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Summer 2023

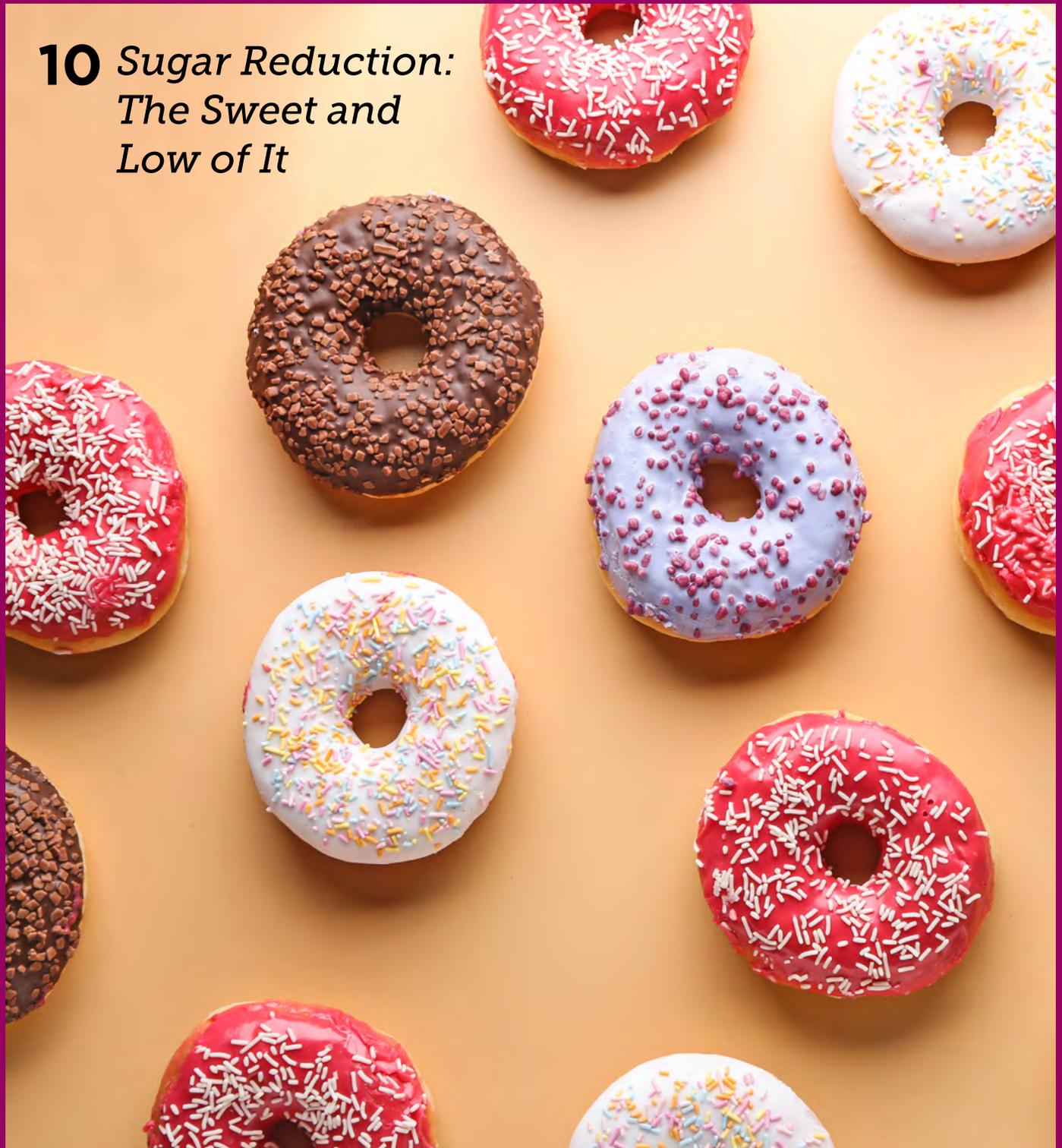
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Halal Consumer

A Publication of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America

Magazine

10 *Sugar Reduction:
The Sweet and
Low of It*





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ABOUT HALAL CONSUMER

Halal Consumer is a publication of IFANCA (Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America). IFANCA is a non-profit Islamic organization with the mission to promote halal food and the institution of halal. IFANCA objectives include making halal foods conveniently available, introducing halal to food companies and institutions, creating awareness of halal among consumers, and providing halal solutions to consumer needs.

DESIGNED BY Annan Shehadi
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Editor's Note

Assalaamu alaikum,

The IFANCA team has been busy this summer!

Representatives attended the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) First Annual Event and Expo and the National Association of College & University Food Services (NACUFS) 2023 National Conference in the same week. Then, a few days later, IFANCA brought together a team of food equity advocates to speak at an event at the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) 2023 International Conference.

We have been busy here at Halal Consumer Magazine as well. This issue features articles on a whole host of topics and delicious halal recipes you'll want to try yourself

To start, read about millet on page 6. This grain is so important that the UN declared 2023 the International Year of Millets.

If you consistently skip breakfast, you may want to rethink your approach. The article on chrono-nutrition in our Health & Nutrition section talks about how eating on a schedule may improve your well-being.

[According to the Agricultural Research Service \(ARS\) at the United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#), the average adult age twenty and over consumes seventeen teaspoons of added sugar daily. If you're concerned about your sugar intake, check out the article "Sugar Reduction: The Sweet and Low of It" on page 10.

Though self-care is undoubtedly important, helping those around you can also improve your overall well-being. Uncover the topic of community care in the article in the Mental Health section.

Some of you, especially the tech-savvy, may be familiar with vertical farming. Learn about the pros and cons of this practice on page 24.

Many food recalls have captured headlines in the past few years. Discover some of the reasons in the article "Putting (Food) Safety First? The Ins and Outs of Food Recalls" on page 28.

Lastly, weightlifting can be a great way for women to improve their overall strength. If you want to get started, you can find tips on page 32.

To stay up to date with the latest IFANCA and Halal Consumer Magazine news, follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#). You can always email us at halalconsumer@ifanca.org as well.

Happy reading!

Sincerely,

Alison DeGuide **editor**

From the Publisher's Desk

Assalaamu alaikum,

Community care is an important aspect of our faith. As Muslims, we know that helping our neighbors benefits both parties and brings us closer together.

Caring for the community is also core to our mission at IFANCA. In addition to our certification activities, we provide education and awareness on halal, as well as build and support partners worldwide. IFANCA has several community-based initiatives like the Sabeel Food Pantry, Sabeel Center for Community Development, Chicagoland Muslim Turkey Drive, and [Abrahamic Center for Cultural Education \(ACCE\)](#).

ACCE was established in downtown Chicago, Illinois, to bring the community together to learn more about Abrahamic religions. In addition to its gallery space, which visitors can tour in person or [online](#), ACCE also hosts free events, such as art classes, author signings, and discussions.

The Sabeel Center, located in Des Plaines, Illinois, is an Islamic museum and community space dedicated to the life of Prophet Muhammed (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]). It is a place where visitors can develop a greater understanding of Islamic culture and heritage through five galleries about the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and it hosts events such as live cooking demonstrations, holiday celebrations, and community get-togethers.

The Sabeel Food Pantry, located on Belmont Ave. in Chicago, is open twice a week to serve local families irrespective of their financial or religious status.

Lastly, the Chicagoland Turkey Drive is an annual event run by our associates and friends that provides a turkey to each family in ten Chicago-area schools for the Thanksgiving holidays.

These are some of the many ways we support our community.

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "Whoever relieves a Muslim of a burden from the burdens of the world, Allah will relieve him of a burden from the burdens on the Day of Judgement. And whoever helps ease a difficulty in the world, Allah will grant him ease from a difficulty in the world and in the Hereafter. And whoever covers (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will cover (his faults) for him in the world and the Hereafter. And Allah is engaged in helping the worshipper as long as the worshipper is engaged in helping his brother."
—Jami` at-Tirmidhi Book 27, Hadith 36

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry **president**

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Millet

By Maryam Funmilayo



MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH MILLET WAS WHILE visiting Ghana last summer. Cooked in the form of porridge and spiced up with ground chili pepper, cloves, and ginger, it tasted like corn pap or *ogi*, which is a popular Nigerian meal that can be made from maize, sorghum, or millet. [According to the North American Millets Alliance \(NAMA\)](#), “the term ‘millet’ in English applies to about a dozen cultivated species from different branches of the grass family (like wheat, corn, and rice, but not buckwheat or quinoa).” Although millet is technically a seed, it is classified as a grain. More so, it functions as a whole grain.

Millet is one of the earliest cultivated grains in the world, and it is nutty and slightly sweet in taste. It is commonly cultivated in African and Asian countries. [According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(UN\)](#), millets can grow on arid lands with minimal inputs. This means that millets sprout up easily in dry soil without the need for much water.

Many people in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe eat millet as a staple of their diet. For example:

- Among the Hausa tribe in the Ashanti and Northern regions of Ghana, millet is consumed in the form of porridge. It is popularly known as *Hausa koko*, which is Ghana’s most popular street breakfast.
- In India, millet is used to bake *roti* bread.
- In Nigeria, millet is used to make a drink called *kunu*.
- In the United States, a number of commercially gluten-free breads are baked with millet flour.

Joel Fuhrman, a leading expert and board-certified medical specialist in preventing and reversing disease, states that millets are one of the most heavily recommended nutritious natural foods. They are rich in micronutrients, fiber, and resistant starch. In addition, they are among the foods that lower blood glucose levels.

Millet can be purchased from grocery stores, health stores, and online. Millet should be stored in a tightly closed container and in a cool, dark, dry location such as the pantry.

Millet has grown in popularity in recent years mainly because it is more economical compared to other available grains. No wonder the UN declared 2023 the International Year of Millets! 🌾

MARYAM FUNMILAYO is a freelance writer and public health researcher in Irving, Texas. With a background in human nutrition and health promotion, she is always fascinated with Quranic and prophetic teachings regarding food, health, nutrition, and wellness.



Millet is one of the earliest cultivated grains in the world.



Chrono-nutrition: How Eating on a Schedule May Improve Your Well-being

By Omolara Funmilayo

MUCH RESEARCH HAS FOCUSED ON WHAT TO eat and how much to eat. However, emerging research shows increasing evidence that meal timing plays an important role in maintaining the circadian rhythm (a person's internal clock or night/day cycle) and metabolic health. Meal timing, also known as chrono-nutrition, focuses on how the body's circadian rhythm regulates a person's physical, mental, and emotional cycles. Franz Halberg first proposed the concept of meal timing in relation to circadian rhythm, energy metabolism, and chronic disease in 1967.

[A study by Maninder Kaur Ahluwalia in the 2022 edition of *Nutrients*](#) found that the typical eating window for more than half of the population is approximately fifteen hours a day. Such an extended eating window and short overnight fast contribute to increased food intake, disrupted circadian rhythms, and an increased risk of metabolic disorders.

[Research from Jesus Lopez-Minguez et al. in the 2019 edition of *Nutrients*](#) showed that those who consumed a late lunch (after 3:00 p.m.) had difficulty losing weight compared to those who had an earlier lunch. In addition, those who consumed late dinner (close to 10:00 p.m.) were at risk of hyperglycemia and metabolic syndrome. On the contrary, a feeding window between eight and ten hours has been found to be beneficial and sustainable for most people. For instance, having breakfast at 8:00 a.m., dinner at 6:00 p.m., and lunch in between leaves a person a ten-hour eating window. If the same individual has their next breakfast after 6:00 a.m. the following morning, they will have fasted twelve hours overnight.

[A 2022 study by Emily N. C. Manoogian et al. in *Endocrine Reviews*](#) indicated that maintaining a consistent overnight fast of at least twelve hours, which mimics time-restricted eating, can significantly reduce a person's risk of chronic disease. Participants in this study who consistently followed an eight to ten-hour eating window and fasted at least twelve hours experienced improved body weight, less glucose intolerance and hypertension, and improved metabolism.

Chrono-nutrition boils down to reducing your eating window. In order to start practicing chrono-nutrition, you have to consume your meals earlier in the day so as to extend your overnight fast. This means setting an ideal window for regular mealtimes, including an earlier dinner. In addition, it's important to keep a regular and healthy sleep pattern since your eating patterns affect your sleep schedule.

Mistimed eating, such as skipping breakfast and eating a late dinner, reflects an eating pattern that may disrupt your circadian rhythm. A misalignment in your circadian

rhythm predisposes you to several cardiometabolic risks, such as hyperglycemia and diabetes mellitus, [according to Ahmed S. BaHammam and Aljohara S. Almeneessier in an article for the *Frontiers in Nutrition* journal.](#)

Mistimed eating, such as skipping breakfast and eating a late dinner, reflects an eating pattern that may disrupt your circadian rhythm.



Chrono-nutrition is quite different from intermittent fasting or fasting during the month of Ramadan. Compared to chrono-nutrition, fasting focuses on periods of prolonged food restriction with no regard to the body's circadian rhythm. Ramadan mainly involves a shift from daytime to nighttime eating and drinking for the consecutive twenty-nine to thirty days of fasting.

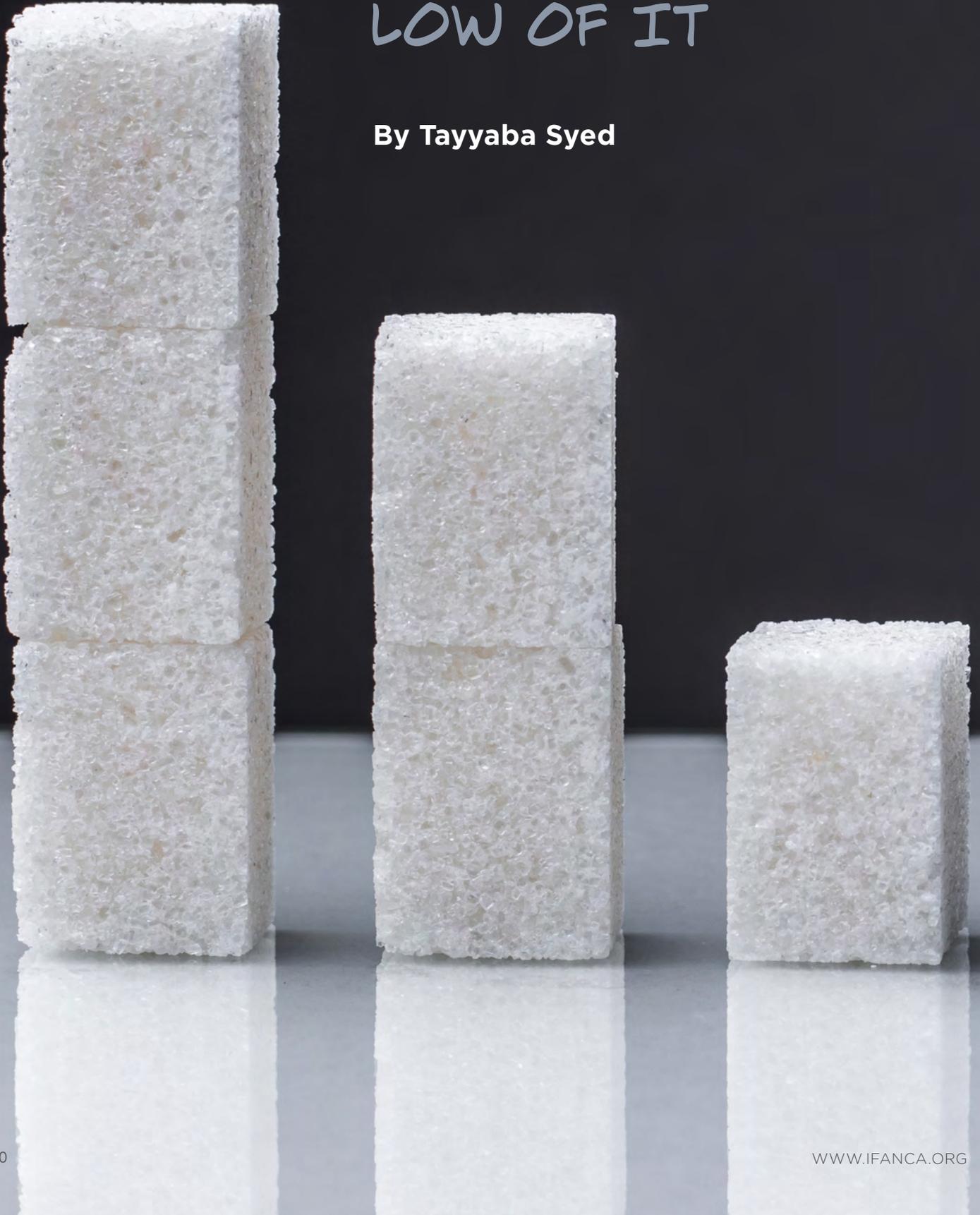
According to the Hadith and Quran, the aim of fasting during the month of Ramadan is to attain righteousness. It's an act of worship for every healthy adult Muslim. In addition, the Hadith highly recommends other voluntary fasting for Muslims throughout the year, such as fasting the six days of Shawwal, Mondays, and Thursdays, among others. These voluntary fasts mimic meal timing patterns during the month of Ramadan.

Chrono-nutrition highlights the importance of aligning what you eat with your circadian rhythm, and eating breakfast and avoiding late-night meals are important components. However, what is most important is choosing an eating approach that will be sustainable for you. 

OMOLARA FUNMILAYO is the owner of [nourishedsupermom.com](#). She is a certified nutrition and holistic wellness coach. She supports her clients by giving them the tools they need for transformation in health and wellness for themselves and their families.

SUGAR REDUCTION= THE SWEET AND LOW OF IT

By Tayyaba Syed



BASHIR ALI* LOST BOTH HIS PARENTS TO THE fatal effects of diabetes. He witnessed his parents suffer from strokes, vision loss, and gum, heart, and kidney disease, all consequences of the uncontrolled sugar levels in their bodies.

“Their quality of life was lost early on, and I don’t want the same for myself,” says Ali.

Ali was diagnosed with diabetes in 2016 at the age of forty-four. He knew it was inevitable with his gene pool. Not only did both his parents suffer from it, but so did his four grandparents. [According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), “more than 37 million Americans have diabetes (about 1 in 10). Type 2 diabetes most often develops in people over age 45, but more and more children, teens, and young adults are also developing it.

For the last seven years, Ali has been working with his doctor to regulate his blood sugar through medication to little avail. Recently, Ali was informed that he would need to start taking insulin (a hormone produced in the pancreas that regulates the amount of glucose in the blood) if his A1C levels do not decrease.

According to the American Diabetes Association, this relatively simple A1C blood test gives a picture of one’s average blood glucose levels over the past two to three months. The higher the levels, the greater the risk of developing complications.

“I finally decided to get serious about my sugar intake,” says Ali. “I don’t want to have to take insulin injections.”

There are many diseases linked with high sugar intake, like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Sugar is addictive and interferes with the body’s natural hormones that

regulate hunger and satisfaction, which can cause excessive cravings and overeating. It can harm one’s metabolism, leading to increased insulin and fat storage.

In just one month of significantly reducing his sugar consumption, Ali has already lost ten pounds. If he does get a sugar craving, he will turn to a moderate amount of fruit. The biggest elimination of sugar from his diet has been from no longer drinking soda.

“I was drinking soda five to six times a week,” states Ali. “I just had to quit it all together and not look into any alternatives. Even my last eye exam was better at age fifty-one. My father lost vision in one eye due to his diabetes. These are all wake-up calls.”

The first general recommendation Dr. Saadia Mian, an endocrinologist in southeastern Michigan, gives to her patients who need to reduce sugars is to decrease or give up sugary drinks and foods with added sugars. These can be juices, carbonated drinks, or sweetened tea or coffee.

“When you drink the sugar instead of eating it, your blood sugar spikes very quickly, which then spikes the insulin level to bring down the sugar,” explains Dr. Mian. “Insulin is the bridge that takes sugar from the bloodstream to our cells. When there is a defect with the insulin bridge, sugar can’t get into the cell and is floating around in the bloodstream. The body thinks it needs more insulin and produces more, but then the pancreas can’t keep up. The high insulin levels can lead to weight gain, diabetes, hormone abnormalities, and other health issues.”

According to Dr. Mian, other ways to reduce blood sugar are eating less and exercising more. She states that moving more increases insulin sensitivity and supports blood sugar coming out of the bloodstream.



The first general recommendation Dr. Saadia Mian, an endocrinologist in southeastern Michigan, gives to her patients who need to reduce sugars is to decrease or give up sugary drinks and foods with added sugars.



“The main thing is to avoid processed sugars,” Dr. Mian advises. “And, yes, you can do it cold turkey. It takes roughly ten to fourteen days for our palates to change and for our taste buds to alter what they crave. Even two weeks without sugar can make a significant difference. Once that cycle is broken, it’s easier to make better choices.”

Dr. Mian attributes the compromised quality of consumption, as well as environmental toxins, to the reason why younger generations are dealing with more hormonal issues like polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) and insulin resistance than their own mothers.

How much is too much added sugar, though? The [American Heart Association](#) suggests a daily added-sugar limit of about six teaspoons for most adult women and no more than about nine teaspoons of sugar for most men. An eight-ounce can of soda alone has twenty-six grams of sugar. The same amount of orange juice has twenty-four grams of sugar, or the equivalent of four oranges.



“Our culture makes us feel like we have to eat to our fill or until we’re satiated. That’s not the Prophetic way. We should eat to the point of not being hungry anymore.”

Tooba Zafar of Des Plaines, Illinois, was shocked to learn how much added sugar was in her daughter’s snacks.

“I could not believe what I found in basic foods like bread, juice, granola bars, and yogurt!” recalls Zafar, who is studying couple and family counseling. “Sugar wasn’t always a weakness for me, but now it seems to be, especially when I have not slept well or am too stressed. To avoid temptation, I keep very little sugary foods in the house.”

To practice accountability and learn how to reduce sugars effectively, Zafar started working with a certified nutrition specialist. Through a balanced diet and exercise, she was able to feel fuller with more nutritious meals and became less dependent on fulfilling her sugar cravings. Her lifestyle change resulted in clearer skin, higher energy levels, less fatigue, and steady weight loss. Recently, Zafar’s father was diagnosed with diabetes and immediately changed his eating habits by making better food choices.

“I like the change at my parents’ house now,” Zafar says. “Reducing our sugar intake can be sustainable even more when you have consistency and support amongst your family. It shouldn’t feel like you’re depriving yourself but taking care of your health instead.”

It is not always easy to get everyone on board with sugar reduction, though. Layla Shamsi* has lived a sugar-free lifestyle since 2019 but has not always received backing from friends and family.

“Giving up sugar takes a lot of self-discipline and can feel lonely at times,” shares Shamsi, a mother of three. “It’s not for everyone, so I just don’t try to bring attention to it. I started off gradually weaning myself from unneces-

sary foods that I knew weren't good for me and made sure to reward myself with treats in moderation here and there. It took me nine months to basically give up sugar and clean up my eating with more vegetables and less processed foods."

For Shamsi, sugar feels "like a drug," and she actually went through withdrawal syndrome. At night, she would have strong sugar cravings but refrain from even walking into the kitchen. Now she feels she is in "maintenance mode" at the age of forty with her husband by her side.

"This has just become our norm: low sugars and sodium, lean protein, clean carbohydrates, smaller portions, and home-cooked meals," Shamsi notes. "It's not a diet but a healthier lifestyle that shows our kids how to value and appreciate food. Our culture makes us feel like we have to eat to our fill or until we're satiated. That's not the Prophetic way. We should eat to the point of not being hungry anymore. It's our *nafs* [desire] that wants more and more until we feel full and satisfied."

Naz Atique is a byproduct of being raised in a health-conscious household like the one Shamsi is trying to create. Atique's father was a runner, and she would often accompany her mother to the gym. She is now a certified personal trainer, corrective exercise specialist, and certified nutrition specialist. She also happens to be Zafar's trainer and has been sharing her expertise with her.

"I will be very honest: sugar is my weakness, and I love it," admits Atique, who resides in Vernon Hills, Illinois, with her husband and three children. "What I explain to my clients is that you never have to completely eliminate something out of your life. Have sugar in moderation but not necessarily every day. Focus on natural sugars, but once in a while you can indulge. A lot of people struggle with sugar intake because the more you consume it, the more you crave it."

When asked how one can practice sugar reduction, Atique states it is more than just tracking your sugar intake but also noting the number of calories you consume. She says that even if something has less or no sugar, it can still be a lot of calories and not the healthiest choice. (M)

**Names changed to maintain the privacy of interviewees.*

TAYYABA SYED is a multiple award-winning author, journalist, and Islamic studies teacher. She conducts literary and faith-based presentations for all ages, serves on the board of directors for a women's nonprofit called Rabata, and is an elected member of her local school district's board of education in Illinois, where she lives with her husband and three children. Learn more at www.tayyabasyed.com.

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The Many Faces of Community Care

By Tayyaba Syed

In 2013, I did something I never imagined I would do. I had just finished a semester of a virtual Sirah class and felt inspired to step out of my comfort zone to teach what I had learned. I got permission from my teacher to share her notes and messaged a few of my neighbors and close friends. It was about ten of us in my basement on a weekly basis with our toddlers running around.

That simple intention blossomed into the Blessed Orchard: a women's halaqa that has served over hundreds of Muslim women in the last decade. Our focus is on traditional

knowledge, spirituality, service, and community. I wanted to provide a safe space where we could grow together as believers with our kids in tow. Caring for my community has been a part of my life since.

I once heard a Muslim scholar say, "When you help carry the burden of others, God lightens your load." I have seen this come into fruition through this work. As Muslims, we belong to a communal faith and are meant to be together and raise each other up.



On the authority of Abu Hamzah Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) — the servant of the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]) — that the Prophet (PBUH) said: None of you [truly] believes until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself. [Al-Bukhari] [Muslim] —Hadith 13, 40 Hadith an-Nawawi

It is not just about stepping out of our comfort zones: it is about stepping up to care for the community, whether it is local, global, or virtual.

My first inspiration for getting involved and serving my community was a Chicago volunteer named Hazel Gómez I interviewed for a local newspaper in 2010, who showed me the meaning of community care. A Puerto Rican and Mexican Muslim convert of nearly twenty years, Gómez served communities even before Islam.

“It’s a value that was instilled in me since I was a child,” recalls Gómez, a faith-driven community organizer in Detroit, Michigan, and mother of three boys. “I was raised by my grandparents, and their home was a hub for community care. They were housing a refugee from Guatemala, and my grandma cooked and fed the homeless and our neighbors. This concept of watching out for others was taught and shown, and we learned how not to be

selfish. She would always pack me a second lunch just in case any other student might need it. Thirty years later, I had a former classmate reach out to me saying how much he appreciated that extra lunch. We shared whatever blessings we had—plain and simple.”

Gómez believes this kind of constant giving has been a means of self-care for herself as well. Taking care of others has helped her develop a gratitude mindset and know that she is not alone. Just as she is there for others, others are there for her.

“The Arabic word ‘*ummah*’ [community] is a type of nurturing we do for one another,” Gómez says. “It can be as simple as conversing with a neighbor or visiting the elderly or inviting a friend to share a meal. Look around and see how you can help hold some of the heaviness that people are experiencing. This may be within the mosque or outside it, as not everyone comes to houses of worship or belongs to a faith tradition. Every human deserves our care, just like Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] was sent to *all* of mankind.”

Having this same understanding is what drives Farhan Ahmed, founder and president of Chi-Care, to serve 1,000+ homeless individuals on a weekly basis in Chicago,



Illinois. He believes those in need should be served and cared for without bias.

“Did the Prophet [PBUH] ask who you are and then give?” questions Ahmed, who lives in Glendale Heights, Illinois, with his wife and two children. “No. He just gave to whomever was in need. We have to take care of every one of God’s creations, not just our own. The *miskeen* [poor] did not choose to be poor. If we have the opportunity to serve, just serve. It’s not up to us who is a recipient or not.”

The initial intent back in March 2020 (yes, at the beginning of the pandemic) was to feed about fifty people a month. Ahmed and his co-founder Asif Iqbal quickly learned that the need was much greater, and it was not just for food. They found the homeless needing hygiene products, seasonal items, clothes, tents, propane, mobile showers, and medical care, which meant they needed more help, financial support, and volunteers. Despite the struggles and demand, the team has not missed a single Sunday of being there for this “forgotten” community.

“It’s like going to therapy,” Ahmed compares. “We don’t just distribute the food and items; we talk to the people and learn their stories. This humbles us. They are living a completely different life but are right in our backyards. How can we neglect them?”

Ahmed states that in Surah Maun, which literally means “petty things” like pottery, salt, sugar, etc., we are reminded to feed those in need and not refuse the request for *maun* or what may seem like “small needs” to us. If we have been blessed to give, then we should give from whatever we have, whether it is our time, resources, energy, or emotions. “It is not just about doing our prayers, but serving others is part of our worship too.”

To go even further, youth activist Mahmoud Desouky believes community care prevents an individual from hypocrisy.



“Did the Prophet [PBUH] ask who you are and then give?” questions Ahmed... “No. He just gave to whomever was in need. We have to take care of every one of God’s creations, not just our own.”

“You can’t do good for the community if you are not bettering yourself,” says Desouky, who is a junior at Rutgers University.

While interning for Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, Desouky worked closely with immigrants seeking visas and green cards and was moved by their stories. “It led me closer to my faith and made me thankful for the blessings I have. My parents are immigrants, and we come from humble beginnings but are living comfortably. My problems are minimal compared to others. To show my gratitude to Allah, I must secure my connection to Him and then be a voice for the rights of those struggling so they can live a good life too.”

Desouky also believes in the impact youth can make. As a mentor, Desouky shows young Muslims how to use their strengths and skills to help others and be influential leaders in their communities.

“It’s crucial to put our abilities to work,” Desouky notes. “The best time to start caring for our communities is as youths because the future is in our hands.”

Through empowering youth and team sports, behavioral health therapist Asma Farooq Shaikh founded an unconventional form of community care. Throughout her childhood and adolescence, Shaikh turned to athletics as an outlet to refuel and make her voice and confidence come alive. However, when asked to conform to wearing shorts for her high school basketball team uniform, she refused to compromise her faith. She made the intention that if she ever had a daughter, she would never let her experience that same kind of discrimination and instead would find faith-centered athletic communities.

Fast forward to 2014. Shaikh became a mentor for her daughter and many other young Muslim teen girls through the Blessed Bonds (BB) Fit program.

“Through the BB Fit community, my most passionate roles fused: mothering, coaching, and serving our community and thus God,” shares Shaikh, who lives in Lisle, Illinois, with her husband and three kids. “I initially didn’t realize how impactful BB Fit was for our female Muslim youth until the girls kept coming back year after year and sharing how important BB Fit had been for them—not only for their physical health but more importantly for their social, emotional, mental, and, most importantly, spiritual health. Furthermore, the BB Fit moms witnessed the impact of this faith-based athletic program and asked if there can be something similar for them.”

In 2017, Shaikh then launched the ChiTown Muslimah Athletics (CTM) in the western suburbs of Chicago. According to Shaikh, CTM provides a safe space for Muslim



“[ChiTown Muslimah Athletics] feels like I found my community, my home with sisters who are Muslim but also passionate about sports.”



women to focus on the core values of faith, strength, perseverance, and cultivating healthy sisterhood in a non-judgmental learning environment.

“We practice to our best what our Beloved Prophet [PBUH] modeled,” Shaikh says. “When women leave practices and games, they are able to be healthier and happier versions of themselves in their personal and professional lives. We have testimonials from husbands who have shared that their wives have rebooted their fitness journeys and are on endorphin highs post CTM games. We have children witnessing their mothers invest in their health and wellness in their thirties, forties, and fifties and learning healthy lifestyles within an Islamic [realm].”

All of CTM’s athletic events have female-only athletes, referees, and spectators, starting and closing each with du’a. The schedule is built around prayer times, and they are mindful of dressing modestly and language.

“We celebrate and uplift our sisters, especially community contributors and women starting their journeys in hijab,” shares Shaikh. “All collected funds go back to programming with a percentage given to a charity. We pray Allah continues to see our sincere efforts as a [means] to serve Him.”

CTM is definitely making an impact in community care, as we see in the following testimonial from a Muslim convert member named Ashley Madryk:

“I [initially] found it very hard to find my place as part of a new community. I really felt like I didn’t fit in or belong. I felt different, and it was hard navigating a new religion when I couldn’t find my place. CTM feels like I found my community, my home with sisters who are Muslim but also passionate about sports. The intersection of athletics and sports, which is my true love, with my faith, which is my identity, meshed perfectly with my soul and heart. I am so grateful.”[©]

TAYYABA SYED is a multiple award-winning author, journalist, and Islamic studies teacher. She conducts literary and faith-based presentations for all ages, serves on the board of directors for a women’s nonprofit called Rabata, and is an elected member of her local school district’s board of education in Illinois, where she lives with her husband and three children. Learn more at www.tayyabasyed.com.



Chocolate Avocado Pudding

By Omolara Funmilayo

Servings: 3 | Time: 10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 2 avocados
- ½ cup pitted dates, chopped, soaked, and drained
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- ½ cup plain coconut milk
- ⅓ cup cocoa powder

DIRECTIONS

1. Add the avocado, soaked dates, and maple syrup to a food processor and pulse to combine.
2. Add the coconut milk and blend until the avocado mixture is smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed.
3. Add the cocoa powder and blend again until combined.
4. Serve chilled. Enjoy!

Notes:

One serving size is approximately ½ cup of pudding.

Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for up to 2 days.

For sweeter pudding, adjust maple syrup to taste.

For additional toppings, add fresh berries or toasted coconut. TM



Zucchini “Noodles” with Arugula, Sundried Tomatoes, and Pine Nuts

By Amelia Keleher

A simple, low-carb summer dish.

Servings: 3-4

INGREDIENTS

- 4 medium zucchinis
- 2 handfuls arugula
- 2 heirloom tomatoes
- ½ cup kalamata olives, sliced
- ¼ cup pine nuts, toasted
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3-4 large spoonfuls pesto (see recipe below)
 - herbes de provence
 - red chili flakes (optional)

Pesto

- 1 bunch basil (about 2 cups packed)
- 1 bunch parsley
- 3 garlic cloves
- ½ cup walnuts, toasted
- ¾ cup olive oil
- salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Fill a small pot with 1 inch of water and bring to a boil.
2. Twist the zucchini through a vegetable spiralizer into the pot, secure the lid, and steam for 2-3 minutes until the zucchini noodles are tender but not soggy.
3. Remove the pot from the heat and strain the noodles.
4. In a separate saucepan, heat the olive oil and add the zucchini noodles. Sauté for 10-12 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Dice the tomatoes and add them to the saucepan, allowing them to simmer for 5 minutes.
6. Stir in the fresh pesto and herbes de provence and let the dish simmer for several more minutes before serving.
7. Garnish the noodles with toasted pine nuts, fresh arugula, salt, pepper, and red chili flakes.

Pesto

1. Rinse the basil and parsley, then pluck the leaves and discard the stems (or set aside for a soup broth).
2. Toast the walnuts in a skillet until crunchy, about 2-3 minutes. Be careful not to burn them.
3. Place all items in a blender and pulse until smooth.
4. If you prefer a thinner pesto, add more olive oil until you've reached the desired consistency.
5. Store the pesto in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week or in your freezer for up to 3 months. ©



Coconut Millet Banana Bread

By Taskeen Khan

INGREDIENTS

- 3 ripe bananas
- 1/3 cup butter (either salted or unsalted), melted
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup millet (if you don't want the bread to have too much crunch, use 1/4 cup of millet instead)
- shredded sweetened coconut

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the bananas and butter. The riper the bananas, the more their flavor will come through. If the butter is still hard from being refrigerated, microwave the bananas and butter together for 1 minute.
2. Mix the bananas and butter together.
3. Add the baking soda, sugar, vanilla, salt, and flour to the bananas and butter.
4. Mix the ingredients well.
5. Add the egg and mix the ingredients again, making sure there are no flour clumps.
6. Add the millet.
7. Mix the ingredients together and pour into a baking dish.
8. Add enough shredded coconut to cover the top of the bread.
9. Bake at 350 degrees for 60 minutes.

Notes:

This recipe works well as a "one-pot" bake. All the ingredients can be added and mixed in the dish you intend to bake the bread in.

This recipe also works really well as a muffin. Fill the muffin tins halfway with the bread batter, then top with the shredded coconut. Bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees.

For a sweeter treat, use 1/2 cup sugar and 1/2 cup of your favorite chocolate chips. ©



Shrimp Fried Cauliflower Rice

By Omolara Funmilayo

Servings: 2 | Time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces shrimp
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons avocado oil, divided
- 2 eggs
- 2½ cups cauliflower rice
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 2 tablespoons coconut aminos
- 2 stalks green onions, sliced

DIRECTIONS

1. Season the shrimp with chili powder.
2. Heat a skillet over medium heat. Add half of the avocado oil and cook the shrimp for about 3 minutes per side. Remove and set aside.
3. In the same pan, add the eggs and scramble them. Once cooked, remove and set them aside.
4. Add the remaining avocado oil to the pan and cook the cauliflower rice and red pepper over medium heat. Let the dish cook undisturbed for 3 to 4 minutes, allowing the cauliflower rice to get crispy. Then stir and cook for 5 more minutes.
5. Add the coconut aminos and stir.
6. Add the shrimp and egg back to the pan and stir.
7. Top with green onion, serve, and enjoy!

Notes:

Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days.
Season with toasted sesame oil, lime juice, hot sauce, and/or chili flakes.
Add additional vegetables, such as peas or carrots, if you'd like.
You can use edamame and tofu instead of egg and shrimp.
Another substitution is to use tamari instead of coconut aminos. 



Gluten-Free Sweet Potato Scones

By Amelia Keleher

These filling scones get their sweetness from sweet potato and raisins.

Servings: 6-8

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large sweet potato, roasted whole
- 1 cup millet flour (can substitute coconut flour or rice flour)
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup whole milk (or vegan milk of choice)
- ¼ cup raisins
- ½ cup walnut pieces
- ¼ cup coconut oil
- 2 tablespoons cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- baking chocolate chips (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 385° F. Poke several holes in the sweet potato and roast whole until soft, about 45 minutes to 1 hour. Allow the sweet potato to cool, then peel.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine the dry ingredients (millet flour, raisins, walnut pieces, cinnamon, salt, baking powder, and chocolate chips, if using).
3. Melt the coconut oil in a 9-inch cast-iron skillet in the oven.
4. Cut the sweet potato into several pieces and puree the wet ingredients (egg, milk, sweet potato, and coconut oil) in a bowl until smooth.
5. Use a mixing spoon to combine the wet and dry ingredients until they form a slightly sticky dough.
6. Using your hands, mold the mixture into a ball and press the ball flat in the pre-greased cast-iron skillet.
7. Bake for 40-45 minutes at 385° F, or until a knife inserted comes out clean.
8. Serve warm and store in an airtight container for up to several days. 



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Growing Up with Vertical Farms

By Taskeen Khan



WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU IMAGINE A farm? Never-ending rows of green separated by thin aisles of brown soil? Tractors and red barns? What about urban buildings and LED lights? Chances are, these last two are not what you traditionally associate with farming. However, they are key to vertical farming, a new way to produce more food in less space.

[The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations report *How To Feed the World 2050*](#) states that to feed the estimated 9.1 billion people who will be living on earth in 2050, food production needs to increase by 70% between 2005/07 and 2050. The report clarifies that there are “still sufficient land resources to feed the world population for the foreseeable future.” However, much of this land is in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, and challenges, such as a lack of infrastructure, must be addressed before the land can be used.

This is where vertical farming steps in. Vertical farming is a way to produce more food without using large swaths of land or having crops travel thousands of miles from farm to fork. In 1990 the modern interpretation of vertical farming, which involves growing plants indoors in vertically stacked layers using trays and pipes, emerged. The main benefit of vertical farming is that since crops are grown in layers in the same amount of space, vertical farms can grow more food than traditional farms. Additionally, because vertical farming takes place indoors, a farmer can control growing conditions. The temperature, humidity, nutrients the plants receive, and even wavelengths the LED lights produce can all be adjusted to maximize yields.

Furthermore, vertical farms don't require large fields and have been constructed in buildings, including abandoned meat packing facilities and offices. This means that food can be grown in the same community where it is eaten. Given that “transporting ingredients and food products accounts for nearly one-fifth of all carbon emissions in the food system,” [according to a July 2022 *Nature* article by Freda Kreier](#), vertical farming has the potential to make food production significantly more sustainable. Additionally, when food doesn't travel as far, it is less likely to be damaged, reducing food waste. Furthermore, the decrease in travel time and the ability to grow food year-round mean people will have access to fresher foods.

The environmental benefits of vertical farming don't end there. Most vertical farms don't use soil. Instead, they rely on hydroponics, aquaponics, or aeroponics. All three of these systems use less water than traditional agriculture and virtually eliminate the risk of fertilizers leaking into the environment. Indoor farms are also less affected by pests, reducing the need for pesticides.



[V]ertical farms don't require large fields and have been constructed in buildings, including abandoned meat packing facilities and offices. This means that food can be grown in the same community where it is eaten.



However, vertical farms do have a major drawback: they need electricity. Powering the LED light banks, watering systems, and other technology can rack up a high bill. And it is not just the cost that is a drawback: most electricity is produced with fossil fuels. [As described by Stacey Shackford in an article for the Cornell Chronicle](#), Louis Albright, an emeritus professor of biological and environmental engineering at Cornell, argues that vertical farming systems will result in “food production with high cost, large energy use, [and] a giant carbon footprint.” Albright goes on to explain that generating the amount of electricity needed to grow a single head of lettuce would result in “enough CO₂ to fill three 55-gallon drums.” Albright emphasizes that to understand food’s

CO₂ footprint, the entire production process—not just how far the food travels—must be considered.

While vertical farms are still working to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels, they have found a solution to the high cost of growing plants indoors. [In the BBC article “How Vertical Farming Reinvents Agriculture” by Chris Baraniuk](#), Chief Executive of Urban Crops Maarten Vandecruys explains that to be cost-effective, vertical farms should grow “quicker-growing crops that yield a high market value.” For this reason, vertical farms often focus on herbs, edible flowers, and baby greens.

Despite its limitations, vertical farming has become increasingly popular due to the desire to find sustainable alternatives to traditional agriculture. New Jersey is home to Oishii, a vertical farming company that produces Omakase Berries. These specialty strawberries cost about \$1.80 each and can be found at high-end retailers. Chicago is home to Wilder Field, a company that transformed an abandoned Target into a vertical farm and whose greens are in cafes and restaurants across the city.

This trend isn’t limited to America. Belgium is home to Urban Crops, a vertical farm built inside a former carpet factory. The Pasona Urban Farm in Tokyo, Japan, is inside the Pasona company headquarters. The farm is integrated throughout the building, allowing Pasona employees to pick fresh veggies and benefit from the farm’s indoor rice paddies and fruit trees.

Chicago is home to Wilder Field, a company that transformed an abandoned Target into a vertical farm and whose greens are in cafes and restaurants across the city.



Vertical farming is also spreading into the home. Neofarms is a German and Italian startup developing vertical farming systems for the kitchen. Each system is about the size of a fridge and provides consumers with fresh veggies and peace of mind, as they are intimately involved in producing their own food and know exactly what went into it.

There isn't just enthusiasm behind this movement: there is also money. AeroFarms, the company behind the world's largest indoor farm, reports that in 2017 they raised \$40 million in Series D financing, with backers including the Ikea Group. Bowering Farming, another vertical farming company, has investors that include GV (formerly Google Ventures) and celebrities like Natalie Portman and Justin Timberlake.

Vertical farming isn't the perfect solution to all our food production problems, and it has its drawbacks. Hopefully, with vertical farming's increasing popularity, the time, money, and research invested in it will allow it to grow into an important tool for a sustainable future.®

TASKEEN KHAN has a bachelor's degree in integrative biology and a minor in sustainability, energy, and the environment from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is passionate about science education and communication, as well as research.



Putting (Food) Safety First? The Ins and Outs of Food Recalls

By Amelia Keleher



ACCORDING TO THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE Control and Prevention (CDC), over 128,000 people are hospitalized and 3,000 people die of foodborne illnesses each year. There are thirty-one pathogens known to cause foodborne illness, and people who are pregnant or who have weakened immune systems tend to be more at risk of contracting a foodborne illness.

What Causes a Food Recall?

There are a variety of factors that can cause a [food recall](#), including the discovery of different organisms, bacteria, viruses, or parasites such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, listeria, and hepatitis A. The presence of potential or undeclared allergens, including wheat, soy, sesame, milk, or tree nuts, can also result in a recall, as well as the discovery of a foreign object such as glass or metal. All recalls are voluntary and can occur before or after an item has been made available for purchase by the public.

Most recalls tend to be precautionary as opposed to reactionary. If two or more people contract the same illness from the same food item, this is called an outbreak. However, recalls aren't always issued, and when they are, they are sometimes issued weeks to months after an outbreak. For example, [Politico reported](#) that in March 2018, *E. coli* contaminated romaine lettuce, causing 210 people to fall ill and 96 to be hospitalized. Yet no recall was issued. In June 2020, *Salmonella* contaminated onions, sickening 1,127 people and hospitalizing 167. A recall was issued more than a month after people first became ill.

One of the most widely publicized recalls in recent years was [Abbott Nutrition's infant formula recall in February 2022](#). The formula was recalled five months after the first hospitalization was reported to federal health officials, [Politico reports](#). Another of the most widely publicized recalls was [Daily Harvest's recall in June 2022](#) after consumers became ill from a French lentil and crumbled leek dish.

Who Regulates Food Safety?

Food recalls in the U.S. are issued by three different agencies: the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the CDC. [The role of the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service \(FSIS\)](#) is to “ensure that meat, poultry, and egg products are safe, wholesome, and properly labeled.” Last year, the USDA FSIS introduced a [new initiative](#) to reduce the rate of *Salmonella* illnesses attributable to the poultry products they regulate by 25%.

The FDA regulates nearly all food items that are not regulated by the USDA, including dairy, produce, spices, nuts, cereals, flour, legumes, and more. Although the

[FDA has jurisdiction over almost 80% of the food supply](#), the agency's main focus is on drugs and other medical products, and [only 18.4% of the FDA's total budget goes toward food](#).

[The CDC's role](#) is to help connect food producers and food safety systems—including the FDA, USDA, and state and local health departments—to address foodborne illness. The CDC does this by utilizing surveillance systems and advanced technology, evaluating data, and collaborating with other countries and international agencies that track, investigate, and prevent foodborne illnesses.

Some nonprofit and advocacy organizations, such as the [Center for Food Safety](#), are advocating for changes to the industrial food system to build more environmentally sustainable supply chains that produce safer food for people and the planet. Similarly, [Food Print](#) highlights some of the threats to public health and food safety posed by industrial agriculture and factory farms.

“The requirements for meeting halal and kosher guidelines and ensuring no cross-contamination between certified and non-certified products go well beyond FDA and USDA food safety requirements,” explains Dr. Muhammad Chaudry, president and CEO of IFANCA.



Halal & Food Safety

As a comprehensive quality management system, a proper third-party halal program provides oversight and increased transparency. Halal certification includes exhaustive ingredient reviews, independent onsite audits, and inspections of the manufacturing processes conducted by trained and certified professionals.

“The requirements for meeting halal and kosher guidelines and ensuring no cross-contamination between certified and non-certified products go well beyond FDA and USDA food safety requirements,” explains Dr. Muhammad Chaudry, president and CEO of IFANCA. This includes a zero-tolerance policy for porcine materials, and halal products are often produced in a dedicated facility or production line.



“Halal emphasizes more than just the source of ingredients: it encompasses a holistic approach to how our food is made,” says IFANCA Food Scientist Nooran Riaz. “Because halal focuses on the making of a product, the sourcing of ingredients, and the sustainability of the halal food chain from farm to point of delivery, it adds a level of traceability throughout the supply chain.”

IFANCA is a nongovernmental organization dedicated to promoting halal through certification, education, and creating awareness, as well as addressing food security, nutritional equity, and health. As a third-party certifier, IFANCA operates independently of ownership of the product and regulatory controls and is not generally impacted by recalls arising from negligence or lack of oversight since the responsibility for the recall lies with the producer of the product. However, IFANCA can force a recall if halal guidelines are not met or if a non-certified product carrying the IFANCA logo has entered the market, Dr. Chaudry explains.

Time for Change? Food Policy Experts Weigh In

Food recalls in the U.S. seem to be increasingly more common, which [some experts](#), including Sandra Eskin, deputy under secretary for food safety at USDA FSIS, have said is because agencies have become better at identifying potential organisms, allergens, and foreign



Water is one of the main ways that fresh fruits and vegetables become contaminated with pathogens.

objects. However, the modus operandi of industrial agriculture and our current food system makes contamination of foods more likely, especially when crops and animals are produced on a mass scale and transported in large quantities throughout the country.

“Pretty much everyone concerned about food safety agrees that the issue is corporate culture. If safety is a corporate priority, recalls are less likely,” Dr. Marion Nestle, Paulette Goddard Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, Emerita, at NYU Steinhardt, tells Halal Consumer. Dr. Nestle is the co-author of fifteen books, including *Safe Food: The Politics of Food Safety*.

Food policy reporter Helena Bottemiller Evich conducted [an investigation of the FDA](#) for *Politico*, in which she highlighted the agency’s shortcomings, including a lack of safety standards for water used to grow fresh produce, which should have been put in place after the [Food Safety Modernization Act](#) was passed by Congress in 2011. Water is one of the main ways that fresh fruits and vegetables become contaminated with pathogens.

“The FDA has rules requiring food companies to have safety plans in place but does not have the ability to check to make sure the rules are followed. The rules require testing for pathogens, but companies have no incentive to do so and every incentive not to. If they find something that shouldn’t be in a food, they have to recall it,” Dr. Nestle explains. “Few food companies have an excellent culture of food safety in which everyone involved in food production follows the rules in spirit as well as theory.”

Additionally, Dr. Nestle tells Halal Consumer that the FDA is “enormously underfunded and understaffed” when it comes to monitoring food safety. The USDA, on the other hand, is better funded, which Dr. Nestle says is one of the reasons that meat safety problems have diminished.



“The FDA has rules requiring food companies to have safety plans in place but does not have the ability to check to make sure the rules are followed. The rules require testing for pathogens, but companies have no incentive to do so and every incentive not to.”



In July 2022, [the Food Safety Administration Act of 2022](#) was introduced. The Act proposes establishing the Food Safety Administration under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Additionally, the proposed Act would ensure that existing food programs within the FDA are consolidated and create a separate agency that is specifically responsible for regulating food safety within HHS. The Act is currently under review by the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Dr. Nestle is one of the proponents of establishing a single food safety system for human and animal food, which she says are closely related. “The first logical step would be to create a single food safety agency. There have been calls for this for decades with no real action,” she says.

How to Keep Yourself Safe

To learn whether a food has been recalled, visit the following pages:

- [Recalls, Market Withdrawals, & Safety Alerts](#), which is updated regularly by the FDA. You can also sign up to receive email alerts.
- A list of recalled food items is listed on the CDC’s Foodborne Outbreaks [webpage](#).
- [Recalls and Public Health Alerts](#), published by the USDA FSIS.

According to the CDC, there are [four key steps that consumers can take to keep themselves safe](#):

- 1. Clean:** Wash your hands and surfaces often.
- 2. Separate:** Don’t cross-contaminate.
- 3. Cook** to the right temperature.
- 4. Chill:** Refrigerate promptly. Perishable foods, including meat, seafood, dairy, cut fruit, some vegetables, and cooked leftovers, should be refrigerated within two hours. If temperatures are above 90°F, these foods should be refrigerated within one hour.

If you believe that you may have purchased a recalled food item, carefully read the recall notice and follow any product-specific instructions. You may be able to return the product to the store you purchased it from for a refund. Be sure to thoroughly clean all surfaces that the product touched.

Most importantly, make sure no one consumes the contaminated product. If you believe that a specific food product made you sick, you should report it to the corresponding regulating body and/or the company that produced and distributed the product. 🍴

As the food and health equity coordinator at IFANCA, **AMELIA KELEHER** advocates for expanding access to halal options in schools, on college campuses, and through federal nutrition assistance programs. Based in Portland, ME, Amelia is committed to cultivating sustainable and equitable food systems in her local community and beyond.



WOMEN AND WEIGHTLIFTING

By Ali Othman, NSCA-CPT®



IN RECENT YEARS WEIGHTLIFTING HAS GAINED popularity among women as a powerful instrument in a physical fitness routine and a way to enhance one's overall well-being. It's a big change from the days when weightlifting was predominantly associated with oversized, hulk-like men sweating and grunting through their routines. Today, an increasing number of women are realizing the benefits of weightlifting, which go far beyond the aesthetic aspect of the sport. These benefits promote better health by mitigating the risk of diseases like osteoporosis and empowering independence, self-confidence, and self-defense capabilities, all while increasing a person's energy levels and relieving stress in a healthy way.

Many of the health benefits offered by weightlifting are specific to women. Osteoporosis is a condition characterized by low bone density and an increased risk of fracture. This condition is more prevalent among women, especially older women, due to hormonal changes during and after menopause. Weightlifting plays an important role in combating osteoporosis because the mechanical stress imposed during weight-bearing movements stimulates the growth of new bone tissue. New bone tissue means stronger, denser bones and a reduced risk of osteoporosis.

Weightlifting can also have a transformative effect on self-confidence and mental well-being. Stronger bones and muscles mean a stronger you. As you engage in a routine and gradually increase its intensity, you'll witness yourself getting stronger and your body shape changing. This progress helps foster a positive body image, leading to more self-confidence. Like all intense exercise, weightlifting stimulates the release of endorphins, which are the feel-good hormones that help alleviate stress, curb anxiety, and fight off symptoms of depression. Self-confidence and positive mental well-being may not be visually discernable markers of your weightlifting progress, but they will enhance your overall quality of life.

Through weightlifting, you can build physical strength and power that are useful in many situations. Weightlifting can improve body awareness, coordination, agility, reaction time, and endurance. These are the physical tools needed for self-defense, but just as importantly, possessing these tools may help you navigate threatening situations with more confidence.

Whether your health and wellness goals are health-related or aesthetic, weight loss is usually somewhere on the list. Most people never imagine that weightlifting can help them lose weight, but it is a great way to shed some pounds. Weightlifting's positive effect on metabolic rate results in you burning more calories throughout the day. In addition, the lean muscle mass built from weightlifting is more metabolically active than other types of tissue,



Weightlifting's positive effect on metabolic rate results in you burning more calories throughout the day.



like fat. More muscle means burning more calories, even while at rest.

Compound exercises that engage multiple muscle groups will help boost weight loss by maximizing your calorie burn, and exercises like the dumbbell squat to dumbbell curl are at the top of the list. This exercise engages multiple muscle groups and simulates the motion of picking something up off the ground. It's a motion that is naturally present throughout your day and one that gets more difficult as we age.

Taking the first step in any program is always the most daunting part. After talking with your doctor about starting a weightlifting program, your next step is to consult a personal trainer. It's important to learn the basics of weightlifting and perform them in front of a professional who can monitor your form and correct your movement pattern when necessary. Proper movement patterns are the foundation of your program, and whether you have lifted weights before or not, everyone can benefit from a refresher course. Your trainer will take you through each exercise, sometimes before using any weight, while explaining the proper body position and muscle activation for the primary and supporting muscles. This first step is as educational as it is adventurous, so embrace the learning, set realistic goals, and focus on proper form to prevent injury.

After building your foundation, you can decide on your preferred environment for weightlifting. Whether at a gym, a private studio, or in the corner of your home, choose a place where you will be comfortable. While training, it's good to view the body as an integrated unit rather than a collection of separate muscle groups. Whenever possible, train the groups together and in different combinations to maintain synergy throughout your body.

As you begin your program, your focus will be on the big compound exercises that require movement across more than one joint. Squats, deadlifts, and lunges are excellent for building lower body strength. Chest and shoulder presses, rows, pull-ups, and pull-downs will build upper body strength. Your core is the link between your upper and lower body, so don't forget to train the strength and

balance of your midsection. This will be important for maintaining a neutral posture as your body shape changes.

Gradually increase the intensity of your workouts to avoid a plateau and continue your forward progress. This is called progressive overload, and it challenges the body in a healthy way by allowing you ample time to adapt to the increased stress. It also allows you to get stronger while minimizing your risk of injury. Proper nutrition before and after workouts will support this process, as will a well-rounded cardiovascular routine.

While weightlifting offers numerous benefits, it's important to be aware of potential risks associated with the sport. Most injuries come from incorrect form and technique or weight overload. When you build a solid foundation, understand the movement patterns, and gradually increase the amount of weight you're lifting, you mitigate your risk of injury. When progressing in weight, do it gradually to maintain joint and connective tissue health.

Overtraining is another risk that can lead to fatigue, poor performance, and an increased risk of injury. Allow ample rest time between heavy training sessions so your body has a chance to recover and rebuild, and always listen to your body. If a movement doesn't feel right, remove it from your routine and replace it with a more comfortable alternative. Consider all muscle groups when weightlifting because keeping your body's symmetry is important to maintaining its synergy.

Weightlifting is an empowering and transformative sport that provides many physical and mental health benefits. Men have been the main beneficiary of these health benefits for too long, but the trend has shifted in recent years. What we're seeing now is the realization that weightlifting is a great technique to pave the way to a healthier, stronger, and more confident future for women. 

ALI OTHMAN is an NSCA-certified personal trainer with over fifteen years of experience in the health and wellness industry.

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Enjoy Life®	Snack Food	Enjoy Life Natural Brands	Supermarkets, convenience stores, drugstores
Flipz® Turtles®	Candy / Chocolate	DeMet's Candy Company	Supermarkets, drugstores, discount stores
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Impossible™	Food Products	Impossible Foods Inc.	Grocery stores and select restaurants throughout the United States
J&M®	Food Products	J & M Food Products Company	Visit their website: www.halalcertified.com
Kontos®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bakery Items Bread 	Kontos Foods, Inc.	Ethnic (Arab, Indo/Pak) stores and fruit & vegetable markets throughout the United States
La Yogurt®	Dairy Products	Johanna Foods, Inc.	Supermarkets, fruit/vegetable markets, discount stores
Love & Quiches Gourmet®	Brownies and Cakes	Bello LLC, dba Love and Quiches	Visit their website for outlets: www.loveandquiches.com
MAYA™	Cosmetics	Maya Cosmetics	Visit their website: www.maya-cosmetics.com
Melaleuca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutritional Supplements Personal Care Products 	Melaleuca, Inc.	Visit their website for distributors: www.melaleuca.com
Mountain High™	Dairy Products	General Mills	Supermarkets throughout the United States
My Own Meal®	Food Products	My Own Meals, Inc.	Visit their website: www.myownmeals.com
National®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dessert Mixes Food Products Sauces & Dressings, Condiments Spices & Seasonings 	National Foods Limited	Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States and Canada
Natural Delights®	Food Products	Datepac, LLC	Kroger, Meijer, Publix, Walmart, Whole Foods, and various markets throughout the United States

Brand	Product Type	Company Name	Available At
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Organic Valley®	Dairy Products	Organic Valley	Supermarkets throughout the United States
Peek Freans	Bakery Items	English Biscuit Manufacturers (Pvt.) Ltd.	Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States and Canada
POM Wonderful®	Beverages / Beverage Concentrates	POM Wonderful, LLC	Supermarkets throughout the United States
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