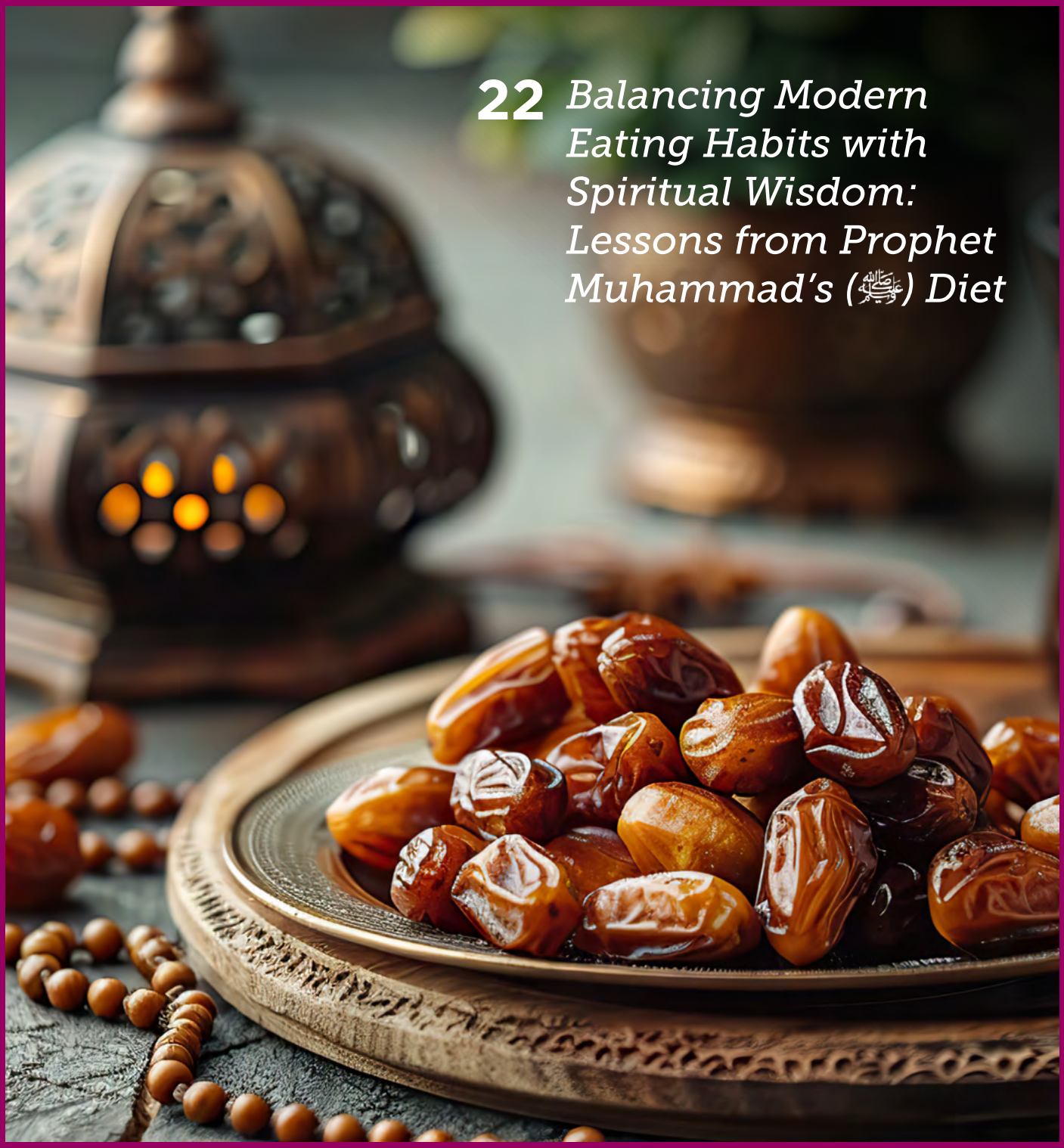
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Spring 2024
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Halal Consumer

A Publication of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America
Magazine



22 *Balancing Modern Eating Habits with Spiritual Wisdom: Lessons from Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) Diet*



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In the name of God, the Most Beneficent, Most Merciful









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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
www.annanshehadi.com

Editor's Note

Assalaamu alaikum,

We have had some new changes at the Halal Consumer magazine, and I am pleased to introduce myself as the new editor! I am so excited to be on board and will continue to bring you the latest trends and developments in the ever-changing halal landscape!

In this issue, we will take inspiration from Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and learn how his balanced diet and spiritual etiquette offer practical wisdom that contrasts with today's popular diets. Our recipes also reflect a balanced diet, from salmon kebabs to a hearty soup. In addition, we have a wonderful treat for you, where you can try your hands at recreating the viral Dubai Chocolate Knafeh bar.

IFANCA has been working hard to address issues of food security which are crippling many across the country. In our Feature article, we present various projects that we have initiated that go beyond halal certification. In order to promote health equity issues, we have created partnerships to eradicate polio.

Our Spotlight feature highlights the extraordinary work done by the Abrahamic Center for Cultural Education (ACCE), as they seek to build bridges with the wider community in Chicago, Illinois. The center is a great resource for academic institutions as they provide information about Islam and Muslims through innovative means including an art gallery, creative events, and educational presentations, in addition to interfaith activities.

The food industry can be full of surprises and you may not always be getting what you paid for. Our article on "Food Fraud" looks into ways consumers can avoid falling into fraudulent traps. We also include an article on "Decoding Ambiguous Ingredients," which aims to provide clarity on ingredients that are perceived to be haram.

We may not always have time or energy to go to the gym and partake in rigorous workouts. In the article, "A NEAT way to stay fit," our personal trainer offers neat ways on how your simple daily actions can contribute to a healthy lifestyle, on days when you cannot do regular exercises. We also have "A Special Focus on Men's Health," which brings attention to common health issues such as cancer and cardiovascular diseases, and what preventative measures you can take to improve your health.

Be sure to follow us on all our social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, Youtube, and LinkedIn, for all the latest news about Halal Consumer Magazine and IFANCA. You can also email us at halalconsumer@ifanca.org with any questions or feedback. We love hearing from our readers!

Sincerely,

Zehra Jafri editor

From the Publisher's Desk

Assalaamu alaikum,

There has been a changing of the guard here at the Halal Consumer Magazine.
After 3 ½ years of dedicated service, our previous editor, Alison DeGuide, has now moved on to pursue new opportunities. We want to express our gratitude for her valuable contributions to IFANCA, and we wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

With that, I am delighted to announce that Zehra Jafri has assumed the role of Editor of our magazine. With an extensive background working for various Muslim organizations in the USA and abroad, Zehra brings a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of the global halal industry. She comes with an abundance of fresh ideas aimed at evolving the magazine's content. We look forward to the positive changes she will bring to our publication.

But before we can do that, we want to get to know you, our dedicated readers, a little bit better. Your insights are extremely valuable to us, as we seek to create content of relevance to you. **Please scan the QR code to the right to access our short survey.**

Please also encourage other members of your household to participate in this survey, as we value everyone's opinions. Your feedback will enable us to deliver the content you want and is crucial in shaping the future of our magazine. Together, we can create a publication that truly resonates with our community.

In addition, we always love to hear from our readers. If you have any feedback, or if you would like to contribute articles or recipes, please email us at halalconsumer@ifanca.org.

Sincerely,

Muhammad Munir Chaudry president

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Halal or Not?
Decoding Ambiguous Ingredients

By Dofactora Iskandar



THE FOOD INDUSTRY IS ALWAYS EVOLVING, with new trends and ingredients constantly emerging. With that comes a great deal of confusion, as to whether a certain ingredient is halal, as many words can have double meanings. Two of the forbidden categories for Muslim consumers are pork and alcohol. Despite a product being halal, many Muslims still hesitate to consume Halal food and drinks with haram association. Here we will dissect the ambiguous terminology used in the food industry for ingredients derived from these sources, to determine if an ingredient is halal.

Pork or porcine related:

Bacon

Bacon is a breakfast strip meat item made from pigs. The process involves curing and smoking the meat. Other animal species such as turkey, chicken, and beef can also be processed to resemble bacon, but these alternatives do not have the same market size as traditional pork bacon. In American culture, the word "bacon" is uniquely associated with pigs. Therefore, it is best not to use the term "bacon" for any other animal, such as chicken bacon, turkey bacon, or beef bacon. Alternatives for this type of product could be chicken breakfast strips or beef breakfast strips. However, the taste and sensory profile of such alternates may not imitate the original (pork) bacon.

Hamburger

In the 1800s, German immigrants migrated to the USA and introduced a beef-based dish in the style of Hamburg, Germany. It has never been a pork-based food since its introduction. Over time, the product has evolved, resulting in variations such as beef burgers, cheeseburgers, and even fish burgers. Due to this development, some people mistakenly believe that hamburgers are made from ham which is a pork meat item. So, in the USA the term “hamburger” is always used for a pure beef item.

Hotdog

A hot dog is a classic summertime food consisting of a sausage served hot in a long, soft roll that is sliced down the middle to hold the sausage. People may refer to a



Despite a product being halal, many Muslims still hesitate to consume Halal food and drinks with haram association.



hot dog as the entire food item or just the sausage itself, which can also be called a frankfurter. Although it contains “dog” in the name, it does not infer the usage of dog meat in sausages. Moreover, the name "hot dog" comes from the Dachshund Sausage Theory, which indicates that the name is a witty reference to the dachshund dog breed's long and thin body. The name is credited to the vendors who sold the sausages, which were brought by German immigrants.

Alcoholic drinks related:

Wine

Wine is an alcoholic beverage made from fruit, commonly grapes. There are many types of wine, such as white wine and red wine, each with specific tastes and colors due to variations in raw materials and processing methods. While wine is primarily consumed as a beverage, it can also be used as a cooking ingredient. However, the Halal status of cooking wine and wine vinegar differs. Cooking wine is categorized as Haram because it still contains alcohol, while wine vinegar is considered Halal. This is because the alcohol in wine vinegar has been fermented into acetic acid.

Beer

Beer is an alcoholic beverage made from grains. There are many types of beer, such as porter, stout, and lager, each with specific tastes and colors due to variations in raw materials and processing methods.

There are also beverages named "beer" that are non-alcoholic, such as ginger beer and root beer. Historically, ginger beer was brewed and could contain some alcohol. However, most commercially available ginger beer today is non-alcoholic and made with ginger, sugar, water, and carbonation. Root beer was never intended to be an alcoholic beverage. It is flavored with sassafras root, herbs, and spices, and does not go through an alcoholic fermentation process.

Cocktails

Cocktails are alcoholic beverages typically made with a distilled spirit (like gin, rum, tequila, vodka, whiskey, etc.), along with other ingredients such as liqueurs, cordials, fruit juices, cream, sugar, spices, and herbs. They are often shaken or stirred together with ice and then strained into a glass.

Besides that, the term "cocktail" is also used for food, commonly fruit cocktails. A fruit cocktail is a mixture of chopped or diced fruits, sometimes served with a light syrup or dressing, which is a non-alcoholic food.

Mocktails

Nowadays, to cater to more people who do not consume alcohol, mocktails have been developed. Mocktails likely came along as a way for people who couldn't or didn't want to consume alcohol to enjoy similar flavorful drinks as cocktails. The key difference is the absence of ethanol.

In mocktails, carbonated drinks or soda are used to replace the alcohol. The types of ingredients and flavors are the same as in cocktails, for example, Mojito. There are both Mojito cocktails and Mojito mocktails. Other examples include Pina Colada, Margarita, and Bloody Mary.



Bourbon

Bourbon is a type of American whiskey made from a grain mixture that is at least 51% corn, with other grains such as rye, wheat, or barley. There are also common culinary uses of the term "Bourbon," such as in Vanilla Bourbon and Biscuit Bourbon. Vanilla Bourbon refers to vanilla that is harvested using a particular curing method developed on an island named Ile Bourbon, commonly known as Reunion Island. Biscuit Bourbon refers to a type of cookie that typically has a chocolate biscuit base and a vanilla-flavored cream filling.

Madeira

Madeira wine is a fortified wine produced on Portugal's Madeira Islands. Similarly to Bourbon, Madeira is also commonly used in other contexts, such as in the term Madeira cake, which is a traditional British cake. Contrary to its name, it is not made with Madeira wine. The cake is similar to a pound cake or yellow cake, often served with tea or liqueurs. Historically, it was fashionable to enjoy a slice of this cake with a glass of Madeira wine, hence the name. Ⓜ

DOFACTORA ISKANDAR is a Halal industry professional with a Master of Food Science from Cornell University. Leveraging his scientific background, Dofactora has worked as a Halal auditor and trainer for the past eight years.



A Special Focus on Men's Health

By Kelly Izdihar Crosby





AS WOMEN FACE SPECIFIC HEALTH CHALLENGES due to their hormonal makeup and anatomy, men also face health challenges for the same reasons. Men's health is tied to their unique reproductive system and lifestyle behaviors. We'll start with health issues that originate in the male reproductive system.

Men are at risk for prostate cancer and testicular cancer. Prostate cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer. The prostate is a small, walnut-shaped gland that produces seminal fluid that transports and develops sperm. When prostate cancers develop, if they stay inside the prostate gland, they may not cause serious harm, and only need minimal treatment. However, some cancers grow aggressively and spread quickly. Common symptoms of prostate cancer include trouble urinating, blood in the urine, blood in the semen, erectile dysfunction, and unintentional weight loss. The cause of prostate cancer is unknown, but risk factors include a family history of prostate cancer and obesity. The risk of getting prostate cancer increases after age 50.

Testicular cancer isn't very common and is highly treatable. The testicles make sperm and the hormone testosterone inside of the scrotum. Testicular cancer can occur at any age but mostly happens between the ages of 15 and 45. The first sign of cancer is usually a bump or lump on the testicle. Other signs can include back pain, discomfort in the testicle or scrotum, a dull ache in the lower belly or groin, and enlargement of breast tissue.

Men experience declining levels of testosterone as they age or due to certain health conditions. This is also referred to as low testosterone or male hypogonadism. Testosterone, the androgen produced in the testicles, is the key ingredient in male hormonal development as it can affect appearance, sex drive, muscle build, and bone mass. These symptoms of low testosterone can be emotionally and physically challenging. The symptoms include decreased libido, erectile dysfunction, fatigue, hair loss, decreased cognitive function, decreased sperm

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups. Men are also more likely to have heart attacks and a higher risk for coronary artery disease.

count, increased body fat, loss of muscle mass, and decreased bone density.

Similar diseases affect men and women differently. Cardiovascular diseases affect both men and women, but men tend to develop it at earlier ages. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups. Men are also more likely to have heart attacks and a higher risk for coronary artery disease. According to an article on WedMD, "just being a man makes you more likely to get heart disease at a younger age — about 10 years earlier on average." Low testosterone and erectile dysfunction could be signs of future heart problems.

Men tend to develop type 2 diabetes at a lower weight than women. Because men tend to accumulate fat around the abdomen, this trait is associated with higher risk for type 2 diabetes, rather than the pear-shaped fat distribution often common with women. Erectile dysfunction shows up as a common symptom along with an overactive bladder, incontinence, urinary tract infections, and retrograde ejaculation (when semen is released into the bladder). Undiagnosed or unmanaged diabetes can lead to other health problems such as stroke, vision loss, kidney failure, heart disease, or the amputation of a toe, foot, or leg. We can see how all these ailments are linked to one another.

Men are at a slightly higher risk for colon cancer than women with the lifetime risk of developing colorectal cancer being about one in 23 for men and one in 25 for women. Excluding skin cancers, colorectal cancers are the third most diagnosed cancers in the US. In an article for Men's Health magazine, Marty Munson states, "Colorectal cancer is a big risk: It's currently the third leading

There is a social stigma for men, in seeking help, and the fear of appearing weak or fragile. The pressure to "man up" and appear unemotional has long-lasting, detrimental consequences.





Do not let toxic ideas of masculinity prevent you from living a happy, healthy life.

cause of both new cancers and cancer deaths for men (behind lung and prostate). And while colorectal cancer rates are declining for people ages 65 and older, they're climbing for younger people—especially men." The symptoms of colorectal cancers usually depend on the size of the cancer and where it is in the large intestine. The symptoms include blood in the stools or rectal bleeding, changes in bowel habits such as frequent diarrhea or constipation, fatigue, discomfort in the belly area, and losing weight without trying.

There are lifestyle choices that play a role in men's health. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "although men just make up over half of the workforce, they experience more than 90 percent of workplace fatalities." Men are more likely to be in occupations that involve a higher risk of being injured or exposure to hazardous substances. These jobs usually involve construction or industrial work. If your father, brother, or uncle works in construction, transportation, or health care, he's probably experienced at least one type of injury.

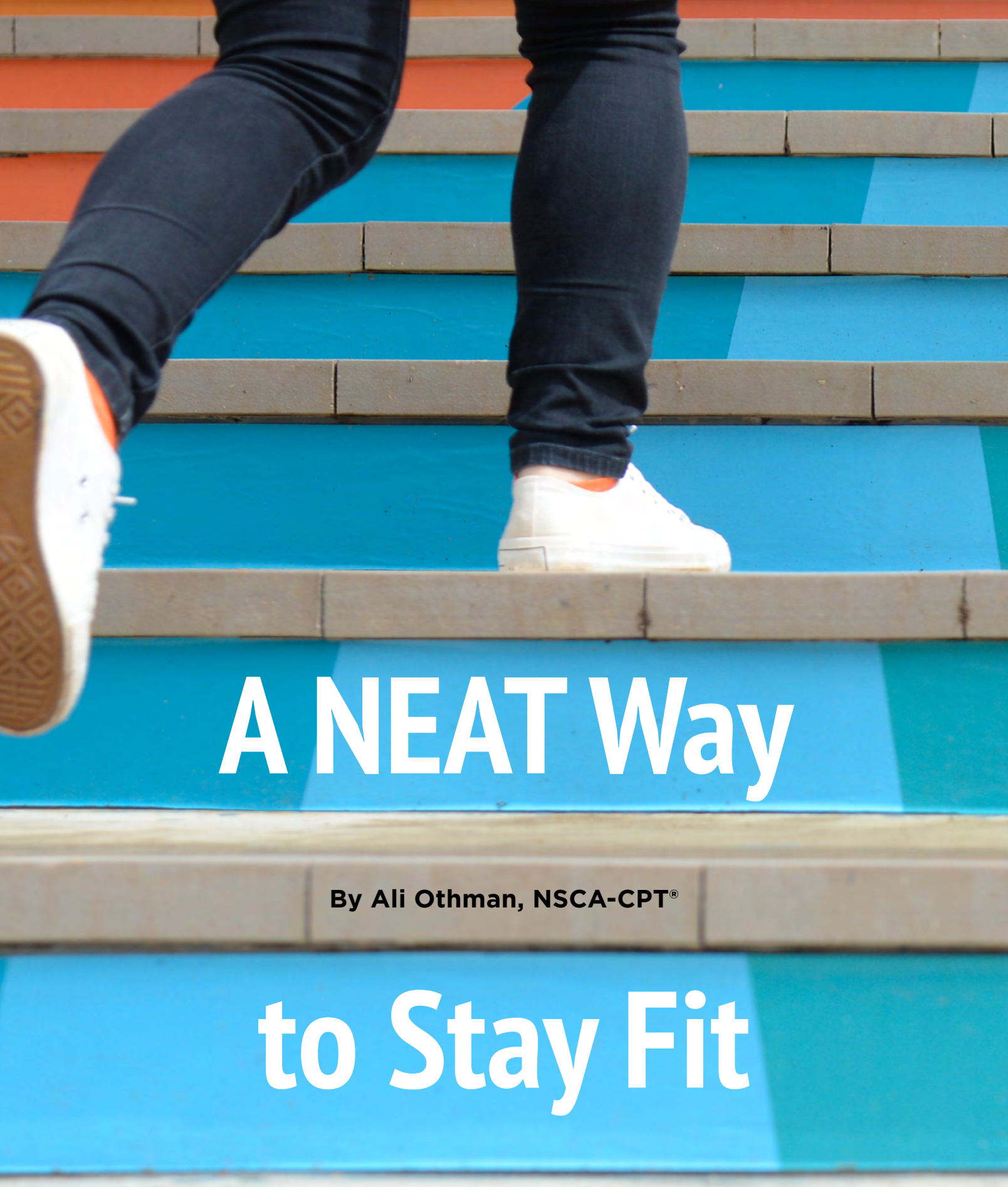
Also, according to the Indiana University School of Medicine "Men are significantly less likely than women to see a doctor or report symptoms to a health care provider. Only 60 percent of men go to the doctor for a yearly, routine checkup, and 40 percent won't go until something is seriously wrong." Often, men will avoid health issues, hoping they will resolve on their own. Or, if they do seek medical attention, they may not be completely forthcoming about all their problems. Part of this avoidance is rooted in fear. But it is also rooted in the negative feelings of vulnerability and the societal pressure men feel to be "superheroes" or to "man up." Easily treatable illnesses can evolve into life threatening diseases due to fear and avoidance.

This avoidance also extends into maintaining their mental health. Men may not seek out counseling because of unhealthy societal expectations of masculinity. There is a social stigma for men, in seeking help, and the fear of appearing weak or fragile. The pressure to "man up" and appear unemotional has long-lasting, detrimental consequences. Some may choose to mask their emotional symptoms, like depression or anxiety, with unhealthy coping habits such as smoking, unhealthy eating, or substance abuse. Although women are more likely to attempt suicide, men are more likely to die by suicide, and often through violent means. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention states, "in 2022, men died by suicide 3.85 times more than women."

But there is light at the end of the tunnel. So many of these issues can be avoided with a healthy diet, moderate exercise, and preventive healthcare. Guidelines vary for when men should start their annual physicals, but from ages 18 to 39, they should be every two to three years. From ages 40 and above, exams should be done annually. These exams are to check for issues with blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose. Prostate cancer screening usually starts at 50 but may start earlier if you are African American or have a family history of prostate cancer. Men can perform self-examinations to check for testicular cancer. This is recommended for those between the ages of 20 and 40 years old. Colon cancer screenings start at age 45. Mental health screenings can start at any time when feelings of ongoing sadness or anxiety are detected.

When concerning men's health, it is important for men to put aside their fears and reservations. If you are in pain, whether that pain is physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual, please seek professional help. Don't "tough it out." Do not let toxic ideas of masculinity prevent you from living a happy, healthy life. Abdullah bin Amru bin Al-'As narrated that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) advised us, "Your body has a right on you," (Sahih al-Bukhari 1975). Our minds and bodies have rights over us, and they must be valued as the precious gifts they are.

KELLY IZDIHAR CROSBY is an artist and freelance writer living in Atlanta, Georgia.



A NEAT Way to Stay Fit

By Ali Othman, NSCA-CPT®

In the everlasting pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, exercise always sits center stage. We lace up our running shoes, hit the gym, or carry and roll out our yoga mats, all in the name of wellness. The countless health benefits that come with exercise can't be emphasized enough.

But, for once, exercise is not the topic of the day. There is another, often overlooked, method for improving health and burning calories. Non-exercise activity thermogenesis, or NEAT, is the hidden tool in your belt that often gets lost in the fold.

NEAT is the energy expended during activities of daily living, exclusive of structured exercise, sleeping, and eating. It is the cumulative total of the calories burned when taking a flight of stairs, walking through the store carrying groceries, and even fidgeting during that afternoon meeting. All of these minor actions collectively contribute to a hefty portion of daily caloric expenditure.

NEAT is accessible to everyone regardless of fitness level or ability. Lifelong athletes and non-exercisers alike can find countless opportunities to incorporate NEAT into their day. Each individual's NEAT will vary based on their fitness level, likes and dislikes, and daily routine. Unlike traditional exercise, NEAT does not require workout equipment or dedicated sessions. The idea is simply about making deliberate choices to move more throughout the day.

NEAT varies between people based on factors such as occupation, leisure activities, and, in general, the way we spend our day. The benefits of NEAT extend beyond merely burning calories. A 2007 study by J. A. Levine published in the *Journal of Internal Medicine* explained its importance in maintaining a healthy body mass index: "data support the central hypothesis that NEAT is pivotal in the regulation of human energy expenditure and body weight regulation and that NEAT is important for understanding the cause and effective treatment for obesity." Countless studies dating back more than two decades point to similar conclusions. NEAT is about optimizing your lifestyle to include more activity, leading to improved cardiovascular health, enhanced metabolic function, and a better mood.

Unlike traditional exercise, NEAT does not require workout equipment or dedicated sessions. The idea is simply about making deliberate choices to move more throughout the day.

With a firm understanding of the importance of NEAT, we're primed to explore some practical ways to boost our daily activity.

1. Consider the stairs. This is an obvious one, but skip the elevator every so often and opt for the stairs. Stairs are an excellent way to elevate your heart rate and strengthen leg muscles while burning calories. If you're going all the way up, start with the stairs and finish with the elevator.

2. Take walking breaks. Incorporate short walks into your day, especially if you work a desk job. A fifteen-minute walk around the block can invigorate and rejuvenate your body and mind.

3. Get a standing desk. Invest in a standing desk to break up long periods of sitting. Standing promotes better posture and circulation and burns more calories than sitting. Try standing for ten to fifteen minutes every hour.

4. Take calls while walking. Turn sedentary moments into opportunities for physical activity by taking your calls on the move.







5. Complete your daily tasks and chores. Household chores like vacuuming, gardening, shoveling, and washing and folding clothes burn calories. Approach them as a chance to get active rather than something to procrastinate on.

6. Park farther away. Rather than searching for the closest parking space like a shark circling its prey, park farther away and walk to and from your destination. The added steps will promote circulation, increase your heart rate, and add to your NEAT.

7. Move and stretch regularly. Incorporate light exercises and stretching throughout the day to promote movement and reduce stiffness. A few three-minute sessions of jumping jacks, push-ups, or other calisthenics followed by some light stretching throughout the day will drive a higher calorie burn.

8. Fidget away. Embrace your habit of fidgeting because, as surprising as it seems, it increases NEAT. Tapping your foot, bouncing your leg, and playing with that pen all add up to calorie expenditure. As long as it doesn't bother your neighbor, keep on fidgeting.

9. Commute actively. Consider walking, biking, or using public transport rather than driving everywhere. These active commuting activities burn calories and add purposeful movement to your day, and movement with a purpose is so much easier than movement without.

Non-exercise activity thermogenesis is a game-changer in the quest for a healthier and more active lifestyle.

10. You decide. Find ways to elevate your heart rate and introduce some fun into your day. Prioritize activities that you enjoy so you can go back to your routine with a smile.

Incorporating these simple but effective strategies into your daily routine will help positively contribute to your NEAT and allow you to reap the health benefits of being more active. More importantly, these strategies are about embracing an active lifestyle filled with movement for the purpose of healthy living.

A 2004 study by James A. Levine published in the *American Journal of Physiology* underscores NEAT's importance to daily calorie burn. "NEAT is therefore the most variable component of energy expenditure, both within and between subjects, ranging from ~15% of total daily energy expenditure in very sedentary individuals to 50% or more of total daily energy expenditure in highly



active individuals." In a busy world where structured exercise may not always be possible, daily activities become a lifeline.

Non-exercise activity thermogenesis is a game-changer in the quest for a healthier and more active lifestyle. Perhaps NEAT's most notable characteristic is its inclusivity. It is so inclusive, in fact, that it transcends fitness levels, allowing access to all who want to embrace movement.

Remember that NEAT is not about abandoning structured exercise but rather embracing a lifestyle where every step, stretch, and all those loads of laundry contribute to your well-being. Its power rests in our hands, in the deliberate choices we make at each opportunity for movement. Be conscious of these opportunities, and infuse purposeful activity into your life one step at a time. Ⓜ

ALI OTHMAN is an NSCA-certified personal trainer with over fifteen years of experience in the health and wellness industry. He is passionate about giving people the tools to live a healthier and better-informed tomorrow.

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Spiced Salmon Kebabs

By Omolara Funmilayo

Servings: 4 | Time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil (plus extra for asparagus)
- 1¼ pounds salmon fillet, sliced into 1-inch cubes
- 2 lemons, sliced into thin rounds
- 8 barbecue skewers
- 6 cups asparagus, woody ends trimmed off
- sea salt & black pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the grill to medium heat.
2. In a mixing bowl, mix the parsley, sesame seeds, black pepper, sea salt, red pepper flakes, maple syrup, and olive oil. Mix well. Add the salmon pieces and toss well to coat.
3. Grab your barbecue skewers and slide on a piece of salmon, followed by a folded lemon slice. Repeat until all ingredients are used up and several kebabs are made.
4. Toss asparagus in a splash of olive oil and season with sea salt and black pepper to taste.
5. Place kebabs on one side of the grill and asparagus on the other. Grill both for about 3-4 minutes per side, or until salmon flakes with a fork.
6. Remove from the grill and divide between plates. Enjoy!

Notes:
Serve with quinoa, brown rice, or sweet potato for more carbs.
Chop the salmon and add it to a zip-lock baggie with the marinade. Store in the fridge for up to a day to save time. Ⓜ



Chicken Taco Soup

By Sughra Jafri

Servings: 8 | Time: 40 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ onion chopped
- 2 lbs halal chicken breast
- 2 10 oz. cans of diced tomatoes with green chilies
- 1 15 oz. can of black beans drained and rinsed
- 1 15 oz. can corn drained
- ½ red bell pepper chopped
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 1 halal chicken or vegetable stock cube dissolved in 2 cups water
- salt & pepper to taste

Optional toppings to serve:
shredded Mexican cheese, avocado, cilantro, tortilla strips, beans, corn, etc.

DIRECTIONS

1. Add the oil and onion to a pot and sweat over medium heat for 5-7 minutes.
2. Add the chicken and sauté until browned for 10 minutes.
3. Stir in the spices, canned beans, and vegetables. Make sure to set aside a few spoonfuls of the vegetables and beans for toppings when serving.
4. Increase the heat to high and bring the soup to a boil. Turn down the heat so it's simmering for 5 minutes.
5. Cut the cream cheese into smaller pieces and add it to the soup. Let it blend into the soup.
6. Season the soup to your taste with any additional spices and garnish with toppings.

Notes:
You can also use 2 cups of halal cooked chicken and stir in towards the end. This will speed up cooking time. Ⓜ



Gyros Bread

By Sughra Jafri

Servings: 12–16 | Time: 1 hour

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups flour
- 1 cup warm water
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 ½ tsp yeast
- 1 lb. of Olympia® Foods Cooked Halal Gyros Slices
- 2-3 cups of Cabot® Creamery Pepper Jack, Colby Jack, or Cheddar Cheese
- Garlic Parmesan spread

For the Garlic Parmesan spread:

- ½ cup of melted butter
- ⅓ cup parmesan cheese, grated
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp dried parsley

DIRECTIONS

1. Whisk the warm water, yeast, and sugar together using a stand mixer or large mixing bowl. Let it sit covered for 5 minutes.
2. Add olive oil, salt, and flour. Mix on low speed for 2 minutes, or beat slowly with a silicone spatula or wooden spoon until the ingredients are well combined.
3. Knead the dough in the mixer for 5 minutes or by hand on a floured surface. If sticky, sprinkle with 1 tsp of flour at a time. Test the dough by poking it, to see if it bounces back and can stretch without tearing.
4. Grease a large bowl and place the dough inside. Cover and let rise at room temperature for 60-90 minutes until doubled in size.
5. Spread the dough on a greased pan. Cover it lightly and let it rest for 5-10 minutes while you prepare the toppings.
6. Combine the ingredients for the garlic parmesan spread in a bowl and mix well.
7. Spread a layer of garlic parmesan spread on the dough.
8. Heat slices of gyros in the microwave for 1 minute, layer on top of paper towels to absorb the excess grease.
9. Layer the gyros without overlapping, so the entire bread surface is covered.
10. Optional: you can add sautéed vegetables such as onions, peppers, mushrooms, or sliced olives, according to your tastes.
11. Generously top with the cheese.
12. Roll the dough into a log shape.
13. Optional: you can spread seeds, Italian seasonings, or more cheese on top, according to your tastes.
14. Bake with seam side down, at 325°F, for 40-60 minutes. Start checking after 40 minutes. If the dough feels undercooked, cover it with foil to prevent excess browning and continue baking until fully cooked.
15. Slice and enjoy with Hummus, soup, or any of your favorite dips or sauces. These are also great for school lunches, picnics, and also make great appetizers for dinner parties.

Notes: You may substitute with any other spreads such as pesto, pizza sauce, or cream cheese. Ⓜ



Viral Dubai Chocolate Knafeh Bar

By Zehra Jafri

Servings: 8 | Time: 1 hour

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 8 oz. Kontos® Kataifi Shredded Pastry Dough
- 16 oz. melted dark or milk chocolate
- 3 ½ cups Wonderful Pistachios® No Shells Lightly Salted pistachios
- ¼ cup tahini

Optional: white chocolate, food coloring, and edible gold dust for decoration

DIRECTIONS

1. Defrost the kataifi for 1 hour.
2. Melt butter on medium heat and add chopped kataifi. Toast for 8-10 minutes until golden and crispy. Transfer to a plate and absorb excess grease. Allow it to cool to room temperature.
3. Melt the chocolate in a saucepan or in the microwave.
4. Blend the pistachios until they gain a crumbly consistency, then continue until the mixture turns into a paste, and continue until a silkier texture is formed. There is no need to add any water or oil.
5. Add the pistachio cream to the cooled kataifi and mix until well combined with the tahini.
6. Drizzle any decorative chocolate, food coloring, or gold dust into molds, depending on how fancy and presentable you want it to look, and chill in the freezer for 10 minutes. Pour in the chocolate and spread it in the mold. Chill in the freezer for another 10 minutes until set.
7. Lather the filling onto the set chocolate and spread evenly. Pour in more chocolate and allow it to cover the filling. Chill in the freezer for another 30 minutes to 1 hour, until set.
8. Once the bar has set, take it out of the mold and enjoy!

Notes:

This recipe is easily adaptable to any size mold, so you can enjoy the chocolate in all different shapes and sizes.

You can also use ready-made pistachio cream.Ⓜ



Balancing Modern Eating Habits with Spiritual Wisdom: Lessons from Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) Diet

By Zehra Jafri

THE WAYS IN WHICH WE EAT AND THE FOODS that we consume are often influenced by our inherited behaviors and cultural traditions. As Muslims, we adhere to the sunnah as we seek to emulate the lifestyle of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). His dietary habits, derived from teachings in the Qur'an, provide valuable guidance on how Muslims should maintain a balanced diet for their overall well-being. In today's world, where various diets gain popularity, promising short-lived results by restricting or eliminating certain foods, we learn from the etiquette of the Prophet (ﷺ), that eating is not simply a physical necessity to fill our stomachs, but it is also a spiritual act that can nourish our minds and souls.

The Prophet (ﷺ) always began his meals with the name of God and finished his meals with expressions of gratitude. This practice teaches us to always acknowledge God for providing His blessings and appreciating the sustenance provided. It emphasizes the importance of gratitude and mindfulness in our daily lives, recognizing that even the basic act of eating is a blessing that we should not take for granted.

Another important etiquette taught by the Prophet (ﷺ) was to eat in moderation. He firmly discouraged over-indulgence in eating. Moderation is central to the Prophet's dietary habits. This balanced approach ensured that a balanced intake of nutrients would help prevent health issues associated with overconsumption, or at the other extreme, starvation. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, "A human being fills no worse vessel than his stomach. It is sufficient for a human being to eat a few mouthfuls to keep his spine straight. But if he must (fill it), then let him divide his stomach into three parts: one-third for food, one-third for drink, and one-third for air." (Sunan Ibn Majah 3349)

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) showed great humility in how he ate. He preferred sitting on the floor with his companions, treating everyone equally. Before he began eating, he made sure servants were served first, showing his kindness and consideration. He would eat on the floor, invite servants to join him, and always cleaned the plate to not waste any food. He also taught that there are more blessings to share your meal with others. "The food of one person is sufficient for two, and the food of two people is sufficient for four, and the food of four people is sufficient for eight." (Sahih Muslim)

Narrations also indicate that the Prophet (ﷺ) fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "If you fast any part of the month, then fast the 13th, 14th, and 15th" (Sunan an-Nasa'i 2424). Fasting is recommended in the middle of the month to serve as a reminder to the Muslims to maintain their spiritual practice and self-discipline throughout the year, and to not restrict it only to the month of Ramadan. Modern science has affirmed the benefits of fasting and intermittent fasting as research has indicated that fasting can improve metabolism, cellular repair, brain function, heart health, lower blood sugar, and reduce inflammation. There are several distinct methods for fasting in modern diets, which aim to serve different purposes.

5:2 Diet: This approach involves eating normally for five days a week and then restricting calorie intake to 500 calories for women, and 600 calories for men on the remaining two days. The goal is to promote weight loss and metabolic health by creating a calorie deficit.

16/8 Method: This method restricts eating to an 8-hour window each day, resulting in a 16-hour fasting period. Variations like 18:6 or 20:4 can also be used. The purpose is to improve metabolic health and facilitate weight management by extending the fasting period to encourage the body to utilize stored fat for energy.

24-hour Dry Fast: This involves abstaining from all caloric intake for a full 24 hours, though water and zero-calorie fluids are permitted. The aim is to promote cellular repair and detoxification by allowing the digestive system to rest completely.

Liquid Fasting: This type of fasting focuses on consuming only liquids such as water, strained fruit and vegetable juices, or broth. The goal is to support detoxification and give the digestive system a break while still providing essential nutrients and hydration.

Other variations of fasting include alternate-day fasting and eating only one meal a day. In addition to the month of Ramadan, there are other forms of religious fasting observed by different faith groups, such as the Navratri Festival, where adherents typically restrict their diet to fruits, nuts, dairy products, and certain vegetables that are considered pure, while avoiding grains, pulses, onions, garlic, meat, fish, and alcohol. Likewise, fasting for Lent lasts 40 days, and participants give up something that



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they like, but it does not necessarily have to be a food item. The aim of these practices is spiritual observance aimed at purification and devotion.

Amid this backdrop of diverse fasting practices, dietary choices in everyday life come center stage. Nowadays, when the eating habits of Muslims are considered, halal meat immediately comes to mind. Does this mean that Muslims have to eat meat? These are the conflicted thoughts many Muslims who choose vegetarian or vegan diets face, whether through criticism from family and friends, or from society at large. The overconsumption of meat in modern society has also prompted some to adopt vegetarian or vegan diets for personal, health, or environmental reasons. If a Muslim does not consume meat, does it contradict the sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ)?

Historically, meat was considered a luxury item and consumed sparingly by the Prophet (ﷺ) and was reserved for special occasions such as Eid. This practice reflects moderation and appreciation for the limited resources of the times. Eid al Adha nowadays has become synonymous with sacrificing sheep, goats, and cows. The Qurbani is mandatory for every Muslim who can afford to do so. The tradition is traced back to the Qur'an, where Prophet Ibrahim (ﷺ), was commanded by Allah (swt) to sacrifice his son Ismail (ﷺ). The angel Jibraeel then replaced Ismail (ﷺ) with a ram. The qurbani was a metaphor for sacrifice and submitting to God's will, rather than being hailed as a festival of elaborate meat dishes. Islam teaches us balance even in the way that the qurbani is to be distributed. One-third is to be shared amongst family members, one-third is for friends, and one-third is to be distributed amongst the poor. Many Muslims also donate their entire qurbani for the disadvantaged Muslim communities in developing nations. This shows that we should not overindulge and be greedy, but also be charitable and share our sustenance with others to attain more blessings, as consuming meat frequently is also not financially sustainable for many people. These days many Muslims display extravagance in weddings and other celebrations and have moved away from the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) with regard to simplicity and humbleness.

Remember, if you're following a special diet for health reasons, it's important to consult your doctor to ensure you're not missing any essential nutrients and to explore ways to supplement them into your diet to ensure you maintain a balanced diet...

Over the years, many crash diets have emerged and become trendy for their promises of rapid weight loss through restrictive eating patterns. While these diets may offer short-term benefits, their sustainability and long-term health effects are often debated. Here are some examples of popular dietary trends and their potential health risks:

Atkins Diet: This diet reduces carbohydrate intake and emphasizes higher consumption of proteins and fats to promote weight loss, by using fat as the main energy source. The risk of chronic diseases increases with high meat intake.

Detox Diets: These diets claim to eliminate toxins from the body through fasting, juice cleanses, or specific food restrictions. They often lack essential nutrients and can cause electrolyte imbalances, dehydration, fatigue, and digestive issues.

High-Protein Diets: Diets that excessively emphasize protein can increase the risk of kidney stones, and lead to nutrient imbalances, if not balanced properly with other food groups. It is important to check the source of the protein, as the body digests natural sources differently as opposed to protein supplements which contain fillers, sweeteners, and other additives that can trigger digestive intolerances.

Keto Diet: This diet cuts down on carbohydrates and encourages eating more fats to trigger ketosis, where the body uses fat for fuel instead of carbohydrates. While it can be effective for short-term weight management, in the long run, it can lead to nutrient deficiencies, constipation, kidney and cholesterol complications.

Paleo Diet: This diet is based on foods eaten by early humans, focusing on meat, fish, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds while excluding grains, legumes, and dairy. It may seem like a decently balanced diet, however, due to the restrictions, it lacks essential nutrients such as calcium and vitamin D, and its high meat intake can increase saturated fat intake.

Raw Food Diet: This diet advocates for consuming only uncooked and unprocessed foods, emphasizing fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. Some starchy vegetables such as potatoes are excluded from this diet. While it promotes natural eating, it can lead to digestive issues such as bloating, gas, and other discomforts due to the nature of digesting raw vegetables and grains.



The Prophet's (ﷺ) dietary recommendations align with modern studies of balanced nutrition, promoting weight management, heart health, and overall well-being.

Vegan Diet: The vegan diet, which restricts all animal products including meat, dairy, eggs, and even honey, emphasizes eating plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. However, this diet lacks adequate nutrients which are primarily found in animal products such as vitamin B12, vitamin D3, iron, calcium, and omega-3 fatty acids.

Modern scientific research has shown the adverse effects of diets that are based on restrictions. This can impact various bodily functions as well as overall health. It can alter gut bacteria, affect digestion, immune system, the balance of energy, and weight fluctuations. Furthermore, these diets can also contribute to non-physical ailments, such as psychological disorders. Remember, if you're following a special diet for health reasons, it's important to consult your doctor to ensure you're not missing any essential nutrients and to explore ways to supplement them into your diet to ensure you maintain a balanced diet, and always consider the timeless advice from Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Many of the foods eaten by the Prophet (ﷺ) are now popularly known as today's "superfoods." While adhering to halal rules is crucial for Muslims, it doesn't imply that Allah (swt) emphasizes us to consume meat. The Qur'an mentions a variety of foods such as dates, figs, olives, pomegranates, honey, milk, fish, barley, lentils, and grapes, emphasizing dietary balance. These foods are rich in essential vitamins and nutrients, spanning multiple food groups, reflecting Allah's (swt) blessings and provision for us. These foods all contain varying levels of carbohydrates, protein, fats, vitamins, and minerals, which when consumed in moderation, fulfill an individual's nutritional needs.

The Prophet's (ﷺ) dietary recommendations align with modern studies of balanced nutrition, promoting weight management, heart health, and overall well-being. His examples on eating habits, from portion control to fasting, offer practical wisdom relevant to today's health challenges. His varied food choices reflect Islam's flexibility, allowing Muslims to adapt their diet based on their health and cultural preferences while adhering to halal guidelines.

In conclusion, the dietary practices of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) offer guidance on achieving a healthy and well-balanced diet. His emphasis on moderation, variety, ethical considerations, and eating etiquette provides a holistic framework for Muslims to maintain both physical health and spiritual fulfillment through their food choices. The Prophet's approach contrasts with modern restrictive diets that may deprive the body of essential vitamins and nutrients. By following his example, Muslims can navigate today's complex food landscape, maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle aligned with Islamic principles, and achieve well-being in both physical and spiritual aspects of life.

ZEHRA JAFRI has a Bachelor's degree in Marketing and enjoys keeping up with current news and social media trends. She lives in Chicago, IL with her 3 children.



FOOD FRAUD: A GLOBAL ISSUE

By Ernest Clark



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE THINGS YOU AND your family eat and drink aren't what they're supposed to be? This pervasive issue threatens the global food supply chain and those of us who rely on it. Food fraud, a term describing the intentional deception of consumers by those in the food industry, is the illicit modification or substitution of edible substances that can result in monetary gains, reduced trust in institutions, and, most importantly, impacts on our health.

Food fraud can take many forms, including false labeling or branding and adulterated or swapped ingredients. The practice is almost always financially motivated; for instance, malicious suppliers can sell diluted products, making more money. The problem is widespread, with approximately one percent of the world's entire food industry impacted yearly, according to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Conservative estimates place the global impact of food fraud at 10 to 15 billion dollars each year, though the FDA website states the true figure may be closer to $40 billion.

Food fraud's biggest threat is to the health of consumers. In 2008, food suppliers diluted infant formula using a dangerous substance known as melamine, a type of plastic. This resulted in the deaths of six infants and the hospitalizations of thousands, becoming known as the "Chinese milk scandal." But food fraud isn't a threat consigned to previous decades—on February 6, 2024, the FDA announced that a cinnamon processor in Ecuador was to blame for lead contamination of children's applesauce distributed beyond the country. Manufacturers recalled the tainted applesauce, but at least ninety confirmed cases of lead poisoning occurred across more than thirty U.S. states, impacting one-year-old children on average. Arianna Johnson made note of this in an article for *Forbes*, detailing how a Maryland couple filed a lawsuit in November 2023 after their child suffered lead poisoning as a result of the contaminated cinnamon.

A deeper look at the factors that contribute to food fraud helps us understand how and why the practice occurs and continues. As mentioned, food fraud can take a



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Globalization also contributes to the difficulty in curbing food fraud. Food and ingredient supply chains can reach across continents, changing hands and being processed and stored at a series of locations.

number of forms, but it is ultimately a tool or shortcut to make money. Food fraud, at its most straightforward, can be as simple as sellers claiming a normally lower-priced fish cut is actually that of a more expensive species, driving increased profits. Fraudsters may also sell expired or unmarked products. But fraud can also be the combination of a failure to spend the proper time and resources ensuring food processors are cleaned (or that food samples haven't been contaminated during packaging) while making illegitimate claims that such safeguards are, in fact, in place. Fraudsters may also falsely state their products are certified organic, exploiting consumer preferences to charge more or achieve more frequent sales.

These practices are effective for several reasons, the chief of which is that it is incredibly difficult to detect food fraud. But why? Even cases of outright food substitution require spot testing to be successfully identified, while the testing itself costs time and resources. In addition, tests may only check for one contaminant, such as plastic. In 2013, beef samples in the United Kingdom and Ireland were found to contain (or, in some cases, be mostly made of) undeclared horse meat. Investigators discovered the substitution after conducting tests for horse DNA, sparking a more widespread investigation. It was only when the Food Safety Authority of Ireland received the results of several tests involving tainted beef that retailers could be alerted, resulting in a mass removal of beef from circulation.

Globalization also contributes to the difficulty in curbing food fraud. Food and ingredient supply chains can reach across continents, changing hands and being processed and stored at a series of locations. This muddies the food trail. Even if a substituted or misbranded food item is successfully identified, it can be a complicated, time-consuming process to track down the source of the fraudulent product.

Consequences for perpetrators vary. Business owners who sell tainted products can receive fines, revocations of their licenses, or even jail time. However, halting fraudsters at the source requires more in-depth efforts. Operation Opson is a yearly Interpol and Europol joint law enforcement operation targeting food fraud. The eighth annual instance of this resulted in the seizure of approximately 16,000 tons and 33 million liters of compromised food and drink items, as well as the arrest of hundreds of individuals. In its eleventh year, Operation Opson disrupted eight different criminal networks.

In another example, in November 2023, Italian and Spanish police seized 260,000 liters of consumer-grade olive oil adulterated with lower-grade oil alternatives. Police also uncovered a criminal network that distributed the oil, confiscating multiple vehicles and €91,000 in







The Food Authenticity Network listed in 2022 the most common product categories, naming seafood as the number one most likely food to be adulterated or substituted.

cash. In relation to the case, the Food and Economic Safety Authority of Portugal stated a scarcity of olive oil on the global market and subsequent increase in olive oil prices likely contributed to the criminal activity, showcasing how changing economic factors can spur financially motivated fraudsters.

What types of foods are most at risk for fraud, and how can we protect ourselves? The Food Authenticity Network listed in 2022 the most common product categories, naming seafood as the number one most likely food to be adulterated or substituted. Meat, poultry, and dairy were close behind, each accounting for approximately a tenth of observed cases that year. Other likely foods that fraudsters target are items like honey or oils, which can be easily mixed with lower-quality substitutes.

While law enforcement agencies regularly identify and disrupt fraudster operations, we as consumers must also take steps to reduce the risk and likelihood of potential food fraud impact. The Food Fraud Initiative at Michigan State University recommends consumers ask themselves questions when something doesn't seem right: does the food taste how it's supposed to? Does it have the wrong color? If you have consumed a certain fish before, and something tastes strange about a recent cut, there may be a legitimate reason.

In addition, prioritizing certain types of suppliers over others can reduce the risk of food fraud. A national grocery store chain will be less likely to sell fraudulent or unsafe goods than an alternative local provider. Seals of quality or approval from trusted brands are not just a marketing tactic; they are also generally less likely to involve adulterated or substituted products or ingredients.

More sophisticated techniques to detect and prevent food fraud may be on the horizon. While spot-testing solutions are time-consuming and expensive, experts believe this may change. In Cara Rosenbloom's 2017 *Washington Post* article, Food Fraud Initiative Director John Spink said, "DNA coding is too expensive for consumers to do now, but it may eventually be an option." Currently, a simple awareness of food fraud's prevalence can help us be more careful about what we and our loved ones ingest, avoiding food and drink that tastes wrong and prioritizing less risky brands and products.

ERNEST CLARK is a researcher based in Dallas, Texas, who enjoys rock climbing, reading, and the outdoors. In his off time, he writes fiction short stories and attempts to broaden both his cuisine and media palettes wherever possible.



IFANCA's Multifaceted Approach to Food Security and Health Equity

By Asma Ahad

BEFORE THE TERMS FOOD AND HEALTH SECURITY were mainstream ideas, IFANCA's mission was to address these concerns. Access to halal foods is directly tied to food security, as many Muslims will forego nutrition security to adhere to religious dietary guidelines, regardless of their socio-economic class.

When IFANCA was founded in 1982, the goal was simple: make halal products more accessible for those who need them. We did not set out to be a halal certifier. Our goal was to help consumers by giving them the resources they needed to navigate the thousands of products that filled grocery store aisles.

Eventually, we were approached by companies that wanted help ensuring that their products were halal, including finding and sourcing halal ingredients. The more we were asked, the more we realized that halal consumers needed more than just a list of halal/haram ingredients; they needed halal-certified products to be available and easily accessible throughout their day-to-day lives.

This brings us to where we are today. As a leading halal certifier for over forty years, IFANCA is made up of industry experts and thought leaders in Islamic jurisprudence. We have played a leadership role in establishing best practices for halal compliance. Our standards have passed rigorous vetting and are broadly accepted by Islamic scholars and practicing Muslim consumers.

Halal is an institution and a comprehensive quality management system with clear religious guidelines that have been practiced for many centuries. These guidelines span the supply chain from farm to point of delivery, which includes—but is not limited to—procurement, preparation, production, service, sanitation, storage, and handling.

Through certification, we advance our goal of making halal products available for all and build trust and transparency. Consumers can find halal-certified products with our Crescent-M logo at retail outlets worldwide, such as Abbott Nutrition medical nutritional products, Cabot Creamery dairy products, Olympia Food Industries, Saffron Road meals, and Wonderful Pistachios. We pride ourselves on being the trusted authority on halal and are constantly striving to do our best for consumers.

Just as halal certification is crucial to our mission, our social impact work to support the global community is equally important. As a not-for-profit organization, we

also strive to promote food security, health and nutrition equity, and sustainability.

Our work to promote food security encompasses many different initiatives. IFANCA provides scholarships and endowments, in the field of food science, to students and universities across the United States. We want to help equip the next generation to solve today's problems and give them the tools they need to advocate for their food-insecure peers.

In 2016, IFANCA provided Texas A&M University with an endowment to create the Food Diversity Innovation Program. This program teaches students about food diversity in all its forms, from religious and ethnic-foods to allergen-friendly, organic, and more. Through this program, future food scientists gain an understanding of the different dietary needs of people worldwide. This type of education is crucial to ensuring that all populations have access to food that meets their individual needs.

As part of this commitment to equity, IFANCA works with administrators to create halal-certified foodservice programs so that no student goes hungry simply because they can't find food that suits their religious beliefs. Last year, we hosted food equity experts for the panel "Ensuring Equitable Access to Halal Foods for Kindergarten-12 and College Students: Stories from Food Equity Advocates" at the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) 2023 annual conference. The panelists included leadership from the United States Department of Agriculture, executives from the foodservice industry, and representatives from the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

IFANCA's social impact work also focuses on sustainability. We believe in returning to the basics and preserving the world in the best way that we can, which is why we support the Zaytuna College Center for Ethical Living and Learning (ZCELL). ZCELL focuses on the tie between Islam and sustainability and teaches students how to incorporate ethical living practices into their lifestyles. At ZCELL, students learn about regenerative agricultural practices like permaculture and become involved in producing their own food.

IFANCA promotes equity by advocating for the needs of the community in all walks of life. This work extends beyond food and pharmaceuticals to vaccines and supporting efforts to eradicate polio. We support institutions working to make the world a better place for everyone, whether or not someone is a halal consumer. At IFANCA, we strive to live ethically and perform our work in such a way that the benefits extend to the global community. When you purchase an IFANCA halal-certified product, know that you support an organization with service at its core. We will continue to serve producers who strive to create halal-certified products, as well as the consumers who need these products. We will serve the environment by being good stewards of the Earth we have been given, and we will serve the global community by continuing to fund and assist with food security and health equity programs worldwide.

Whether it is in halal compliance, sustainability, food security, or health and nutrition equity, we look forward to having the opportunity to work with you.

ASMA AHAD is Director of Halal Market Development at IFANCA, where she has built key partnerships with global and national leaders to address concerns of food and health security, and nutrition equity. She serves on the board of the Halal Product Development Company, a PIF portfolio company. Earlier in her career at Kraft Foods, she initiated and led the first study in North America that established the relevance of everyday retail products to halal consumers.

The Abrahamic Center for Cultural Education (ACCE)

THE ABRAHAMIC CENTER FOR CULTURAL EDUCATION (ACCE) IS AN ISLAMIC art gallery and resource center, initiated by IFANCA®, located in downtown Chicago. It is dedicated to creatively educating the community on Islam and Muslims, while also preserving the community's diverse history, heritage, and stories. ACCE works collaboratively with individuals, academic institutions, religious organizations, and public and private entities. It supplements existing educational programs at schools, universities, and other venues with free training sessions, presentations, and additional resources, aiming to foster culturally competent generations. ACCE offers three main services: educational presentations, creative events, and visits to our exhibition space.



Founded around 2015, the Abrahamic Center for Cultural Education (ACCE) completed its final gallery space and permanent exhibition in December 2018. The exhibition contains 10 panels, each featuring reproductions of artifacts that hold significant contextual relevance to the explored themes. Each panel includes an interactive tablet featuring quizzes, additional images, and unique facts. Supplementary sculptures are crafted by both local and non-local artists, while the main panel paintings were completed entirely by the renowned artist and Chicago native, Shawn Michael Warren. Notably, all the paintings were custom-made for the exhibition and specifically omit any depictions of animate beings or persons to align with Islamic artistic tradition.

The permanent exhibition, *Timeline of the Prophets*, consistently sparks curiosity, connection, and joy. It's rare to find a space where we can see both the threads that unite us and those that diverge. The Abrahamic Center for Cultural Education serves as a place that

does exactly that—interweaving new threads of connection while recognizing differences.

The *Timeline of the Prophets* is a collaborative effort, created by artists from diverse backgrounds who, through their own education, acquainted themselves with Islamic, Christian, and Judaic traditions. Each panel features a Muslim perspective, offering a unique lens on the shared stories. The space also includes models of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina and Early Kaaba. The fifth floor is not just an exhibit; it's a reflection of our identity—a place for dialogue, learning, and remembrance.

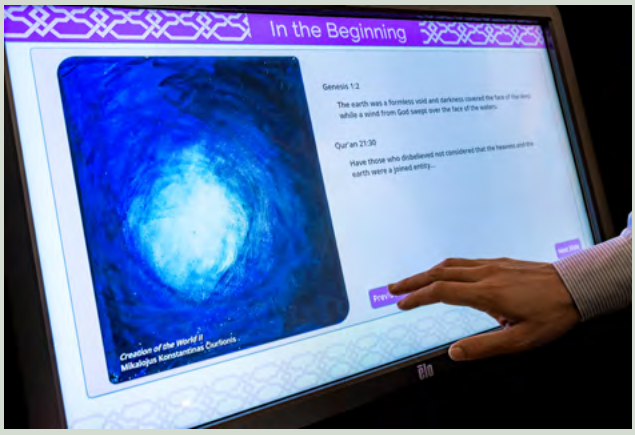
Since its inception, ACCE has developed creative programming offered to schools and prominent universities throughout the Chicago area. These programs include presentations and workshops such as *Islam for Educators*, *Muslims in the Workplace*, *Art Making and Resistance*, and *Islamic Art and Tessellation*s and more. ACCE has had the privilege of delivering curated education to institutions like Roosevelt University, DePaul University, and the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

ACCE proudly serves as a core partner with Communities in Schools (CIS) Chicago, a local chapter of a national organization providing under-served youth access to extracurricular programs and resources at Chicago Public Schools and other locations. Over the past six years, ACCE has conducted programming in Chicago's Northside, Westside, and Southside neighborhoods, offering workshops including *Islamic Art and Tessellations*, *Muslim Women in STEAM*, and *Islam 101* for grades K-12.



Repentance **by Brandon Hurley**

- This sculpture depicts the Muslim gesture of supplication, direct prayer to God. All of the Abrahamic faiths value their personal relationship with God and use gestures, especially of the hand, to interact with Divinity-from genuflection to the Birchat Kohanim, hands are a powerful symbol of the interconnectedness of the Abrahamic faiths.
- The hands are turned upward, in an expression of sincerity.
- The glass pieces symbolize the various sins and imperfections of human beings, but they reflect light, thus showing that out of something bad, goodness can come.



In the Beginning

The Qur'anic narrative holds that God created all things in the universe. Because creation is explicitly attributed to God, the Qur'an puts forth the interconnectedness of humanity, often referring to humanity as the "Children of Adam."





Noah's Ark **by Aaron Delehanty**

This diorama depicts the final part of Noah's journey in the Ark, inspired by the artwork of the Mughals. The Mughals were a Muslim empire in India that ruled from the early 1500's to the mid 1800's.

In this scene, the waters are receding and hope, in the form of a rainbow and the appearance of dry land, is emerging. For the Abrahamic faiths, this story is important because it demonstrates the interconnectedness of humanity after the Deluge and it is a story of hope in the face of adversity. Adherents of the Abrahamic faiths can look to this story as inspiration in dark times.



Early Prophet's Mosque

This model depicts the Prophet's Mosque in Medina in the time of Muhammad ( ).

The Prophet's Mosque is one of the earliest mosques of Islam, built when Muhammad and the early Muslims immigrated to Medina fleeing persecution. It was originally a simple structure, expanded as necessary as the need arose. It was a place of worship and a gathering place for Muslims and served as an embassy of sorts when Muslims would receive delegations from other lands. In Medina, Muhammad achieved an unprecedented level of cooperation amongst the Jewish and Arab polytheistic tribes, bringing them together in a sense of fraternity and mutual defense.

- Muhammad's house
- Houses under construction. The artist desired to show some of the building techniques used in the mosque by demonstrating in this structure
- Reception area for delegations

"Everything from this workshop was new to me. I learned how intentional design in Islamic art is and how it is always rooted in spirituality. I also learned what the words Muslim and Islam actually mean in translation. It was very beautiful and informative," said a participant in our tailored workshop, *Islamic Art and Resistance*, conducted at Marwen Arts Center.

In 2023, ACCE expanded its CPS programming, building on previous years of engagement. Each workshop provides the Chicago community a window into learning about their Muslim brothers and sisters through avenues of social justice, art, architecture, and history.

Additionally, ACCE serves as both a proud core partner and board member of the Chicago Cultural Alliance (CCA), an active consortium of over 40 cultural heritage museums, centers, and historical societies in the Chicago area. ACCE takes pride in a leadership role within the Chicago Cultural Alliance as a Muslim space, considering the little representation our community receives on a larger city scale. Through CCA, ACCE collaborates with other local cultural centers in the city to co-host a variety of diverse programming such as, *Suitcase Stories*, an evening of storytelling through objects people have brought with them across borders. This event honored diasporic communities and touched on ideas of cultural representation, displacement, and belonging. In this example, we were able to co-host with DANK Haus German American Cultural Center and the Indo-American Museum, both being partners we have cultivated through CCA collaborations.

Historically, ACCE opened its doors to individuals from all walks of life, fostering dialogue, particularly among the Abrahamic communities. One of its past initiatives was the women's interfaith book club, *Daughters of Abraham*, which met monthly. Examples of books read include "The Fox Hunt" by Mohammed Al Samawi.

Recent programs at ACCE have focused on combining cultural exploration with current events, such as hosting a *Tatreez* workshop to honor traditional Palestinian embroidery as a form of resistance. ACCE offers diasporic art workshops in stitching, painting, and building, rooted in communities with a Muslim presence, along with film screenings and other events. Artists, educators, and activists regularly engage with ACCE in various capacities to co-organize initiatives aimed at community empowerment and cultural representation. ACCE holds a strong belief that maintaining a presence in the city requires their active involvement and perspectives, which are often overlooked in broader Chicago city initiatives and in neighborhoods that lack resources.

ACCE uses its space to co-organize with other collectives and professionals to offer community empowerment resources, including skill shares, community healing circles, mental health resources, student organizing, and more. In addition, a rotating artist residency program has been established that showcases the work of various artists exploring Abrahamic themes relevant to the center, with a priority on amplifying voices from the Muslim community and reflecting the cultural diversity of the community. The artist residency program highlights themes such as migration, justice, and diversity and offers a space for local artists to showcase their work in the heart of downtown Chicago.

Looking forward, ACCE aims to expand its network locally, statewide, and nationally, inviting diverse groups and organizations to explore and collaborate on meaningful projects and events. For those interested in visiting ACCE, please contact a member of the team to arrange a tour. The exhibition can also be accessed online through a virtual tour, but the space thrives on in-person interactions and values discussions with visitors. Additionally, ensure you are following ACCE on social media to stay up to date on upcoming programs at the center.

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Early Kaaba

This model represents the Kaaba in roughly the first hundred years after the death of Muhammad (ﷺ).

The Kaaba is believed by Muslims to be the first house of worship for humanity dedicated to God, built by Adam and rebuilt by Abraham and Ishmael. It has been damaged, destroyed, and rebuilt many times over millennia. In the time of Muhammad, it was dedicated to Arab polytheism but rededicated to the worship of God by Muhammad and the early Muslims. The early Kaaba was a simple structure that was adorned with a simple cloth, likely made out of linen.

The semi-circular wall is known as the "Hateem" believed to be part of the original foundations of the Kaaba.

The rectangular footprints mark an area known as the "Standing Place of Abraham" where Abraham is believed to have stood and prayed to God after rebuilding the Kaaba with his son, Ishmael.

ACCE is an initiative of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA®), a global leader in halal certification.

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Melaleuca	• 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®	• Dessert Mixes • Food Products • Sauces & Dressings, Condiments • Spices & Seasonings	National Foods Limited	Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the United States and Canada
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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
Saffron Road™	• Appetizers • Food Products • Snack Foods	American Halal Company, Inc.	HEB, Kroger, Publix, Target, Whole Foods, and various markets throughout the United States Visit their website to locate a store near you: saffronroad.com
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