. Rather, we are working to change how meat is produced. Given that per capita meat consumption in the United States and globally is as high as it has ever been, we want to have the meat produced in ways that are healthy, humane, and sustainable.” Rather than trying to convince consumers that they should think more about the environmental impact of meat, these pioneers are creating sustainable meat from plants.

Ethics and Environmental Concerns
Ethics and environmental concerns are a big driving factor behind these shifts in consumer behavior. We know that the industrial model of raising livestock contributes to climate change, antibiotic resistance, pollution, uses a lot of land for livestock and feed, and consumes billions of dollars a year in subsidies to grow feed. Pollutants from industrial farms even create algal blooms that kill off or disperse marine life and the crops fed to industrially raised animals worldwide could feed an extra 4 billion people. Plant-based meats are a potential remedy to these issues.

An analysis of the Impossible Burger found it has an 89% reduced carbon footprint than beef, uses 87% less water, 96% less land, and reduces water contamination by 92%. It may seem that greenhouse gases from cattle is insignificant, but livestock account for 15% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.

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based meats are a potential remedy, but at the moment they’re too small to make a significant impact until they scale up—they hold less than 1% of the market share in competition with the meat industry. But they’re fresh on the market and growing rapidly.

A major factor in meat consumption is price. Between 2005 and 2014, meat consumption in America dropped, due to higher prices attributed to feed costs, draught, and disease. This drove down supply and caused prices to rise. However, by 2015, these issues resolved and prices dropped, causing meat consumption to bounce back.

Role in Different Diets
These plant-based meats can play different roles for different folks. For someone on a standard American diet, simply switching out regular meat for the occasional plant-based option can be an easy step towards sustainability and reducing disease risk factors. If we consider that eating red meat may increase the risk of getting cancer, then eating plant-based meat may be a healthier option. Just replacing one of every three meaty meals with a plant-based alternative can be your contribution to reducing America’s meat consumption and potentially improve your health. Eliminating red meat will also eliminate a risk factor for colon cancer.

A 2016 study involving over 131,000 participants in a three decade cohort reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association, found that replacing just 3% of calories from animal protein (meat and eggs) with plant protein was associated with 12-34% lower mortality from all causes. The highest effect was observed when processed meat was replaced. Small changes can have a profound impact.

What about vegetarians? Vegetarians are typically more health-conscious. Their protein is mostly from whole foods like beans, nuts, lentils, edamame, and quinoa. They have a lower disease risk for many common ailments, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes. These new plant-based meats can offer extra variety and plant-based heme in the Impossible Burger can serve as an excellent source of iron in a diet where iron requirements can be difficult to meet.

...replacing just 3% of calories from animal protein (meat and eggs) with plant protein was associated with 12-34% lower mortality from all causes.
### Similarities and Differences

Nutritionally, the macronutrients in plant-based meat are intended to be similar to those in regular beef. The main differences are that the fat in plant-based meat comes from coconut and sunflower oil, the sodium content is higher, they contain some fiber, and the shelf life is longer. The Impossible Burger has higher potassium, vitamin, and mineral content.

Plant-based meats come in many forms, including burgers, ground beef, chicken, and even seafood.

### Eating Experience

I perused consumer reviews for the Beyond Burger and found mostly positive experiences, with 87% of reviewers recommending it. Price, however, seems to be a major factor in their potential to further displace meat as they are often more expensive or equally priced.

I visited a restaurant to give the burgers a spin. The waitress said they are very popular. I found the Impossible Burger to be moist (unlike many veggie burgers) and it tasted almost exactly like beef, but it had a slightly different aftertaste and the texture was a tad different. However, as a whole, the burger was excellent. The veggie burger I tried had a great smell, but it was excessively salty (1060 mg of sodium), a bit dry, and didn’t taste as good as the Impossible Burger. I asked a nearby diner who also ordered the Impossible Burger and she said she ordered it because she is vegetarian and tired of the old veggie patties.

### Where to Find

You can find Beyond Meat products at popular grocery stores and online, and the Impossible Burger at over 5,000 restaurants. The easiest way to find them locally is to search their websites for a location near you.

Plant-based meat has grown five times faster than the food industry as a whole. Retail sales are growing faster than regular meat. Despite the growth, it is still a tiny dent in the massive meat industry as a whole, though the future may be promising. With Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat raising millions of dollars to scale up their operations and boost output, we may see lower prices, fewer shortages, and wider availability. As competitors arrive on the scene, recipes develop, and prices undercut real meat, we may see truly significant market changes, Insha’Allah. This can result in a more sustainable food supply and a healthier population.

And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily (Quran 25:63). Perhaps reducing our carbon footprint via taming our meat consumption is one way to implement this ayah in our lives, as Shaikh Hamza Yusuf suggests.

GREG CARR is a dietitian and NASM personal trainer in Texas. You can find him at ZaytunNutrition.com.

### Nutritional Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Impossible Burger, 4oz</th>
<th>Beyond Meat Burger, 4oz</th>
<th>Beef Burger, 4oz</th>
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<td>4.2mg (25% DV)</td>
<td>2.2mg (12% DV)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Onions: Where Sweet Meets Tangy

Whether raw or sautéed, pickled or fried, onions always bring the unique taste of sweet and tangy to every meal. Known for their zesty flavor and pungent scent, they release chemicals that can irritate our eyes when chopped. Despite the tears, it doesn’t stop us from adding them to our favorite dishes. This delicious vegetable is packed with nutrients and brings bold flavor to salads, soups, meat, and seafood dishes.

By Kelly Crosby
he geographic origin of the onion is unknown due to its ancestor plant, the wild onion, being extinct. However, its use and cultivation go as far back as the Bronze Age of civilization. Ancient records exist of their cultivation in Western and Eastern civilizations, as far back as 5000 BCE. Onions were especially valued for their flavor, long shelf, and use in herbal and traditional medicine. Known as the bulb onion or common onion, it has a papery skin covering a shiny bulb with a notable strong smell.

The more well-known variety of onions come in three basic colors: yellow, red, and white. Yellow onions, or brown onions, referred to as red in some European countries, have a strong flavor due to the high sulfur content. They also have quercetin, a bitter flavored flavanol used as an ingredient in beverages and foods. About 90% of the onions grown in the United States are yellow onions. They are used to make French onion soup, sautéed dishes, and shish kebabs. When caramelized, they turn dark brown, giving a savory flavor.

Red onions, known as purple onions in Europe, are brightly colored with red-purplish skin and white flesh. Generally eaten raw or lightly cooked, red onions are often used to garnish salads. Their reddish skins add a pop of color and sharp taste to a sea of leafy green vegetables. They have a mild to sweet flavor and are higher in fiber and flavonoids when compared to yellow and white onions.

White onions have a sweet and mild taste and are considered a staple food in Mexican cuisine. They are golden brown when sautéed. Small white onions, known as boiler onions, are used in soups, stews, casseroles, and salads. There is also a certain type of white onion known as a sweet onion. Its low sulfur and high-water content make it less smelly and milder than other onions. Plus, you won’t cry when you cut them!

There are other types of vegetables that belong to the onion family, such as leeks, chives, shallots, and spring onions. Because they have long, thin green shoots, most people don’t associate them with bulb-shaped onions. Green onion, or scallions, also belong to this family. Processed forms of onions are available such as onion powder and dried minced onions. These can be a great substitute for when there’s no time for cutting. Onion salt, a mixture of salt and ground onion powder, is also a quick way to add flavor to any meat or vegetable dish.

Onions are mentioned in the Quran as one of the many delicious vegetables requested by the Children of Israel. “And [recall] when you said, “O Moses, we can never endure one [kind of] food. So call upon your Lord to bring forth for us from the earth its green herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions…” (Quran 2:61)

Want to know how to avoid “onion eyes?” Cutting onions in a small pool of water can help keep the gases from contacting your eyes.

Onions are tasty, but they cause smelly breath, which can be bothersome to your fellow worshippers at the mosque. Therefore, the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]), encourages us to avoid attending the mosque after eating onions. Of course, some simple dental hygiene can combat this problem. Some toothpaste and mouthwash go a long way! Narrated Mu‘awiyah ibn Qurrah: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) forbade these two plants (i.e. garlic and onions), and he said: He who eats them should not come near our mosque. If it is necessary to eat them, make them dead by cooking, that is, onions and garlic.—Sunan Abi Dawud, Book 27, Hadith 3818. Cooking to death, a phrase still used in culinary culture, means cooking them for a long period of time. Your friends, family, and your fellow worshippers at the mosque will appreciate it.

Onions have many health benefits. One medium-sized onion has 44 calories. “Onions are super-healthy,” says Victoria Jarzabkowski, a nutritionist with the Fitness Institute of Texas at the University of Texas at Austin. “They are excellent sources of vitamin C, sulfuric compounds, flavonoids, and phytochemicals.” Vitamin C helps regulate our immunity, tissue repair, and iron absorption. Vitamin C is also an antioxidant, a compound that helps prevent damage caused by free radicals or harmful molecules. They also contain Vitamin B, including folate (B9) and pyridoxine (B6), and potassium. Vitamin B promotes metabolism, red blood cell production, and nerve function. Potassium is good for cardiovascular health, bone strength, and muscle strength.

Want to know how to avoid “onion eyes?” Cutting onions in a small pool of water can help keep the gases from contacting your eyes. Cutting the onion near running water, using a fan, or opening a window for a fresh source of air also helps. Refrigerating the onions before use reduces the enzyme reaction rate. Also, the more one exposes themselves to cutting onions, the less tears there will be. 😆

KELLY IZDIHAR CROSBY is an artist and editorial assistant living in Atlanta, GA.
Dark Cocoa Powder and Cacao Nibs Superfood Powder Smoothie

By: YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RD, LD

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

1 cup coconut milk
1 medium banana, frozen
2 tablespoons raw dark cocoa powder and cacao nibs
2 tablespoons peanut butter
1 dash of cinnamon
1 cup of ice

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine ingredients in blender.
2. Blend until smooth and creamy.


Palestinian Msakhan Rolls

By: Minar Shehadah

Servings: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound halal chicken breast
- 4-5 cups water or broth
- 1 package flour tortillas
- 3-4 large onions
- ¾ cup olive oil, extra for brushing
- 2 tablespoons sumac seasoning
- salt
- pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. In a pot over medium-high heat, add the chicken breast. Pour water or broth over the chicken and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and let it simmer until the chicken is cooked through, about 20-30 minutes depending on the thickness of the chicken.

2. Remove the chicken from the pot and let it rest until slightly cooled. Shred the chicken breast with a fork and set aside.

3. Peel the onions and slice them (diced or crescent shape). Sauté the onions in a pan with 1 tablespoon of olive oil until softened and translucent in color. Add sumac, salt, pepper and the remainder of the olive oil and mix together.

4. Remove from heat and combine the shredded chicken with the onion mixture.

5. Preheat oven to 400°F and line a baking sheet with parchment. Set aside.

6. On a clean surface, lay a tortilla and add two tablespoons of the onion and chicken mixture. Roll the tortilla and place it on the lined baking sheet. Repeat with remainder of filling and tortillas.

7. Place the Msakhan Rolls in the oven and bake until the tortillas are slightly brown.

8. Remove from the oven and brush the tops with olive oil. Serve immediately.

©
Pea Protein Superfood Powder Smoothie

By: YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RD, LD

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup cashew milk
- 1 cup spinach, fresh
- 1 medium banana, frozen
- ½ cup strawberries, frozen
- ¼ cup blueberries, frozen
- 1 scoop pea protein powder
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla bean powder
- 1 Natural Delight Medjool date for extra sweetness
- 1 cup ice

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine ingredients in blender.
2. Blend until smooth and creamy.
Plant-Based Chickpea Omelet

By: YaQutullah Ibraheem Muhammad MS, RD, LD

Servings: 1

INGREDIENTS

Chickpea Batter
¾ cup chickpea flour (gram flour)
¾ cup unsweetened non-dairy milk
2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
2 teaspoons nutritional yeast
¼ teaspoon turmeric powder
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon onion powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
2 tablespoons Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
Himalayan Pink salt to taste
1 lime, sliced into wedges

Stuffing Mix
¼ red onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves minced
¼ cup tomatoes, chopped
¼ cup broccoli florets, chopped
1 tablespoon cilantro, chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. In a measuring cup, whisk together the chickpea batter. The batter should have the consistency of pancake batter, easy to pour. Set aside.

2. In a heated non-stick skillet, sauté the red onion and garlic until lightly browned. Then add broccoli to soften. Remove and set aside.

3. Add olive oil and pour half of the batter into the heated skillet. Add the garlic, onions, broccoli, and tomatoes to one side of the batter, until batter bubbles and firms along the edges (about 2 minutes cooking time).

4. When ready, gently fold over the other side to cook another minute. Cover with a lid, turn off the stove, and allow to steam for 5 minutes.

5. Garnish with cilantro, sliced avocado and lime wedges. Salt and pepper to taste. You may also use other plant-based flours such as almond, oat, rice, cassava, or banana. 
A CLOSER LOOK
AT LABELS

What’s in a Name: Food Label Laws?
By Kelly Izdihar Crosby
Food product labels empower us to make informed choices about our food consumption and health. Reading labels allows us to determine if a product is genetically modified, organic, or low calorie. Whether you’re an avid label reader or barely notice it, food labels are the result of laws that were created for our protection. Some find food labels daunting, even confusing, in terms of understanding the nutritional content and ingredients. They are guides to help us tailor our diets to our own specific needs and they also have the potential to save our lives. For someone with an allergy, or someone looking to limit sugar or salt intake, reading the label could be the difference between health and illness.

Until the 1960s, there was very little information on food labels to identify the nutritional content. At that time, most labels only described the number of calories and sodium in a product. Meals were made at home so there was little demand for information. However, with the introduction and popularity of processed foods, consumers requested more information. In response, the recommendation of the 1969 White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health was that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should consider developing a system for identifying the nutritional qualities of food. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) monitors most of our meat, poultry, dairy, and eggs while the FDA monitors all the other food products. There are a lot of similar and differing regulations between both government agencies, making it somewhat confusing as to who is regulating what food product at any given time. But the FDA is responsible for regulating 80% of our food supply, including including all processed and packaged foods.

Food Labels Usually Contain Five Elements

1. The statement of identity tells the consumer what the product is.
2. The product’s net weight is usually listed on the bottom of the product or the label.
3. The manufacturer’s address is also there for consumers to contact for inquiries.
4. The nutrition label, which is divided into three parts: serving size, nutrients, and vitamins and minerals. The serving size can tell the consumer just how many calories or how much cholesterol is in that specific serving size. Nutrition facts label should include five core nutrients such as the calories, total fat, sodium, total carbohydrates, and protein. The vitamin and mineral contents are usually placed under the nutrition facts. Some examples include the percentage of iron, calcium, vitamin C, and vitamin A.
5. The ingredient list, which may include easily recognized items like salt, sugar, and whole grain rice or scientific names for common food ingredients that may not be so easy to recognize. The more processed the food, the more complex the ingredient list. For example, ascorbic acid, riboflavin, maltodextrin, and calcium carbonate are found on labels of popular food products. Ascorbic acid is another name for vitamin C. Riboflavin is vitamin B2. Maltodextrin is a white, starchy powder added into many foods to improve their flavor, thickness, or shelf life.

According to the FDA, there are two main reasons for manufacturers to have proper food labeling. One, is to accurately describe their product to consumers and two, is to avoid facing any penalties or sanctions for not meeting the FDA standards which could lead to product removal from shelves. Also, the FDA is “responsible for assuring that foods sold in the United States are safe, wholesome, and properly labeled. This applies to foods produced domestically, as well as foods from foreign countries. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938 (FD&C Act) and the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act (FPLA) of 1967 are the federal laws governing food products under FDA’s jurisdiction.” The FD&C Act oversees the safety of food, medicine, medical devices, and cosmetics. The FPLA directs the Federal Trade Commission and the FDA to issue regulations requiring that all “consumer commodities” be labeled to disclose net contents, identity of commodity, and name and place of business of the product’s manufacturer, packer, or distributor.

The more processed the food, the more complex the ingredient list...

Ascorbic acid is another name for vitamin C. Riboflavin is vitamin B2. Maltodextrin is a white, starchy powder added into many foods to improve their flavor, thickness, or shelf life.

According to the FDA, there are two main reasons for manufacturers to have proper food labeling.
Dietary supplements also have similar requirements for labelling by the FDA. The statement of identity describes whether the supplement is a vitamin, a mineral, an herb or a botanical, an amino acid, or a dietary substance. Other requirements are listing the net quantity of contents statement or the amount of the dietary supplement, the nutrition labeling, the ingredient list, and the name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor.

The USDA regulates most labels we see on meat and poultry packaging. Their labels are also like the labels used by the FDA. The USDA also regulates the labelling of a product to describe if it is chemical free, free range or roaming, halal or zabiha halal, kosher, no hormones, no antibiotics, or organic. Most of the regulation of non-GMO foods are conducted by the USDA, but it usually applies to meat and poultry. On their website, the USDA advises manufacturers, “Overall, if you make a product and want to claim that it or its ingredients are organic, your final product probably needs to be certified. If you are not certified, you must not make any organic claim on the principal display panel or use the USDA organic seal anywhere on the package. You may only, on the information panel, identify the certified organic ingredients as organic and the percentage of organic ingredients.”

But what about food labels that tout they are vegan or vegetarian? Can you trust the label? Currently, there is no regulation by the FDA or USDA on the use of the label vegan or vegetarian. Food manufacturers may state on their product labels that a food is “vegetarian” to indicate that no meat is included, or “vegan” to indicate the absence of any animal product in the ingredients. Vegan labelling also means no honey or other products derived from insects. There are non-government groups, or independent certification companies that provide these certifications, but their policies vary widely in terms of ingredient verification, on-site inspections, and products permitted to be included. Because there is no standardization or regulation for certifying vegan and vegetarian products, care should be taken in determining the value of a symbol indicating the product to be vegan or vegetarian.

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Currently, there are 64 countries that have laws requiring manufacturers to disclose genetically engineered ingredients in their products. Three countries, Zambia, Serbia, and Benin have banned GMO foods and their cultivation. Many other countries, including the United States and Canada do not require manufacturers to have GMO food labelling. If you see a non-meat or poultry product with a GMO label, know that the manufacturer has volunteered to offer that information. However, the non-GMO project, is an independent non-profit organization with a verification program. Look for the non-GMO project label and check out their website, https://www.nongmoproject.org/ for a list of non-GMO foods and retailers.

The FDA issued new rules on labeling that will come into effect on January 1, 2020. These modify the Nutrition Facts label to more prominently display the calories and the amount of added sugar per serving. More information is available on the FDA website.

KELLY IZDIHAR CROSBY is an artist and editorial assistant living in Atlanta, GA.
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FEATURES

Are you ready to share the planet with nine billion people? Well you better make room because the Global Hunger Index has reported that in ten years we will reach eight billion and in thirty years we will hit nine billion. Is our food production sustainable? We’ve all heard the term sustainability, in grocery stores, in the news, in political debates, and in tenth grade biology class. So what is food sustainability? Food sustainability means to avoid depleting our food production resources so they can feed the growing global population while employing the best ecological, economic, and social practices without interfering with the environment. I know what you’re thinking; we have already failed. Hope is a part of our faith so let’s read further.

How do we secure food for a growing planet? We do this by understanding the factors affecting food sustainability: ecology, economy, and society. Ecology is the obvious one. We know that soil and air quality affect farming. A main ecological factor is climate. The climate is changing. Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns make farming more challenging. Technologically advanced nations are combating this by using greenhouses, complex fertilizers, and advanced irrigation methods. However, regions without resources are struggling with their crops. According to Farhana Khan, a chemical engineer, “the increase in chemical usage over the years such as pesticides, plastics, gasoline, lead, and chemical fertilizers has enabled them to seep into and negatively affect the quality of the soil. The increase in hydrochloric and sulfuric acids in the soil results in soil compacting. This prevents air circulation and drainage, thus making it less fertile.”

The economy plays a big part in food sustainability. As countries become wealthier, the consumption, production, and acquisition of food increase. Wealthy countries have the financial resources to create fertile farming with equipment and technology. Whatever they do not...
produce, they have the money to import from other nations. However, wealthy countries also waste food because of inadequate food production systems. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), we do have enough food in the world to sustain our current population. Their research shows that “global agriculture produces 17% more calories per person today than 30 years ago.” We can imagine the obvious economic conditions and lifestyle that affect food security in nations that are still developing or have limited financial means. I know what you’re thinking; why can’t wealthy nations share excess food and technology with poor nations? We need to change the global mindset from focusing on donations and aid to focusing on human rights and dignity.

The UN and other think tanks develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s). These SDG’s need to eliminate discrimination and embrace equality. Marginalized groups such as women, minorities, migrants, elderly, and indigenous people need to be included in sustainability goals. Excluded groups need a place at the table...literally and figuratively. According to the FAO, women produce the most food, distribute the most food, and cook the most food, yet are the most poor globally because they are not part of the SDG framework. Poverty prevents the production, purchase, and consumption of food which leads to a vicious cycle. The “father of microfinance”, Muhammad Yunus, thought about this same dilemma. His approach to including marginalized communities into the framework has sprouted the term “microloan”. When low income farmers borrow money from conventional creditors to buy farming equipment and seeds for their small farms they are unable to sell their crops at a price that can repay the loans, therefore causing them to incur large debts. This is a huge dilemma in developing nations like India, Bangladesh, and parts of Africa. So how do we break this cycle? Microloans.

In his book, Banker To The Poor: Micro-lending and the Battle Against World Poverty, Yunus discusses how the economy of poverty stricken villages can be improved by lending small amounts of money to people, specifically female farmers and entrepreneurs. He noticed there was land but the villagers were not farming the land. He initially took it upon himself to loan small amounts of money (many ranging less than $30) to get the villagers their much needed start. As his idea grew, he included more individuals to join the cause. There were no “banks” or middlemen or high interest rates. Also the reason why Yunus decided to loan the money instead of donating it was to teach the poor about sustainability. He wanted to create a system where these same villagers could one day offer microloans to others, thus creating a sustainable economy in villages. Social entrepreneurship and the concepts of social economics are vital considerations when investing because food sustainability brings economic growth and economic growth is sustainable if all nations have the ability to produce, sell, and consume food. So the question is not “do we have enough food?” The question is “do we have equity in design?”

Society greatly affects food sustainability. Although we have discussed ecology and the economy, we could probably put most of the factors under the “society” category. Restaurants are advertising “in season, locally grown” foods. Foods that are “in season” refer to being produced in the natural production season, thereby minimizing the environmental cost and maximizing a consistent supply of fresh produce. Conflict and war, deforestation, and certain manufacturing practices have affected sustainability by cutting off food supplies, destroying crops, ruining soil, polluting water sources, and poisoning marine life.

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So the question is not “do we have enough food?” The question is “do we have equity in design?”

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We can have a positive impact on food sustainability if we prioritize it on a local, national, and global level. There are non-governmental organizations working to improve food sustainability and security that can and should be supported. These include the UN, OxFam, Islamic Relief, Feeding America, and many smaller organizations. The Green Revolution started circa WWII to improve agricultural yields in Mexico and eventually crossed oceans over to India and Pakistan in order to help produce high yielding grains resistant to insects and diseases. The Blue Revolution refers to using food sources from the oceans and other bodies of water to provide nutrition, ideally keeping in line with not harming the habitats of the sea creatures. Greenhouses can be used in extreme weather to grow crops in climate controlled environments. Irrigation systems can help farmers combat low levels of rainfall by bringing in water from wells, springs, rivers, or lakes. Remember doing science experiments in middle school using hydroponics and aeroponics? These techniques can be used on a larger scale. Hydroponics uses porous materials to grow plants without soil and aeroponics is when plants are suspended in the air and their roots are misted with water and nutrients. Biotechnology has helped by producing disease resistant crops and developing substitutes for resource intensive items like animal derived rennet used to make cheese. We do need to be responsible in our use of technology to avoid detrimental long term impact on food supplies.
So what does all this cost and who is picking up the bill? This gets tricky because nobody wants to lose money or comfort because they don’t think it’s their problem. That’s why we need to change the mindset when making strategic plans regarding food production, food distribution, and food maintenance. We have to redesign the United Nations’ SDG’s to include all communities. We need to restructure the goals and the framework while losing the hero and savior complex. The question now is: how do we make society understand that ensuring food sustainability for everyone while keeping the environment intact for all is not a choice, rather, it is an accountability and a human rights issue? Governments need to focus on these important matters and we need to do our part by holding elected officials accountable. We must educate ourselves and then educate others. If governments will not listen, then elect people who will. Support and work with NGO’s. Lobby and demand better. Use your spending power wisely and make companies take notice.

The population will increase to nine billion within the next thirty years and we still have not successfully secured food for the seven billion people currently inhabiting this planet and not because we do not have the resources. Resolving this is not only necessary, it is an important 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).
What’s Your Major Mal-Function?

By Ali Othman, CPT
Our ability to successfully perform daily activities is paramount to living a vibrant and happy life. Having trouble with any activity you perform regularly can add stress and anxiety to your day resulting in a diminished quality of life. Perhaps you suffered an injury from which you have not been able to fully recover; or maybe you’ve noticed that as you age activities which were once simple and routine have become difficult and uncomfortable. Functional training can help you address these issues by focusing on the specific movements or motions which have become troublesome, and retraining your body to function properly.

The roots of functional training originated in rehabilitation settings, with physical therapists intervening after an incident that resulted in a dysfunction in one’s activities of daily life. Physical therapists work to correct the deficiency by reorienting the body to move as it once did without pain or discomfort. This is done with repetition and progression, using motions that mimic the original movement as closely as possible and progressively increase in intensity using weights or resistance. The continuous repetition trains the mind to move more effortlessly and the progressive resistance strengthens the muscles to make the movement less painful. As functional training gained popularity, it spread to other segments of the population such as a baseball player trying to correct his swing, a doctor attempting to correct the slumped posture of a child, and women preparing for pregnancy.

Let’s look deeper into using functional training techniques as a method of rehabilitation for both stroke survivors and post-surgical patients. Following these, we’ll look at a lesser known group who can use similar techniques to serve a different function. With proper preemptive and post-natal care, pregnant women can prepare their bodies for delivery using functional techniques, and may even be able to reduce the amount of pain suffered during and after childbirth. This demographic cannot always handle full-on strength or agility training, so an exercise regimen of functional training is often an ideal way to help manage and overcome issues brought on during and after pregnancy. In order to best explain the purpose of functional training, we will concentrate on these three demographics and explore the possible benefits of its use.

**Stroke Rehabilitation**

A stroke occurs when there is an interruption of blood supply to the brain. Nowadays more people are surviving strokes than in the past; and stroke survivors generally have long roads to recovery. Among an array of other complications, loss of muscle movement at some level is extremely common. Stroke survivors often require
The roots of functional training originated in rehabilitation settings, with physical therapists intervening after an incident that resulted in a dysfunction in one's activities of daily life. Physical therapists work to correct the deficiency by reorienting the body to move as it once did without pain or discomfort.

Walking can be broken down into what are known as Gait Cycles. The gait cycle involves all of the events from the point where one foot is in contact with the ground and that same foot raises, moves forward, and returns to contact the ground again. The two main phases of the gait cycle are stance and swing. In order to successfully propel forward during the swing phase, the heel comes off the ground; the hip, knee, and ankle are flexed; the toes come off the ground; the lower leg is swung forward; and the heel returns to the ground followed by the toes, resulting in a firmly planted foot. It’s hard to imagine that something as unassuming as walking contains so many moving parts; but this simple activity is extremely challenging to master as a child and just as difficult to remaster for stroke survivors.

Walking can be successfully retrained in many stroke survivors by physical therapists in several ways, one of which involves the use of functional training. The initial swing, or the part of the gait cycle where the hip, knee, and ankle are flexed requires the use of many muscles in the legs and the body’s core. It also requires a small degree of balance, which is often lost after a stroke. For this reason it can be one of the most difficult parts of learning to walk, and an ideal candidate for using functionally specific training as a teaching tool.

Core strength and stability are critical parts of the initial swing, but it’s important to reiterate that for the training or therapy to be considered functional, the exercises should mimic the movement as closely as possible. This means that all the muscles which are used to move and balance during the initial swing should be worked together the same way they are used during the motion. The motion is trained repeatedly so that muscle memory can begin to take over and the movement becomes second nature.

To successfully train the initial swing in a stroke survivor, the client can stand while grasping a wall rail (or something similar if being done outside of a therapy setting) with the left hand to assist with balance. With the right leg slightly behind the left, the client raises their heel, bends the knee, and flexes the hip simultaneously. If the client isn’t able to return their leg to the starting position for the next repetition, the therapist can assist by sliding their leg back once it returns to the ground. Once this skill is mastered, the use of ankle weights can add a little resistance to the movement and aid in the growth of the muscles that are used to produce the motion. Depending on the severity of the stroke and level of impaired movement, the therapist may train the entire gait cycle as one movement, or break the cycle down into smaller more easily mastered sections as described here. Either way, this type of exercise application is the very base of functional training.

Post-Surgical Recovery
Recovery from a severe joint injury and the subsequent surgery is always a difficult task; and if left unattended loss of muscle mass and flexibility around the joint can be debilitating. I had a client who was recovering from a knee surgery, and was suffering from the expected pain, stiffness, and loss of flexibility. The incident and the surgery that followed left him unable to sit on the floor with bent knees during his daily prayers. After several months of working with a physical therapist, he noticed marked improvement in strength and balance. During these sessions he performed a variety of exercises designed to strengthen the muscles surrounding the knees as well and the muscles of the hips and ankles. His strength and muscle tone were increasing; however, there was little progress toward achieving his goal of being able to pray without the use of a chair.

After several discussions about his progress in therapy and how it related to his daily activities, I decided to add a functional flexibility exercise to his weekly routine. His goal was to sit on the floor with bent knees, so that’s exactly what we did. We warmed up the muscles around his knees with some light exercise as you should always do before attempting to stretch a muscle. Then, starting out with several pillows behind his knees to keep the knee joint from fully flexing, he sat with knees bent each day for a short time, usually until the pain was too great to continue. After a few weeks we removed one of the pillows and performed the same exercise, now with more...
joint flexion and a lower level of pain. These two factors are key measures in physical therapy and with all therapy and training, measuring your progress is vital to ensure you are advancing towards your goal.

After another few weeks the pillow was removed and he was able to sit with bent knees long enough to perform his prayers. There was still discomfort, but the goal was achieved and with continued effort the pain has continued to diminish and his bent-knee seated position has become easier to achieve and withstand. One of the most important aspects of all types of exercise and therapy is that they are personalized to the goals of the individual. A generalized physical therapy routine is without a doubt helpful in increasing muscle strength and endurance, but tailoring the therapy to your specific goals will always yield optimal results.

Pre-Childbirth and Post-Childbirth Techniques
The muscles of the pelvic floor play an important role during childbirth. These muscles must relax and expand to allow the baby to more easily move through the birth canal. The body will release hormones during pregnancy which cause a loosening of both the muscles and the ligaments of the pelvic floor, allowing the baby to be delivered without major injury to the mother. Exercising these muscles before and during pregnancy will strengthen and increase their elasticity. This can produce a two-fold benefit. Increased elasticity will allow the muscles to stretch more easily during delivery, and stronger muscles will lead to a quicker recovery after childbirth. Strengthening the pelvic muscles may also alleviate the possibility of postpartum urinary incontinence, an issue experienced by many women.

The deep squat with a pelvic floor squeeze is a functional exercise that can be done before and during pregnancy. To perform this exercise, stand with your feet in a wide position and your knees and toes pointed outward. Squat down as far as you can comfortably go and hold that position at the bottom. If needed hold onto a wall or an immobile object for balance. At the bottom of the squat, squeeze your pelvic floor muscles and hold. This is a difficult task best described as squeezing as if you were attempting to stop the flow of urine. Hold the squeeze for ten seconds if you are able to, then return to the standing position and repeat five to seven times. This exercise can be done three to four days a week and is a good addition to your health and wellness routine.

Many of our activities of daily life are performed with little or no thought until they become difficult or painful. When that happens, simple daily tasks can easily turn into a long list of unattractive and unwelcomed chores. If this sounds familiar to you, then you may be a candidate for adding some functional training into your weekly schedule. Tailor the program to your needs, measure your progress, and adjust the program as needed to propel yourself to your goal. You owe it to yourself to remove the stressful events in your life and eliminate your major malfunctions. As always, consult with your physician before taking on any new fitness or wellness activities.

ALI OTHMAN has been an NSCA certified personal trainer for the past 13 years with specialization in weight loss, functional training, muscular hypertrophy, and human nutrition. He also works in the Technical Department at IFANCA and manages IFANCA business activities in South Korea.
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| Saffron Road  | • Food Products  
|              | • Snack Food  
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