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**Assalamu Alaikum**

May your Ramadan be blessed and we hope, *inshallah*, that this issue of Halal Consumer helps you prepare to make the most of the month. We focus on Ramadan through the lens of *A Child's First Fast* and by *Sharing the Essence of Ramadan*. Get into *The Spirit of Ramadan* with these *iftaar* recipes. Besides its spiritual significance, we see what this holy month means to the US Economy in *Ka-Ching! The Economic Impact of Ramadan*. See how *Dearborn's Meals on Wheels Deliver a Recipe for Halal Success*. Indeed, today, halal and Muslims touch every aspect of American life.

If the month of fasting is around the corner, can planning for Eid parties be too far behind? Perhaps you’d like to *Think Outside the Envelope* or explore *The A-Z of Makeup*. There will be just enough days after Ramadan to squeeze in a family holiday before schools reopen. Make your plans once you’ve read *Halal on the Go: Vacationing While Muslim*.

When it’s time to begin thinking back-to-school, whether it is *National School Lunch Standards get a Makeover* & *Schools Raise the Bar* or *Halal Finds a Home at University of Chicago*, halal is now on many campuses across the nation.

Sincerely,

**Naazish YarKhan** managing editor
Note from the Publisher’s Desk

Assalamu Alaikum

The awareness of halal in America was non-existent, just a couple of decades ago. Today, major media outlets cover halal issues regularly. Conferences on halal as an economic opportunity are occurring all over the world. There are innumerable blogs, YouTube videos and Facebook pages about halal. New and diverse businesses catering to the halal consumer are on the rise.

The awareness of halal has contributed to the global commoditization of food. It has impacted food formulations in ways that would have been unimaginable in the 60’s in America. To make a unique food product that you purchase at the grocery store, food ingredients are often sourced from varied nations, assembled in another country, packaged in still another and often sold internationally. The awareness of halal has meant that multinationals in the food business have tried to ensure that their ingredients, and end products, are fit for consumption by halal consumers. Yes, Western companies such as Pepsi, Coke, Nestle, Unilever and ConAgra offer halal products the world over, in order to gain access to several markets.

Halal Consumer magazine brings you insights as to how far halal has come. Halal’s continuing visibility and awareness will create consistent customer demand. Over the next few years, we will witness the transformation of halal consumer voices into powerful sources of influence.

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry president, IFANCA
A Child’s First Fast

By Tayyaba Syed
Nothing brings families together like the month of Ramadan. It is a time of reflection, unity, peace, giving to the less fortunate and being grateful for all that we have. Although fasting is not obligatory before puberty, watching family members and relatives fast, some children want to participate in Ramadan, as fully.

Haleema Siddiqui has been the principal at Al Ihsan School in Cleveland, Ohio for the last three years. Throughout this time, she has seen many elementary students including little kindergartners choose to fast despite long, hot days.

“The kids will have recess, play and run around and fasting will not faze them,” said Siddiqui in an interview with Halal Consumer. “It seems much harder for us grown-ups to refrain from food than for them. They consider fasting to be a fun activity. We give them a special certificate at the end of the month for their effort,” she said.

Siddiqui believes it is essential to instill the importance of Ramadan early on in a child’s life. That awareness will create excitement in their hearts and prepare them for fasting full days.

Siddiqui recalls her most vivid first memory of Ramadan: “I was around 5 years old and woke up in the middle of the night. I saw the lights were on in the house, and I heard lots of talking. I got up to see what was going on and saw my older siblings and parents having a meal together. At first I thought I was dreaming. Why would they be up in the middle of the night eating? When they asked me to join them, I realized I was not dreaming and enjoyed this amazing meal, full of dinner and breakfast foods. Afterwards, I went back to sleep along with everyone else. In the morning when I told my 7-year-old sister about it, she refused to believe me. Then I had my mother confirm the event, and that was the first time we learned about Ramadan and fasting.”

Siddiqui, however, did not keep a fast until she was 12 years old. “My father did not think we could fast as children no matter how much we pleaded that we were ready,” she said. “He would tell us ‘when you have to fast, you will.’”

Uzma Abbas is an electrical engineer and mother of three from Ashburn, Virginia. As a parent, she does not enforce fasting at such a young age either. “My eldest daughter Isra, 8, knows about it but has not said she wants to try fasting herself. I have neither asked her if she wants to nor am I going to encourage her to do it right now,” said Abbas. She feels Isra is too young to realize that she cannot last a whole day without food and drink. “When she realizes she can participate in fasting with us, we will have her do it wholeheartedly. For now Isra enjoys having iftaar (evening meal to break the fast) with us, which is a good start,” said Abbas.

Many parents wonder when is the right time to teach their kids about fasting. “The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said that children should be asked to pray starting at age 7,” said Mufti Azeem, co-founder and principal of Darus Salam Academy in Lombard, Illinois. “Children must get used to the pillar of prayer even before fasting.”

To make an easier transition into fasting, Mufti Azeem recommends children go without food for shorter time frames such as a few hours. “They should know it is not a complete fast, but rather it is helping them get ready for the full length fast,” he said.

Kindergarten teacher Sana Quadri from Chicago has a seven-year-old who likes fasting half-day. Her son, Humzah Syed, has fasted for a few half-days. He almost completed a full fast last Ramadan, but innocently ate a popsicle an hour prior to iftaar. “This year we will have him try his first complete fast and see how many he can do,” said Quadri. “During his practice fasts last year we kept him busy and stayed out most of the day even allowing him a nap if he seemed tired, which helped pass the time as well,” she said. She also recommends the book Hamza’s First Fast. “That’s Humzah’s favorite book and it has really inspired and encouraged him to try fasting at his age.” No matter at what age a child decides to fast, it is worth celebrating.

Senior investment analyst Numan and his wife Aatifa Ahmed of Bloomington, Illinois, did not realize their daughter, Hannah, who was 7 at the time, was going to complete the whole day’s fast. An hour or so before sunset, they told her she could make it through. To make it special, Hannah broke her fast at the mosque with her friends, and the Imam made an announcement recognizing her accomplishment after the Maghrib prayer.
For this Ramadan, reward your child with some great IFANCA-certified halal treats. Try:

1. Sacred Chocolate
   A hand-made, organic chocolate cold-pressed to keep its original beneficial nutrients.
   www.sacredchocolate.com

2. Golden Bonbon Almond Nougat Candy
   A sweet made from honey, almonds and eggs derived from an old, Italian recipe passed down generations.
   www.goldenbonbon.com

3. Chocolat
   Handcrafted chocolates for the chocolate aficionado.
   www.chocolatuzma.com

4. Godiva Chocolate
   Luxury chocolate, rich ganaches, creamy pralinés, fresh fruits and nuts, and buttery caramels.
   www.Godiva.com

5. Amway Snack Bars
   A terrific snack bar: chocolate, good protein, no sugar, low calories.
   www.amway.com

“Hannah has an amazing support system full of family and friends and community members who encourage and appreciate her as much as we do,” said Aatifah, who is a speech language pathologist by profession. “She and her friends inspire each other, and as a community it is wonderful for kids to be acknowledged for their achievements,” she said. To make their daughter’s fasting even more enjoyable, the Ahmed’s prepared suhoor, the pre-dawn meal, with her favorite foods. Besides nourishment for the day, it was an effective incentive to get Hannah up at that hour. Hannah even helped prepare the food.

Six-year-old Rida Ali from Naperville, Illinois likes to help her mother Deeba Parvez in the kitchen during Ramadan. They bake cookies in the shape of crescents and stars and wrap them as presents for Rida’s teachers and staff at her public school. Each cookie includes a card with information about what Ramadan is.

This year, Rida will attempt to keep her first fast. “We plan to have our family, including her grandparents from both sides and aunts and uncles over, so they can break the fast with her,” said Parvez. “We will make all her favorite snacks for iftaar, decorate the house, and make it a very special day for her,” she said.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Tayyaba Syed is a public speaker and writer with commentaries on National Public Radio and by-lines in numerous publications including Chicago Parent, Chicago Crescent and MBMuslimah.com
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If it’s Ramadan, there have got to be dates in the house. Here are some delicious recipes for this healthy yet deliciously sweet fruit. IFANCA halal-certified date manufacturers include Bard Valley Medjool Date, Arizona, Desert Valley Date, California, Mariani Packing Company, California, and Sun Dates LLC, California.

If dates are halal, why do we certify them, you’re wondering? Yes, dates are halal but how about the coating on them that keeps them from spoiling? Or the packing materials? IFANCA halal certification ensures that it’s all halal.
Date Bars

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup water
2 1/2 cups chopped dates
1 tsp baking soda
1 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine oats, flour, brown sugar, baking soda and salt.
2. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
3. Press into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan.
4. In a saucepan, combine dates, sugar and water.
5. Cook for 10 minutes or until thickened, stirring frequently.
7. Spread over crust.
8. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes.
9. Cool on a wire rack. Cut into squares; top with whipped cream

Source: Jill McCon, Montrose, Michigan

Date and Poppy Seed Pancakes

INGREDIENTS

1 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup dates, finely chopped
2 tbsp margarine, melted
1 egg
3/4 cup flour
1 tbsp poppy seeds
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a mixing bowl, stir together buttermilk, dates, butter and egg to blend well.
2. Combine remaining ingredients; stir into buttermilk, mixing lightly with a fork (do not try to smooth out all of the lumps).
3. Heat skillet; spoon batter onto skillet allowing about 3 tbsp of batter for each.
4. Fry until golden brown, turn once.
5. Dust with powdered sugar and serve with fresh fruit and whipping cream or syrup.

Variation: For waffles, add 2 tbsp of buttermilk to batter. Bake in waffle iron according to manufacturer's instructions.

Source: www.datesaregreat.com

Date Filled Cookies

INGREDIENTS

1 cup dates, pitted and chopped
1/2 cup white sugar
3/4 cup water
1/2 cup butter, softened
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 tsp baking soda
1 1/4 cups rolled oats
1/2 tsp salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. In a small saucepan over low heat, mix dates, sugar and 1/2 cup of water. Bring to a boil, and cook for 15 minutes, or until thick and smooth. Set aside to cool.
3. Cream butter and brown sugar together until smooth. Gradually mix in flour, baking soda, and salt. Add the oatmeal and mix well. Stir in 2 to 4 tablespoons of water. Form the dough into a ball and refrigerate for 15 minutes.
4. On a floured surface, roll dough to 1/8 inch thickness and cut into 2 inch rounds. Place 1/2 of the rounds on cookie sheets. Spoon date mixture in the center of each round and top with another round. Press edges firmly together.
5. Bake 15 minutes in the preheated oven, or until browned.

Source: http://allrecipes.com
**Date Cheesecake**

**Ingredients**
- 15 Graham Crackers, crushed
- 2 Tbsp butter, melted
- 4 packages (8 oz) cream cheese
- 1 cup diced dates
- ¾ cup milk
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour

**Instructions**
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spray a 9-inch springform pan with non-stick cooking spray.
2. In a medium bowl, mix Graham Cracker crumbs with melted butter. Press onto bottom of spring form pan.
3. In a large bowl, mix cream cheese until smooth. Blend in milk, and then mix in the eggs one at a time, mixing just enough to incorporate. Mix sour cream, vanilla and flour until smooth. Pour filling into prepared crust.
4. Add dates to the mixture, making sure dates are spread evenly across cheesecake.
5. Bake in preheated oven for one hour. Turn the oven off, and let cake cool in oven with the door closed for five to six hours to prevent cracking. Chill in refrigerator until serving.

Source: www.datesaregreat.com

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**Date Nut Bread**

**Ingredients**
- 1½ cups chopped, pitted dates
- 1½ cups boiling water
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp butter or margarine, softened
- 1 egg
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts

**Instructions**
1. Bring water to boil in small saucepan. Stir in dates. Remove from heat and cool until lukewarm.
2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place brown sugar and butter in mixer bowl; cream until blended.
3. Add egg and beat until smooth. Add date/water mixture, and beat until blended.
4. In another bowl, combine flour, soda and salt, mixing thoroughly.
5. Stir wet ingredients into flour mixture, stirring just until blended. Do not overbeat; batter should be lumpy. Fold in nuts.
6. Pour batter into greased loaf pan, or three small mini-loaf pans.
7. Bake about 60-75 minutes for large loaf, 45-60 minutes for mini-loaves. Check readiness by inserting wooden pick in center to see if it comes out clean.
8. Remove from oven and cool in pan for 15 minutes. Remove from pan and cool on wire rack.
Sharing the Essence of Ramadan

By Kiran Ansari

For their weekly staff meeting, Basma Jabbar’s coworkers usually order bagels and donuts. In Ramadan, however, it’s different. They choose not to do so out of respect for their colleague who does not eat or drink from dawn to dusk for one month. But it was not always that way. Over the years, Jabbar subtly introduced fasting which gradually influenced her coworkers’ decision. Her quiet reflection on the Quran during lunch hour and sharing dates and samosas at iftaar, to end the day’s fast, prompted questions and a yearning to know more. Not everyone is fortunate to have such a positive experience, but it comes easier for those who accept religious tolerance as a two-way street. One cannot expect others to bend over backwards without offering mutual respect.
Subtle messaging is also on Sabina Abdul-Qadir’s mind each year when she coordinates a breakfast for the homeless on an early Ramadan morning. As part of the Muslim Womens Alliance “Ramadan Rush for Rewards” program, close to 50 Muslims with hair nets on hijabs (head scarves) make sandwiches, pour milk and serve breakfast to more than 300 hungry men and women of all faiths at Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica in Chicago. The cast and crew of this popular event cook, clean, serve and even organize the pantry.

“As Muslims we are not just responsible for our own community, but for our neighbors too,” said Abdul-Qadir. “Instead of in-your-face preaching, we hope that by seeing us praying Fajr and noticing the banners and T-shirts that say ‘Muslim Womens Alliance’, we can get the message across that Muslims care.”

The event attracts Chicagoleans of all ages. If you do not have an organization that plans such events in your town, take the initiative to spearhead your own small project. Ask a local shelter or orphanage if you can bring your friends and family to help serve the needy. Visit www.serve.gov to search by zip code.

Several Muslims also share Ramadan in their children’s classroom with presentations, treats and stories. Plan your visit with the teacher beforehand, check if treats are allowed at all, and tailor the discussion to the age of the kids.

“Try to focus more on culture than religion and take items that appeal to all the senses,” said Nada Asghar of Louisville, KY. “I take henna for the kids to smell, nut-free traditional Lebanese cookies to taste, silver jewelry that jingles and a colorful dishdasha (long dress) to touch.” She also includes a Ramadan word search or coloring sheet for kids to take home in the goody bags she fills with Happy Eid pencils and décor from Silver Envelope (www.silverenvelope.com). Asghar also makes it a point to get a gift for the teacher — usually a practical gift card snuggled in a traditional item like a shawl.

Some of her favorite stories to read in class are “A Party in Ramadan” and “The Best Eid Ever,” both by Asma Mobinuddin. Muslim parents can also work with the teacher or school librarian and gift picture books or fiction novels with Muslim characters to the school or class.
LEVERAGING THE LIBRARY

Libraries use display cases to highlight hobbies and holidays. Share the spirit of Ramadan with a display that could include a copy of the Quran with the English translation, dates, a prayer rug, books that patrons can check out on Islam and Muslims, Ramadan balloons and kid-size traditional Eid clothing.

Rafath Waheed has had a Ramadan display at the Lisle Public Library for several years. She suggests contacting the librarian several months in advance to ensure you get your turn in time.

“I would like to” versus “May I?”

“The moment you give control to the other party, they have the option to refuse,” Waheed said. “Therefore instead of asking if you can put up the display, say, “I would like to put up a Ramadan display, where can I get more information.”

Garner support

When the Lisle library initially resisted, Waheed’s mostly non-Muslim neighbors signed a petition and accompanied her to the Board meeting. She even got Pastor Lisa Telomen of Grace Methodist Church on board and copied CAIR-Chicago on all correspondence.

These factors led the library to not only allow the Ramadan exhibit but also order a new case for it and allow subsequent Hajj displays.

“If the library says they do not promote any religious affiliation, tell them that we are not promoting Islam, but are educating the public about our holidays just as other holiday decorations are displayed year round,” said Jamila Yusuf from Markham, IL.

Record everything

“Keep records of all correspondence with library personnel and take photos of patrons admiring the display as there might be a different decision maker next year,” said Huma Murad of Hickory Hills, IL. The photos can also help you remember the items you included last year.

Think beyond Ramadan

If the case is already reserved during Ramadan, approach neighboring towns or be proactive and book it for Hajj, Eid ul Adha or an evergreen theme like women in Islam.

Abide by the rules

Remember to take down the display at the agreed upon time and leave the area neat.

“I always send a thank-you note,” said Yusuf. “But sometimes the librarian’s thank you card arrives before I send mine!”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Kiran Ansari is a Chicago-based writer and editor with more than 12 years of experience and bylines in more than 30 publications. She has served as Managing Editor of ‘Chicago Crescent’ and interim Executive Director, CIOGC and can be reached via LinkedIn at http://www.linkedin.com/pub/kiran-ansari-rasul/5/47/b7a
An urban campus bristling with energy, the University of Chicago (UChicago) in Hyde Park is famous for its extraordinary number of Nobel Laureates. Its ivy-covered, gray stone, gothic buildings ornamented with gargoyles and grotesques also happen to be President Obama’s former place of work. Most recently, UChicago acquired another feather in its cap thanks to the unrelenting collaboration between its Muslim Students Association (MSA) and campus Dining Services.

A seed planted by the MSA in 2006, and consistently tended to and nurtured since then, has borne fruit. In 2011, the University inaugurated not one but two independent halal stations.

**LEARNING CURVE**
There are approximately 50-75 undergraduate students who self-identify as Muslims at UChicago. Staff, graduate students and hospital employees comprise a larger estimate.
“Muslims should be able to ask for services that make their time living on campus easier and be able to organize an initiative that keeps an open dialogue with dining services on campus,” says Ms. Zakia Ali, Vice President, UChicago MSA, Class of 2012. “It’s a relationship that needs to start somewhere and needs to be worked on very tactfully, with slow steps that show progress.”

It began with Dining Services working with the MSA to understand needs around Ramadan. “The students wanted dates, fruits, fruit juices and asked how we could provide them, so they could break their fast, since our dining halls would close by then,” says Mr. Richard Mason, Executive Director of UChicago Dining. “The students did a wonderful job educating us. They were telling us that some of the students will eat Kosher in the absence of halal, but we also learned that for well over 2/3rd of our Muslim students, that wasn’t acceptable. We have a pretty significant number of Muslim students on campus and we want them eating.”

“We asked where they liked to eat and they talked about going to Devon street. We asked about favorite foods and recipes,” says Mr. Mason. That’s how halal Gyro Pizza from Italian Express on Devon became the first halal option served by Dining Services, following Friday Jummah prayers.

In 2006, during Islamic Awareness Week, zabiha-halal night comprised a fuller menu. “We learned about vendors and how to prepare food for that evening. We saw that serving halal was comparatively easier than Kosher with respect to the physical separation and the role of the rabbi,” says Mr. Mason.

DO YOUR HOME WORK
“In 2010, Zakia Ali, I and another student, Adil, decided to take the initiative to follow up with Dining Services and reinforce efforts. There was a burgeoning Muslim population on campus, and very little (being done) to cater to their needs. The MSA would receive recommendations and requests to improve halal dining, and considering the UChicago campus is not downtown but rather in Hyde Park, halal food is not too easily available,” says Ms. Saalika Mela, Outreach Coordinator UChicago MSA, Class of 2013. “Since the dining halls were meeting other minority needs (Kosher/Gluten-free/Vegan), we felt it was fair the Muslims also be catered to.”

Together, the three students conducted surveys on Muslim students’ satisfaction with dining hall food, their needs, what they would like to see more of, food contamination issues, and over the course of one year, they met with the Dining Committee frequently. The results included increased halal meals during the week, a pilot halal station by Spring 2011, and two permanent halal stations from Fall 2012.

CHALLENGES
Despite busy schedules, Ms. Ali, Ms. Mela and Mohamad Kodiaimati, a second year student majoring in Chemistry and Biochemistry, made halal a priority

Timeline

2007: Inclusion of a restaurant called “Saffron” in Dining Commons, which served halal South Asian food for all meals. This was not part of the three main dining halls.

2008-2009: The MSA & Dining Services engage in discussions resulting in South Asian cuisine with halal meat being served in one dining hall once or twice a week. Dining Services also provided a special taste-tester meal in which a variety of new foods were offered to the general Muslim student body to elicit feedback.

2009-2010: Students request that the cuisine be American halal. Burgers, chicken wings, and hot dogs from halal meat are served a few times a week.

2010-2011: All three dining halls serve halal food three times a week. Challenges arise but are collaboratively addressed.

2011-2012: There are full time halal stations in two of three major undergraduate dining halls.
and did the groundwork necessary. They also took the time to iron out the challenges that invariably arise with new undertakings.

“In 2010-11, there were issues such as the halal food running out. We also had them provide us a schedule and information about the meat vendors to ensure we were getting actual halal meat,” says Ms. Ali.

To eliminate cross-contamination, the students wanted to make sure that separate surfaces and cookware were being used (for both halal and vegetarian). “Dining has been receptive to the problem, but its implementation has proven troublesome as it requires constant supervision of the staff,” says Ms. Ali. Some of the stations (i.e. breakfast omelets) use color coded pans to separate vegetarian items from meat and that was one possible solution.

“We also wanted healthy food options for Muslims, such that we could have grilled chicken and greens, and not always have to resort to fries or cheese pizza,” says Ms. Mela.

SOLUTIONS

In conversations with campus dining, the students found that the best way to eliminate issues of cross contamination was to have a separate halal food station. The move has been well received by the entire student body.

“Each year, as we learned more, we added more meals that were halal. We were able to get better products from our vendors and provide more meals,” says Mr. Mason. “We outsource our food service to a food service management company and in this bid, we required that there be two halal stations in our two largest dining halls. It made a lot of sense to serve our students better by having a dedicated halal station.” For their part, the MSA continues to provide feedback to ensure that the meals served are reflective of what the Muslims on campus want.

“I wouldn’t see many of our Muslim students in our dining halls but with these programs, we do,” says Mr. Mason. Students who aren’t Muslim also see halal as a menu option. “If it is an entrée they enjoy, they’ll eat it as well. There are still others who see value in the way the meat is slaughtered and some of our students care about that,” says Mr. Mason.

If she could have just one improvement over the current situation, Ms. Mela would like a greater diversity of ‘Muslim cuisines’ “by which I mean more Arab dishes, and not as many Indian ones.” From the current menu, spaghetti with meat balls, chicken nuggets, orange chicken with rice and beef stir fry with broccoli are her favorites.

COSTS & BENEFITS

There are additional costs to halal foods but students who live in the residences are required to eat at the Dining Halls. “When colleagues from other campuses visit, they are curious about halal. They think it is as hard to do and as expensive to do as kosher. We have dedicated areas for halal but it easier to do than kosher and less expensive. You neither have to duplicate equipment nor have a person who has a role like the Rabbi,” says Mr. Mason. “Aramark works with the vendors and they feel the vendor supply has gotten better over the years. A lot of the universities are missing out on this.”

What was the single most important thing the MSA did to make their case? “They were helpful in having us understand what was possible,” comes Mr. Mason’s response.

Finally, was it crucial that UChicago is an urban campus? “It was convenient to have access to Devon street initially but once we discovered access to halal through the normal distribution channels, being in a metro or an urban campus wasn’t as important. The supply of halal foods is sufficient,” says Mr. Mason.

LESSONS LEARNED — MS. ALI’S PLAYBOOK

It’s a Two Way Street: “Dining was very receptive to our concerns and suggestions. All it took was initiative, data and follow through on our part to bring them up to speed with what needed to be done. We are working to constantly improve the situation and gather data.”

Understand the Process: The most important thing to do is understand the process and what it means to be a tuition paying student.

Patience: Exercise patience as the school is learning about our traditions and our needs.

Commitment: Had the MSA not had a person or group of people dedicated to working on halal dining to serve as a bridge between the Muslim population on campus and dining services, the entire initiative may have fallen apart. “We still regularly take surveys and provide dining with feedback. Currently, we have a menu that includes items like Gyros, South Asian dishes, Sloppy Joes, and more.”

As Dr. Naimath Khan, UChicago Class of 1997, puts it the MSA has made huge strides. “When I went to school, we’d settle for vegetarian options and if we wanted halal, it was our mother’s home cooked meals we depended on or area restaurants.” If each batch of students has a Zakia Ali or a Saalika Mela, halal on this campus, or any other, will hopefully be there to stay.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Naazish YarKhan is Director, Content Strategy at IFANCA and contributing writer for numerous media internationally including NPR, Aramco World magazine, Huffington Post and Common Ground News Service.

Photo credit: Jason Smith
**A Farm to Fridge Journey into the World of Halal: A MIDAN Webinar**

May 31, 2012 — “A Farm to Fridge Journey into the World of Halal: Expanding Opportunities for the Food and Nutrition Professional” was a webinar hosted by Muslims in Dietetics and Nutrition (MIDAN), a Member Interest Group (MIG) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. MIDAN aims to reduce disparities in healthcare services received by Muslim patients by providing a forum in which food and nutrition professionals can network and develop professionally. MIDAN also strives to increase diversity within the dietetics profession by promoting the field as a career choice within the Muslim community and by providing mentorship for students and new dieticians. The Webinar was sponsored by IFANCA.

Speakers included Roberta Duyff, MS, RD, FADA, CFCS who spoke on the needs of the American Muslim consumer; Hisham Moharram, PhD, a Pioneer in Eco-Halal Agriculture & Founder/CEO of Good Tree Farm of New Egypt, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Project who discussed perspectives as a Muslim Agripreneur and Nour Zibdeh, MS, RD shared expertise on minorities, health and cultural awareness for working with Muslim patients and clients. Asma Ahad, Director of Halal Market Development and a chemical engineer by training represented IFANCA and provided insights on the halal food industry & the halal certification process.

An enthusiastic audience of participants had questions that covered a gamut of topics from how to increase awareness about the Muslim diet amongst dietitians and foodservice directors, to concerns about ingredients such as polysorbates, to queries about the difference between kosher and halal.

“Muslim-Americans are an emerging, untapped marketplace opportunity,” said Ms. Duyff. Ms. Zibdeh pointed out that “minority populations receive lower quality care” when it came to many healthcare services. “It is important to establish trust with your Muslim patients or clients. Tell them that you respect their religion,” she advised. Ms. Ahad discussed approaches employed by IFANCA to overcome the fact that “much of the modern food industry has been developed without the Muslim consumer in mind”. 

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KA-CHING! THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RAMADAN

By Margaret Ramirez
It was a chilly weekend in April as hungry diners waited to be seated at Usmania, which serves pungent halal Indian and Pakistani dishes. Inside the bustling Usmania restaurant on Chicago’s well-known Devon Avenue shopping district, managers and chefs were preparing for the Ramadan rush.

The Muslim holy month was more than three months away and would not start until July 20. But, for Usmania general manager Mohammad Yaqoob, plans were already underway for the increase in customers that Ramadan brings. Yaqoob said that in the week before Ramadan, the popular restaurant usually experiences a 20 to 25 percent jump in business.

“People know that during the month they will be fasting, so they come before Ramadan and tend to eat a little more to prepare for that,” Yaqoob said.

“I lose about 15 pounds myself,” he said with a laugh.

Due to Ramadan coinciding with the summer months this year, Yaqoob predicts an even bigger business boost.

“This year, Ramadan happens right during the summer, when schools are off and kids will be home, so we anticipate even more business,” Yaqoob said.

Usmania is not alone. As the Muslim-American community grows in large U.S. cities and sprawling suburbs, more restaurants, supermarket chains, and grocery stores are supplying halal meat and food products to meet the needs of this profitable new consumer niche.

According to some estimates, the halal food industry is a $16 billion business (IFANCA estimate is $20 billion). Notable supermarket chains such as Costco and Whole Foods have entered the halal market and begun supplying halal products on their shelves.

Two years ago, Wal-Mart signed a deal with Crescent Foods, an Oak Brook, IL based halal chicken producer, to supply products at seven Wal-Mart supercenters in Illinois including Niles, Mount Prospect, Waukegan, Plainfield, Aurora, Romeoville, and Oswego, besides stores in Michigan.
As more American businesses enter the halal market, some have become more educated on the rhythms of the Islamic religious calendar and noticed the sharp rise in business as Ramadan approaches.

At Valli Produce, a popular grocery chain in Chicago’s suburbs that specializes in international foods, the aisles are lined with many halal products serving that region’s growing Muslim community.

Frank Greco, manager of the Valli Produce store in suburban Glendale Heights, said he noticed an increase in Muslim shoppers as new mosques came to the area.

Indeed, less than two miles from the Glendale Heights Valli store, there are two mosques, the almost ready Islamic Education Center and Muslim Society, Inc.

“We try to pay attention to who our customers are,” Greco said. “So with the increase in Muslim places of worship, we have tried to introduce halal products. It’s a consumer that we would be wise to pay attention to.”

In recent years, Greco said he noticed that sales of halal products tend to rise before Ramadan. However, he said it is difficult to quantify because Valli doesn’t separate halal sales from other sales.

One fruit product that showed a dramatic rise during Ramadan is dates. During Ramadan, Muslims traditionally break their fast by eating at least one sweet date, a practice followed by the Prophet Muhammad. 

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Greco said date sales at Valli Produce increased last year by 300 percent during Ramadan.

“There have probably been more increases, but it is hard to tell,” Greco said.

In addition to dates, other foods that tend to show sales increases during Ramadan are milk, vermicelli, nuts, sugar, salt, gram flour, wheat flour, garbanzo beans, phyllo dough, and yogurt which is used to make a traditional beverage lassi.

At Usmania, Yaqoob said the restaurant prepares for the rush by ordering larger quantities of food ingredients, especially for appetizer items most popular during Ramadan.

Yaqoob said diners enjoy breaking the fast by ordering dahi bara, fritters marinated in a spicy yogurt sauce; samosas; choley, curried chickpeas with spices; vegetable pakora; and fruit chaat.

“We try to pay attention to who our customers are. So with the increase in Muslim places of worship, we have tried to introduce halal products. It’s a consumer that we would be wise to pay attention to.” — Frank Greco, Store Manager, Valli Produce.

During the last ten days of Ramadan, as Muslims prepare for Eid, Chicago's Devon Avenue shopping district bustles with excitement. Muslim families crowd the area, shopping for clothes, groceries and other items. In those days, Usmania and other restaurants experience another surge in business.

“People are all excited,” Yaqoob said. “Everyone goes shopping and all the boutiques along Devon are busy. They come in here after they break the fast.”

“It is a holy month and a happy time,” he said. ☺

* “Peace be Upon him” is recited at the mention of every Prophet’s name.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Margaret Ramirez has been a reporter for 15 years and written for the Los Angeles Times, Newsday and the Chicago Tribune. She is currently a journalism instructor at DePaul University.
Dearborn’s Meals on Wheels Delivers A Recipe for Halal Success

By Linda Gardner Phillips

Imagine the despair of being elderly, alone, and hungry. One of ten senior citizens have worried about food, according to the Meals on Wheels Association of America. Funded through the Administration on Aging, Senior Nutrition Programs help ease hunger by serving over one million meals to older people each day. Often dinners meet in a central location, but Meals on Wheels programs bring delicious food directly to each senior’s home. In Wayne County, these meals are now available as halal options.

DELIVERING HALAL TO SENIORS
This groundbreaking halal Meals on Wheels program came to life in Dearborn, Michigan, thanks to the joint efforts of three local organizations: the Senior Alliance Area Agency on Aging 1-C, Wayne County, and ACCESS, the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, a local non-profit providing human services at the grassroots level.

Through this Meals on Wheels program, 65 halal meals are delivered Monday through Friday to elderly halal consumers living in southern and western Wayne County, delighting them with hot food and personal interaction.

Thriving Dearborn first gained fame as the home of the Ford Motor Company. Today it proudly hosts the Arab American National Museum and the country’s largest population of Arab-Americans. Dearborn also contains a significant number of elderly halal consumers who often can’t get halal food due to mobility, language and technology barriers. Joan Sinvракас, Director of Senior Services for Wayne County, describes this hidden population as “typically, isolated women, living alone.”

Ten years ago, the three organizations learned about this underserved group when seniors repeatedly wondered why they could not receive halal meal deliveries.

They worked together to test an innovative halal food pilot program. The positive feedback proved the need and desire for halal Meals on Wheels.

A FRESH START
In October 2009, fresh federal funding arrived and the Senior Alliance set out to find a capable contractor — no small task. All Meals on Wheels contractors must meet strict federal guidelines for nutrition, delivery
and ongoing assessments. But this endeavor also called for culturally appropriate, halal-certified food. They finally accepted the proposal of a large national corporation, which seemed an obvious solution for such a large meal volume.

Reaching out to the area’s unique senior demographic also proved challenging. Some elders in need were refugees, and many were illiterate in English and/or didn’t speak the language. ACCESS provided many key referrals. This center emerged from the Dearborn Arab community over 40 years ago to serve immigrants, and now runs 100 diverse programs reaching over 70,000 local residents.

Despite a promising start, the fledgling halal program ran into roadblocks. The initial contractor couldn’t meet halal dietary prerequisites, and had no agility to make rapid adjustments. The participants felt alienated by the firm’s phone translation service, which many could not understand or use. After three months, the Senior Alliance switched to a new contractor, Wayne County, which had proven connections with local restaurants and customs.

**BRINGING IT HOME**
Wayne County already served 3800 Meals on Wheels per week, and quickly refocused the halal program closer to home. They identified the best halal-certified area kitchens to take on the stringent requirements. The county and the agency narrowed down their options to choose the new halal provider: The Country Restaurant, a Dearborn middle-eastern restaurant with an enthusiastic owner.

**A REMARKABLE PARTNERSHIP**
The restaurant’s Meals on Wheels menu rotates daily, and features healthy food such as Chicken Shawarma, pita bread, kafta, baba ghanooj, hummus, tabouli and lots of vegetables. Since 2010, the owner has been delighted to be the contractor, and sees it as a good way to give back to the Muslim community. Remarkably, he makes all of the deliveries himself, a job normally done by a team of volunteers.

“This social interaction is very important,” notes Amne Darwish-Talab, ACCESS Director of Social Services East, and a commissioner on the Michigan Governor’s Commission on Aging. “They feel good about it and it is personal.” She stresses that Meals on Wheels benefits homebound seniors not only because they can’t cook, but also because they often lack families and thrive on the human contact. Siavrakas adds that “the person delivering the meal often means more than the meal itself,” and praises the restaurant owner’s “uplifting human contact” with his clients.

**REACHING OUT**
Wayne County extended the program’s reach by rehiring Nabiya Rizk, a highly capable bilingual woman who had worked in the pilot program. Her ability to network locally and communicate warmly proved crucial. Rizk met with people face to face. She helped locals and participants grasp the program’s potential, and as word spread, she rapidly located more eligible clients. Today she often receives direct phone calls from those who’d like to participate. Further, each recipient receives at least two visits per year from Rizk, which also helps her gather direct feedback.

**PAYING IT FORWARD**
By going local, the halal Meals on Wheels program truly fulfilled its mission. The homebound appreciate receiving a halal meal that’s hot and good to eat. They anticipate the personal visits, which give them a foothold in the larger Muslim community. Most remarkably, the Meals on Wheels recipients find ways to give back, too.

Margaret Watson, the Planning and Programming Manager for the Senior Alliance, notes that the halal participants tend to voluntarily leave the program so that others can take their place. For example, one heart surgery patient could not feed herself, but asked to be removed from the delivery list when her condition improved. Watson says that it’s highly unusual and impressive for Meals on Wheels recipients to do this, as they tend to fear food shortage. The halal patrons’ generosity proves their appreciation of this valuable service, which can only serve 65 meals per day.
Recipe for Success:

Can your community launch a halal Meals on Wheels program?

Watson and Amanda D’Angelo, Contracts Specialist for the Senior Alliance, shared this checklist for success:

1. **Advocate locally for federal funding**
   - Find community members to advocate for federal funding. The Agency on Aging is required to meet the needs of the local community. They must hear from local people, or the funding will not materialize.

2. **Document the need**
   - Provide justification for funding by clearly documenting the existing need. Present your case, and make your presence known, at annual agency hearings.

3. **Hire culturally competent staff**
   - Know your target population, and hire people who can communicate with them in their own language(s), and appropriate cultural context(s).

4. **Hire a halal-aware nutritionist**
   - Find a good nutrition who understands how to delight the cultural palate while creating healthy meals that meet all requirements.

5. **Really deliver**
   - Create a delivery plan and prepare to handle a consistent and sustainable volume with volunteers or one provider.

6. **Fundraise locally**
   - Work with a community group for fundraising. Government funding probably won’t cover all costs.

7. **Make a backup plan**
   - Keep your program going by planning ahead for times when funds run low. In Dearborn, a suggested donation of $2.25 per meal helps fill in the gaps.

8. **Meet all federal standards**
   - Know the requirements and meet them meticulously. If your program cannot meet the federal standards, it simply will cease to exist.

9. **Have the meals IFANCA halal certified**
   - Resources:
     - Senior Alliance
     - http://www.aaa1c.org/
     - Meals on Wheels Association of America

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**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Linda Gardner Phillips is a writer and the Director of Public Relations for Deerpath Farm, a conservation community north of Chicago. She also writes for Enjoy Illinois, the official blog of the Illinois Office of Tourism. (http://Enjoyillinoisblog.com)
The A-Z of Makeup

Tips and Tricks shared by Reem Saenz, owner of S2 Makeup Artistry in Texas and Anna Shafiei, co-owner of Lipstick Squad in Aurora, Illinois.
ALWAYS LOOK APPROACHABLE. Don’t let your makeup overpower your personality or God-gifted features.

BEWARE OF BRIDEZILLA: Some brides transform into Bridezilla because of the clash between what they want and the need to respect the elders in the family.

CONCEALER is a quick and effortless way to hide dark circles and not look too cakey with foundation on a regular work day.

DIRT. Yes, dirt. You need to remove the dirt and debris from your skin just like you do from your home.

ENHANCE your natural beauty. “Make up is supposed to boost your features, not magically transform you into someone else,” said Reem Saenz, co-owner of S2 Makeup Artistry in Texas.

SKIP FOUNDATION unless you are a bride or a model: “Foundation everyday can make your skin look grayish,” said Anna Shafiei, co-owner of Lipstick Squad in Aurora, IL. “Women with ethnic skin tones should not try to look fairer.”

GEOGRAPHY matters: Trends vary across the country. While skin care may be more important in the harsh, cold climate of Chicago or New York, in Texas, it is all about the hair.

HIJABI makeup: Saenz believes that if you feel insecure about dark circles or blemishes, it is okay to apply makeup. “If you are doing it to make yourself feel better and not to attract others, it is fine in my opinion but I cannot speak for everyone,” she says.

IMMIGRANT IDEAS: Makeup pros feel that many Muslim clientele from “back home” never want to look like themselves. “They want to look like XYZ’s cousin on her wedding or someone from a Shahrukh Khan movie,” Saenz said.

JUMP at the opportunity for a consultation at a department store or from friends who do a good job with makeup.
KICK it up a notch: If you are stuck in the same makeup rut for a decade, try one new thing. Mascara, for instance, can make eyes look bigger and more awake to face a long day — whether it is in the carpool lane or at a corporate lunch.

LEARN what works for your skin tone. Don't blindly copy fashion trends from the runway. Just like some clothes are only meant to make a statement on the catwalk, some makeup trends deserve to stay there, too.

MOISTURIZE religiously. Saenz sees so many women scrambling after high end cosmetics but neglecting their skin. She suggests a regimen of cleansing + toning + moisturizing twice a day from when girls hit puberty.

NEVER forget to remove makeup: Cleansing at night ensures that your pores can are not clogged.

OVERBOARD Alert: “If someone says your make up is looking pretty, it means you have gone too far,” Saenz said. “You should stand out, not your make up.”

PLAY with colors: Invest some time on a lazy weekend afternoon to save you hours during crunch time. Use trial and error to experiment with different colors and brands during your down time so that you have a few fail-proof products to grab when you are rushing out the door.

QUIT trying to match: “Matchy-matchy is out,” Shafiei said. “If you are wearing a blue top, your eye shadow does not have to be blue.”

RESPECT the professional makeup artist’s time: To get a bride ready from head to toe, it takes Shafiei around three hours. Saenz agrees that the entourage is harder to please than the bride herself. “With six cousins and four sisters in law itching to compete, it gets tricky,” Saenz said. “I used to charge per person but everyone kept on adding requests so I now charge by the hour.”

SKIN CARE is paramount: Imagine a home with beautiful décor but a dirty floor. Now imagine a much simpler but squeaky clean home. Which is more appealing? It is the same story for our face. We can use the best make up brand but not do ourselves any favors if we don’t take care of our skin.

TEN-MINUTE makeup regimen: For many women who are juggling packing lunches, getting ready for work and signing permission slips in the morning, having ten
minutes for makeup seems like a luxury. When sitting in traffic, Shafiei relies on four things: concealer, blush, lip gloss and mascara.

**UNDERSTATE** is better: For every day, Shafiei prefers lip gloss for some shimmer as opposed to a bold lipstick.

**VIBRANT** hues are in. Both makeup pros agree that vibrant colors — almost neon — are in fashion. However, in order to wear the latest hues without looking like a fashion mistake opt for just one pop of color. If you are going for tangerine lips, keep the eyes understated. If you are going for sea foam eyes, then opt for nude lips.

**WARM WATER:** Wash your face with warm water to open the pores and drink eight glasses of water daily. “Once you hit 25, your skin stops producing collagen and it is hard to turn back the clock,” Saenz said. “Drinking a lot of water can do wonders for your skin.”

**X OUT** makeup techniques that don’t work for you. The smokey eye may look dramatic on some and horrific on others. Just because a particular technique is in fashion, does not mean it is right for you.

**YOU** get what you pay for: Saenz doesn’t skimp on skin care. If it is a choice, between a drugstore and department store brand, she would definitely choose the more expensive one as she believes in using a little of a good product than slathering on a lot of an inexpensive brand. A $45 bottle of moisturizer or cleanser can last you six months, if used correctly. That doesn’t seem like a huge investment for your prized possession.

**ZIP** it. If you are going to a professional, give your input and then trust her to do a good job.

For the best in cosmetics, try these IFANCA Halal Certified brands:
Amara Cosmetics (www.amaracosmetics.com)
USANA (www.usana.com)
Sunrider – Kandesn (www.sunrider.com)

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Kiran Ansari is a Chicago-based writer and editor with more than 12 years of experience and bylines in more than 30 publications. She has served as Managing Editor of ‘Chicago Crescent’ and interim Executive Director, CIOGC and can be reached via LinkedIn at http://www.linkedin.com/pub/kiran-ansari-rasul/5/47/b7a
When American children walk into school lunch rooms wafting with the aroma of fried foods and sweet treats, they fill millions of lunch trays with processed, commercially prepared chicken nuggets, pizzas, fries and sugary drinks. This year, the National School Lunch Program received a revolutionary makeover with new nutrition standards mandated by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and championed by Michelle Obama. The objective is to bring more nutritional value to lunch rooms and battle the issue of childhood obesity.

Out of 55 million children in the US, 30% are overweight and 17% are classified as obese, putting future generations at risk of diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer, according to the 2011 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Though 32 million American children buy—or receive federally subsidized hot lunches—only 25% of elementary schools and 8% of high schools meet the USDA’s nutritional standards requirements.

“The USDA’s revised School Lunch Program is based on the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans that provides a host of scientific and medical information about our nutrition,” said Ben Senauer, professor of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota who studies economic trends in federal school lunch programs. He explains that the USDA’s enhanced plan progressively requires schools to increase “the consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grain while controlling portions and reducing calorie-dense foods, sodium and saturated fats” over the next few years.

Most Islamic schools serve hot lunches and have a stake in the USDA’s new guidelines according to Karen Keyworth, Education Director at the Islamic Schools League of America. “As stewards of the earth,” being green is a core value for
Muslims so administration and teachers of Islamic schools are particularly concerned about nutrition," she said.

For instance, the New Horizons Islamic School (NHS) in Pasadena, California serves halal hot lunches seeking healthy alternatives to kids’ favorite foods by offering salads, subs and Chinese food with fresh vegetables.

Not all meals served by NHS are wholesome as they also cater two weekly meals from halal KFC and Pizza Hut. For Engy Gawish whose fourth grader, Omar Khalid, attends NHS, balance is the key. She teaches healthy habits while allowing occasional indulgences. “Every day, I pack a healthy lunch but Omar has hot lunch once a week, catered in the school by a halal KFC. Teaching by example, we don’t buy soda for the home.”

Pasadena falls under the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) which has received accolades for an innovative school lunch program that serves almost 700,000 meals a day in 1000 locations to 65% of the district’s students. Back in 2006, the first step was to completely eliminate carbonated beverages, flavored milk and candy from its schools.

LAUSD has become a standards trendsetter since they revised menus a year ago. Food services director Dennis Barrett explained that they have created an ethnically diverse, low-fat, plant-based and enriched whole-grains menu with students enjoying Creole stew, quinoa salad, hummus, black-eyed peas, chicken satay, chipotle turkey carnitas and vegetable curry.

“We do not serve carnival food like doughnuts, pizza and chicken nuggets. As a nation we need to foster better eating habits in our future generations,” stated Barrett, “because government standards are just guidelines.” Initially some students rejected these healthy changes and LAUSD sought to modify the menus with the inclusion of burgers made from all natural ground beef. Despite challenges, the program has been gaining traction with celebrities like actress Natalie Portman, parents groups and many students advocating for it.

LAUSD school district persisted in raising the health bar and eliminated artificial dyes like red food color, palm oils from their food menu and decreased sodium to 1100 mg per meal. Barrett concluded that childhood obesity is caused by unwholesome food choices and lack of activity making LAUSD go “beyond federally provided hot lunches” and educate students about “holistic approaches” to healthy lifestyles.

NHS Pasadena also strives for that holistic approach. They’ve added “essential values of fitness and good nutrition” to their curriculum with their Nature’s Playground garden where children plant their own vegetables to learn that food comes from the earth—not from vending machines. Amira Al-Sarraf, Head of NHS comments that students “reap their harvest and enjoy a delicious salad of lettuce,
1 in 7 people will go to bed hungry tonight

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radishes, and kale so the sheer novelty of the garden inspires them to try what they normally don’t eat,” She feels that getting to the origins of food gives children an organic, life-long connection to the foods they eat.

Across the country in Monmouth Junction, NJ, busy working mother Dr. Sumeera Baig packs a balanced lunch for her three children who go to Noor-ul-Iman School, where “the school caters food from limited halal vendors.” A sample lunch Baig packs for her children includes, “homemade Moroccan soup for Noor, bagel for Rehan, and halal chicken quesadillas for Zainab—fruit for each child—and yes, one unhealthy snack.” Baig favors healthier choices but says they are not readily available at school or convenient outside and lamented that “children are picky about what they eat.”

Yes, children are notoriously picky eaters and this is a challenge for many school lunch program implementations. “You cannot pull the carpet from under kids’ feet and say ‘no more fries, eat salad’; there is a lot of marketing, communications and dialogue involved as we empower students to be part of the change,” observed Roger Kipp, the Food Services Director of Norwood Schools in Ohio. Kipp executed an outreach program through workshops and presentations for students, parents and his community to prepare them for a lunchroom sans fast food fare. Kipp has overhauled Norwood School district’s nutrition program so successfully, it already meets the USDA’s 2015 projected nutritional standards. “We eliminated vending machines; got rid of garbage a La carte menu options; removed sugary beverages, desserts and fried foods; and abolished high school Snack Shacks.” This encouraged students to accept the healthier food the district offered and even Kipp—practicing what he preaches—lost 27 pounds.

Unlike LAUSD, NHS and Norwood, most schools struggle to implement the new lunch plans amidst federal budget cuts and more pressing issues. The new lunch plan is expected to improve the long-term health of children. However it is not a cure-all, cautions Susan Levin a nutrition educator at the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM). “It feels like subterfuge when schools say they have met the USDA’s whole-grain requirements by a whole-grain pizza crust smothered with meat and cheese,” Levin stated. “We are directly damaging a generation by giving them sugared sodas and fried corn-dogs instead of complex foods like quinoa, barley, brown rice, legumes and lentils.”

Back at the University of Minnesota, Senauer concurred saying that the USDA’s new regulations are just paper mandates that become viable programs “only if run by passionate, progressive and competent food directors” citing the example of Jean Ronnei who he says has been making “food from scratch” in Saint Paul, Minnesota’s public schools since 2005. Senauer explained that for a school lunch program to work, taste has to be accommodated which Ronnei delivers. “I ate a pizza in a St. Paul High school made with whole grains, low-fat cheese loaded with vegetables. Students loved it, so it puts the USDA’s plan in action,” said Senauer.

Nutritionist Samina Shah from Newport Beach, California said that her daughter’s Irvine High School instituted salad bars, however as students can eat from vending machines or fast food restaurants outside, she has to be extra vigilant about nutrition at home.

Levin would agree with Shah’s approach. “Better lunch programs improve the overall health picture but nutritional values start at the home, extend to the school and become life-long choices.”

ABOUT THE WRITER: Sadia Ashraf is a writer, content strategist and communications specialist who has spearheaded international publicity campaigns, including those as Director Outreach, Central Asia Institute and Public Relations Manager, Friends of Public Arts.
IFANCA has been helping Halal Consumers since 1982

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When Mahnoor Asim’s spunky four-year old asked, “Why doesn’t Santa ever come to our house?” she knew she had to do something.

Muslim children in North America are not to blame when they see the holiday hoopla at malls. Compare that to Eid when they are shuffled from one house to another in uncomfortable clothing and it doesn’t seem like as much fun.

Asim vowed to make Eid festive not just for her children but others too. She now hosts an Eid party every year at a place that is fun for kids instead of a dinner that is anticipated just by adults. She also puts extra thought into the gifts she purchases and makes it a point to buy for adults too, so that children see that Eid is special for everyone.

Which parent hasn’t grabbed a gift card or stuffed some cash in an envelope en route to an Eid party? This year, like Asim, try to plan ahead and make your Eid gifting more meaningful. Halal Consumer has handpicked a few fail-proof ideas (and has partnered with some of the vendors here for gift-away’s too.)

Chocolate Runs Through her Veins

The brainchild of culinary expert Uzma Sharif, IFANCA halal certified brand Chocolat (www.chocolatuzma.com) is a feast for the senses as opposed to a mass produced box of candy that you grab at the grocery store. Besides their exquisite taste, knowing that you do not have to worry about ingredients such as alcohol, gelatin or vanilla extract will put your mind at ease. Sharif makes sure that she uses all natural ingredients so that her products are IFANCA halal-certified.

Her hand-made exotic chocolates, available in unique flavors, come in eco-friendly packaging, largely from treeless paper, with a personal note and can be shipped anywhere. As you share the spirit of Eid, Chocolat is also a tasteful gift for co-workers who may not be Muslim.

“Chocolate is such versatile ingredient that there are countless ways to use it,” Sharif said. “From truffles and bonbons to cakes and sculptures, I love how we can make chocolate delicious and artistic at the same time.” Sharif has chocolate running in her veins as her pastry chef grandfather had several bakeries in Pakistan.

Chocolat is not far behind. Sharif wholesales to several fine stores in Chicago including Express Market at the Hyatt Regency on Wacker drive, Food Ease Market at the Water Tower Place and Marion Market in Oak Park.

With Eid arriving in August this year, Sharif said that it can be a bit tricky, but not impossible, to ship chocolate despite the heat. She suggests her famous caramel date cake, stuffed dates or toasted coconut macaroons as a safer bet.

However, if you still want to order her bestselling triple chocolate almond or assorted bonbon box, she uses special ice packs and coolers to ensure that your gift arrives in good shape.
**Books That Belong**

How many times have grandparents wished they could read stories to their little ones with characters that Muslim-American children can relate to? That’s exactly what three siblings thought when they came up with the idea for Noor Kids (www.noorkids.com), a story plus activity book that is mailed to your child four times a year.

Extensive research showed Mohammed, Shireen and Amin Aaser from Minneapolis that identifying with positive characters builds confidence and from nine business ideas presented to Harvard Business School, Noor Kids was the one funded.

“When kids see themselves in the pages of a book, they feel like they belong,” said Amin Aser, author of Noor Kids. “Plus the demographics and sheer economics of a growing Muslim population support the viability of the idea.”

Noor Kids makes a great Eid gift for 3 to 8 year olds who love to receive mail addressed to them. Along with interesting stories, kids can also enjoy puzzles and brain teasers. Each issue is based on Islamic education, Muslim culture and American integration.

Aaser believes that most books on Islam that are currently available are either based on Muslims living in other countries or focus on the “what” and “how” of Islam. Noor Kids focuses on “why”.

They chose loveable animal characters to represent their readership. “Muslims are so diverse that if the characters were human, inevitably some ethnicity would be left out,” Aaser said. “And subtle references, such as the American flag in the background, are not a coincidence either.”

**Stuck on Art**

If you’re looking for guests to ooh and aah at your home décor but don’t want something permanent or ridiculously priced, think about Islamic art decals. A great choice for college students, your parents or in-laws, these decals are easily removable with no wall damage. They are also very versatile. Experiment by applying them to any clean surface: a mirror, refrigerator or even a locker.

Started by an all-women owned company in Las Vegas, Simply Impressions has a wide palette of design styles, colors and sizes. From a huge tree with the 99 Names of Allah to small “Bismillah” decals for your laptop, they have it all. Their website (www.simplyimpressions.com) showcases decals in different room settings, for inspiration while you shop.

“While most of our clientele is residential, we have had several orders from libraries and Islamic schools,” said Fawzia Khawaja, Co-Founder and Lead Designer. “In the future, we plan on working with more artists and offer more contemporary designs too.”

Ranging from $14 to $100, and 23 colors to choose from, there is something for everyone. The $3 flat shipping seals the deal.

“Kids and adults can add their personal touch by painting a canvas in any array of colors and after it dries, apply a decal,” Khwaja said. “That’s instant and unique art at your fingertips.”
**Look Ma, That’s My Name!**

Eid parties have come a long way from when a couple of immigrant families had a potluck in the basement. The millennial American-born Muslim wants more style without compromising on values. When I saw my children desperately looking to find their names on mugs, water bottles or key chains at souvenir stores, I knew that other Muslims would like to see personalized products as well. That was the seed behind Up A Notch, (www.facebook.com/takeitupanotch).

In addition to personalized wrappers for all shapes and sizes of candy, Up A Notch makes customized favor boxes, hot cocoa or seed packets, mints, lollipops, chap sticks and practically anything that can be wrapped. Its products have already made their debut as ice breakers at a Texas interfaith event, in recognizing Islamic school teachers in Chicago and as a *dawah* tool on Eid for neighbors in New Jersey.

When we were flooded with orders for Eid just through Facebook, we knew there was a demand. I think people like how they can customize their wrappers instead of just choosing from a fixed menu of option A, B or C. My favorite part is seeing the creative ways in which customers use our products.

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**Tranquility in This Modern World**

“I love your design because it is fresh and modern. I have been looking to purchase Islamic art for a while now (but) everything I come across reminds me of my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and parents homes. I wanted something fresh, new, and modern. Please continue to create new pieces.”

“I do not have the words to express how beautiful and elegant your art is. It embodies some of the true characteristics of Islam; simplicity, purity and grace.”

These are actual customer testimonials and at Sakina Design they’ve found the perfect connection between modernity and Islamic art.

“Many Muslims find it challenging to purchase artwork that reflects their Islamic identity and fits in well with their other home decor. This problem frustrated us so much that we created our own line of home decor inspired by Islamic art and architecture from around the world,” says Kung Pik Liu, Creative Director at Sakina Design and also the designer for Halal Consumer® magazine. Ever since then this Southern California entrepreneur, together with her husband Jontie Karden, has been on a quest to share the beauty and diversity of Islamic art.

With more than ten years of experience in the graphic design industry, Kung Pik Liu draws inspiration from civilizations stretching from southern Spain to northern China, creating artwork that is a fusion of East meets West. As their website nicely summarizes it, Islam is “a faith with a long history of tolerance, multiculturalism, justice, and mercy. A society where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived in peace and harmony. And (it has) a tradition in which art has always played a central role in conveying spirituality, history, and heritage. We aim to continue that tradition.” Their artwork does, in fact, create an atmosphere of timeless beauty, contemplation and *sakina* — tranquility. The perfect gift for your own home this Ramadan, don’t you think?

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** Only select products are halal certified for manufacturers. For an up-to-date list of halal certified products, visit www.ifanca.org

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Kiran Ansari is a Chicago-based writer and editor with more than 12 years of experience and bylines in more than 30 publications. She loves to shop for the perfect Eid gift all year long.
LIKE Us & Join the Halal Consumer
Ramadan Gift Away

Halal Consumer has teamed up with IFANCA halal-certified Chocolat by Uzma Sharif, Noor Kids, Up A Notch, and Sakina Design to Gift Away four bundles of fun between June 20th and August 20th.

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3. LIKE one or LIKE all:
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   www.FACEBOOK.com/TakeitUpaNotch
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PROCESS
Halal Consumer will contact four qualifying winners, chosen by random selection, via Facebook. Prizes will be shipped out within a month of notification. No purchase necessary to qualify. Judges decision is final.

Halal Consumer® magazine, its parent organization IFANCA and the above mentioned vendor participants cannot be held liable for any issues related to product damage during shipping or any injury or illness that may result from the use of these products.
For Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, head of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, it was the Arabic labels featuring the word “halal”, that helped him find the meals he needed when traveling in China and Thailand.

“I always eat halal wherever I am and labeling does help,” said the chair of the Board of Trustees of the world's largest international interfaith organization, who travels frequently for his work. “The halal label always guided me in choosing what to eat, whether it was on restaurant signs or packaged food. Not knowing the Chinese language, the (Arabic) labels were the only thing I could read.”
For Tayyibah Taylor, editor of America’s premiere Muslim women’s magazine, Azizah, it was the comfort of Muslim-friendly lodging that made a difference. “I have stayed in ‘halal’ hotels in Muslim-majority countries,” she said in an interview with Halal Consumer. “It is always great to see a Qibla indicator, a prayer rug, and a Quran in a hotel room. In one hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan, they had a female-only floor for businesswomen who were traveling alone. I appreciated that.”

Serena Islamabad Hotel, where Ms. Taylor stayed, along with others like the Millennium Plaza Hotel in Dubai, are considered “halal” due to the availability of amenities like halal food, prayer rugs, prayer times, and the direction toward Mecca clearly marked in the rooms. Other facilities include separate prayer and recreation areas for men and women, as well as an alcohol-free environment.

Mujahid and Taylor’s experiences offer a glimpse of the budding, multi-billion dollar halal-friendly tourism industry.

“In the 1990s, Muslims represented about four to five percent of overall global travel expenditure. By 2010, our research says Muslims represented 10 percent. That 10 percent translates to about $100 billion US dollars,” noted Fazal Bahardeen of the Singapore-based CrescentRating.com, an organization that rates how halal-friendly various aspects of the travel industry are.

Where to eat and prayer related concerns, as exemplified by Taylor and Mujahid’s experiences, are the two most pressing priorities for Muslim travelers.

A PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

It’s been called “halal tourism”, as well as “Shariah-compliant tourism”. Crescentrating.com has chosen to use the term “halal-friendly tourism” to describe its work, and the industry in general.

“If you say, ‘I’m Shariah-compliant’, you have to look at the whole operation. It’s not about window dressing,” Bahardeen said. The reaction of the hospitality industry has also played a
major role in why Crescentrating.com decided to forgo terms like “halal tourism” or “Shariah-compliant travel”.

“We are only creating barriers for those services to grow because of the negativity and backlash associated with those terms,” said Bahardeen. For the hospitality industry, “it’s easier for them to digest” travel services being defined as “halal-friendly”.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND:
A SHIFT IN MUSLIM CONSUMER ATTITUDES

Part of what is fueling the growth of the halal-friendly tourism industry is a change in the attitude of Muslim consumers, who have grown more vocal in expressing their needs while en route to their destinations of choice.

“The industry didn’t realize there was necessity. Ten years ago, when I used to travel, I wouldn’t dare ask a hotel for halal food,” said Bahardeen, who retired from his travel-heavy job as a telecommunications executive to start Crescentrating.com in 2008. “My kids, it’s a different story.”

“Especially in countries where Muslims are minorities, Muslims are much more practicing than their parents were,” he said. That, in turn, has led to a greater expression of halal lifestyle choices, including those related to travel.

This need is reflected in the kind of trips Farrah Abid of Barrington, Illinois and her family take. They routinely seek out halal alternatives for food, as well as Muslim-themed attractions, during trips.

“We usually research guide books and search the internet for halal restaurants, local mosques, and look for other Islamic events that may be occurring on the dates we plan to be in a particular country,” she said. “We also try to talk to people whom we know when planning our itinerary - it really helps to connect with their contacts who can help guide you towards a ‘halal lifestyle’ during your travels.”

It is this need that has also led to the creation of companies like the U.K.-based Serendipity Travel, which “was designed to provide Muslims with inspiration to explore the world’s variety of cultures, landscapes and experiences whilst upholding their faith and core ethics of Islam,” explained founder and director Nabeel Sharriff.

“We take out the hard work and hours of researching their next holiday destination to find the nearest mosque to pray Jummah (Friday prayers), or to locate halal eateries within 10 minutes of their hotel,” he added. “We tend to experience the destinations we sell which is really important, and with our detailed and zealous approach to finding the right holiday, we pass our knowledge on so that our clients can enjoy their trip.”

Turkey, Abu Dhabi, Morocco, and Malaysia, aren’t the only places you can experience halal-friendly tourism through Serendipity Travel. The Caribbean, Australia, Samoa and Fiji, Korea, and Chile are other venues with a halal experience promised to travelers.

A SAMPLE HALAL-FRIENDLY TRIP

So what would a halal-friendly trip abroad possibly look like?

On the website of Crescent Tours, which is also based in the U.K., Muslim tourists are promised only halal foods and restaurants that serve only non-alcoholic hot and soft drinks. Prayer spaces are easily accessible and available, and guests hear the call to prayer amid the enjoyment.

Tourists can enjoy separate pool, spa and leisure facilities for men and women at the resorts and hotels they stay in. In particular, female travelers are promised “private women only beach areas and also mixed beach areas for families with Islamic swimming dress code”.

This is of particular importance to a number of the Muslim women who have expressed satisfaction with their experience with Crescent Tours, as shown in testimonials on its website. “It is really fun for women, as we have our own private beach and the chance to enjoy ourselves, which we couldn’t otherwise do,” wrote Mrs H. Shah, from Brussels, Belgium.

“The women’s complex was excellent. Another feature that many women consider the highlight is an open-air women-only swimming pool at the very top of the hotel. Even the lift accessing the pool is for women alone,” said Miss Nicholson, from Canada.

For visits to Muslim countries, Islamic Heritage tours are also part of the package. Crescent Tours’ guided Ottoman heritage tour to Istanbul, for example, takes travelers to magnificent palaces and grand mosques.

If you’ve always wanted to go on a cruise, the Atlanta, Georgia-based Salaam Cruise offers you that experience, the Halal-friendly way.

“Cruising is one of those things every Muslim wants to do, but is ashamed to admit it,” the group’s Facebook page announces. “So, we went to the cruise line and told them that we wanted a cruise with no alcohol, no gambling and halal food. They told us, you need to charter a whole ship. We said fine. And that was the birth of the Salaam Cruise.” Their inaugural venture to the Bahamas took place in January this year.
WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

The growth of the global Muslim population will most likely fuel the expansion of this industry over the next two decades. Muslims should “make sure (these efforts) are sustainable and socially responsible,” says Mujahid. “This means being aware of whether or not Halal-friendly hotels, airlines, etc. are concerned about the poor and the needy, about this society and its well-being. Are they giving living wages to their employees, and how are they treating workers?”

According to the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life, the world’s Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35 percent in the next 20 years, rising from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030. If current trends continue, Muslims will make up 26.4 percent of the world’s total projected population of 8.3 billion in 2030, up from 23.4 percent of the estimated 2010 world population.

“And that means it’s a market size of beyond $200 billion. Global expenditure in 2020 overall is expected to be $1.5 trillion,” said Bahardeen. “If you are a business and are targeting a global audience, there is no way in the world you can ignore such a phenomenon.”

ABOUT THE WRITER: Samana Siddiqui has been published internationally. She is Managing Editor of SoundVision.com and blogs at http://chicagomuslimparent.blogspot.com

Al Safa Halal No Longer IFANCA Certified

July 2012 — As of July 2012, Al Safa Halal is no longer certified by IFANCA. The product produced up to June 30th 2012 and bearing the IFANCA Crescent M logo is still valid as IFANCA certified.
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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To help the polar bear, we’re partnering with World Wildlife Fund to help protect its Arctic home. To raise awareness and additional support for this initiative, we’re turning our cans and bottle caps white, and inviting the world to join us in our effort to create an Arctic refuge. By working with local communities, supporting research and through additional conservation work, WWF will strive to protect the space the polar bear so desperately needs and help ensure they have a place to call home. Arctic Home is just one example of our efforts to effect positive change in the world as part of our Live Positively commitment. LEARN MORE AT ARCTICHOME.COM
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