

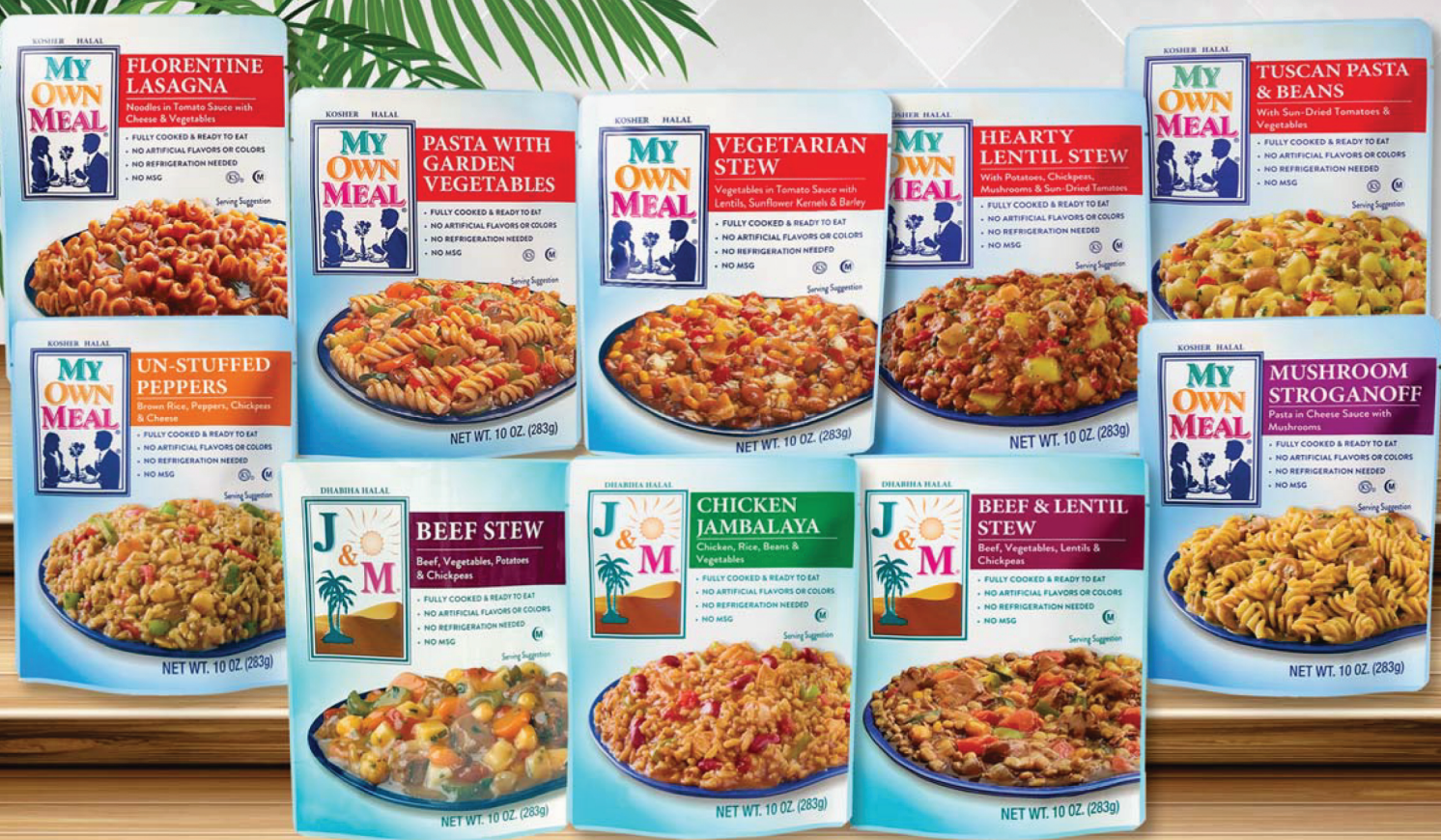
Halal Consumer

A Publication of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America

Magazine

20 IFANCA's 22nd International Halal Food Conference 2025 held in Chicago, IL





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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,

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes at IFANCA? While many of you enjoy reading *Halal Consumer* magazine, you may not be fully aware of the broader scope of our work. In this issue, we take a fresh look at IFANCA's mission and global impact.

The halal industry is expanding well beyond food, with new innovations and global partnerships building consumer trust. Explore IFANCA's global leadership and forward-thinking approach in "Pioneering Trust and Innovation in the Global Halal Industry." The growing demand for halal-certified products, supported by strict standards, has driven the certification of items beyond meat, including dairy, pharmaceuticals, and food-related packaging materials. Discover how this broader approach is transforming the halal market in "Halal Explained: From Food Fundamentals to Certification."

Our cover story spotlights IFANCA's 22nd International Halal Food Conference, held in Chicago this past April. This biannual gathering brought together international regulatory authorities, industry professionals, and government officials to exchange insights and discuss new regulatory developments and policies from different countries. Companies and individuals were also recognized for their achievements in advancing halal products globally.

This issue features important policy milestones that will impact health and nutrition nationwide, with Illinois becoming the first state to mandate access to halal meals in public schools, hospitals, and correctional institutions. "Bridging Nutrition and Faith: Ensuring Halal Food Access, One Plate at a Time" explores how the passage of the *Faith By Plate Act* sets an example for other states to follow to ensure halal accessibility for everyone across the country. "The Red Alert on Red No. 3" delves into another policy shift where this synthetic additive is being phased out for healthier and natural alternatives.

Halal-certified Australian lamb and Wagyu are increasingly featured at high-end steakhouses in the U.S. "Halal from Down Under: Australia's Meat Exports Unpacked" explains how Australia regulates its red meat exports and what consumers should look for to ensure the meat they consume aligns with halal standards.

Some of that premium Australian meat might even find its way into your kitchen. Our recipes are perfect for hosting out-of-town guests and feature a variety of global cuisines. From spicy Hyderabad *Dum ka Gosht* and fragrant Moroccan Lamb Tagine to classic Nigerian Jollof Rice, and ending the meal with colorful cake pops, there is something for everyone to enjoy!

Balancing occasional indulgences with exercise and healthy eating supports heart health. Often called the "silent killer," high cholesterol shows no early symptoms yet contributes to heart disease and stroke, two of the leading causes of death in the United States. "Low Cholesterol Lifestyle" explains how consistent physical activity and smart dietary choices can help manage harmful cholesterol levels and improve your well-being.

From certification and policy advocacy to education, public health, and culinary inspiration, this issue reflects IFANCA's continued commitment to serving the evolving needs of Muslim consumers in the U.S. and beyond. For the latest IFANCA and Halal Consumer magazine updates, please follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X. We welcome your comments and feedback at halalconsumer@ifanca.org, as we love hearing from our readers!

Sincerely,
Zehra Jafri, Editor

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From the Publisher's Desk

Assalaamu alaikum,

The food industry is undergoing a significant shift in how it approaches artificial food color additives, particularly those derived from petroleum-based compounds. Artificial color additives, including synthetic dyes, have long been used to enhance the appearance of processed foods.

However, they have come under increasing scrutiny due to potential health risks, including hyperactivity in children and allergic reactions. As awareness grows, many governments are moving to phase out harmful dyes in favor of more natural alternatives. The European Union began requiring warning labels in 2010 on products containing synthetic dyes, including FD&C colors such as Yellow 5 (Tartrazine), Yellow 6 (Sunset Yellow), and Red 40 (Allura Red), unless companies reformulated their products with safer alternatives. These, however, remained widely used in the United States.

Many multinational companies produce cleaner versions of their products for the European market but continue to market more chemically formulated versions to American consumers. Historically, these artificial colors were not only synthesized from basic chemical compounds, but were often derived from surprising sources. Some of the earliest dyes were made from petroleum-based substances, the same substances used for high-octane and jet fuels. These substances were processed and turned into dyes that would later be added to everything from candy to beverages. The process was far from transparent, and many consumers were unaware of what went into their food.

Recently, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced plans to eliminate petroleum-based synthetic food dyes from the U.S. food supply by 2026. He emphasized the health risks associated with these additives, stating, "For too long, some food producers have been feeding Americans petroleum-based

chemicals without their knowledge or consent. These poisonous compounds offer no nutritional benefit and pose real, measurable dangers to our children's health and development" (HHS, FDA to Phase Out Petroleum-Based Synthetic Dyes in Nation's Food Supply | FDA). The FDA has begun reviewing the authorization of certain dyes and is working to expedite the approval of natural alternatives such as gardenia blue and butterfly pea flower extract.

As the food industry evolves, we are witnessing a transition to using plant-based and naturally occurring pigments. Beet juice, turmeric, spirulina, and other botanicals are becoming the preferred sources of colorants, offering safer options without compromising the finished product's look. This shift has been embraced by many food manufacturers who are now emphasizing clean ingredients and sustainability in their product lines. Consumers are also demanding more transparency in the foods they consume, with an increasing preference for ingredients that are wholesome and GRAS (generally recognized as safe).

Many manufacturers are phasing out synthetic dyes and adopting cleaner labeling standards in response to evolving consumer expectations. IFANCA welcomes these efforts, recognizing their value in improving food quality and reducing the usage of petrochemical-based additives.

Sincerely,
Muhammad Munir Chaudry, PhD
President

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THE RED ALERT ON FD&C RED NO. 3

By Dofactora Iskandar



IN EARLY 2025, THE U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION (FDA) made a significant move by officially revoking the use of FD&C Red No. 3 in food products. This synthetic coloring agent, known for its bright cherry-pink hue, has long been a staple in various processed foods, candies, and even medications. The decision marks a turning point in how food color additives are regulated, especially in light of growing health concerns.

What Is FD&C Red No. 3?

FD&C Red No. 3, also known as *erythrosine*, is a synthetic dye derived from coal tar or petroleum. It's been widely used to give foods a vibrant red or pink color. Before the ban, it was commonly found in:

- **Candies** – especially those with bright red or pink coloring
- **Baked goods** – including cakes, cookies, and pastries
- **Snack foods and cereals** – processed products often targeted at children
- **Dairy and frozen desserts** – such as strawberry-flavored milk or ice cream
- **Medications** – including some strawberry-flavored cough syrups

Why Is the FDA Banning It?

The FDA's decision to ban FD&C Red No. 3 is based on a provision in the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act known as the "Delaney Clause." This clause, named after Congressman James Delaney, who championed it in 1958, prohibits the approval of any food additive found to cause cancer in humans or animals. Although Red No. 3 had already been banned from use in cosmetics and topical drugs since 1990, it remained permitted in foods and orally ingested medications—until it was just banned this year.

Scientific studies dating back to the 1980s linked high doses of Red No. 3 to thyroid tumors in lab rats. More recently, a comprehensive literature review titled "Potential Impacts of Synthetic Food Dyes on Activity and Attention in Children: A Review of the Human and Animal Evidence," published in *Environmental Health*, examined 25 studies involving artificial food colors. The review found that a majority of the studies reported a link between consumption of synthetic dyes and neurobehavioral outcomes in children, including hyperactivity and attention issues.

In response to growing scientific evidence and pressure from public health advocates, the FDA announced the ban and gave manufacturers time to reformulate their products. For food items, the transition deadline is

January 2027, while for orally ingested drugs, the deadline extends to January 2028.

What Are Artificial Colors, and Why Are They Used?

Artificial food colors are man-made chemicals added to food and drinks to improve visual appeal and ensure color consistency. They serve several purposes:

- **Enhancing appearance** – making products look more appetizing
- **Restoring color** – lost during processing or storage
- **Creating uniformity** – natural colors may vary batch to batch
- **Brand identity and marketing** – especially to attract children

While artificial colors are effective and inexpensive, growing concerns over health and safety have put them under increased scrutiny.

Has the FDA Banned Other Food Dyes Before?

Yes, Red No. 3 isn't the first color additive to be banned by the FDA. Here are a few historical examples:

- **Orange No. 1** – banned in the 1950s after children became ill from candies containing the dye
- **FD&C Red No. 2** – banned in 1976 due to cancer concerns
- **Multiple others** – have seen restrictions or bans as scientific knowledge has advanced

In fact, U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy has hinted that more artificial food colors may be subject to review or bans in the coming years.

What Are the Alternatives to Red No. 3?

Manufacturers now face the challenge of replacing Red No. 3 in their product formulas. Several alternatives are available:



Natural Color Sources:

- **Beetroot extract (betanin)** – offers red and pink tones
- **Anthocyanins** – derived from berries and grapes
- **Carmine** – a red pigment from insects (though not suitable for all consumers)

Other Synthetic Colors:

- **FD&C Red No. 40 (Allura Red)** – widely used, though it also faces ongoing health scrutiny

Blended Color Solutions:

- **Mixing approved colors** to replicate the original shade

Though these alternatives may increase production costs, they allow manufacturers to continue offering visually appealing products without compromising safety.

What About the Halal Status of Red No. 3?

For Muslim consumers, the Halal status of food colorings is a key concern. Red No. 3, being synthetically produced from petroleum or coal tar, is generally considered Halal by many Islamic scholars and certifiers.

In Indonesia, for example, the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) lists Red No. 3 among ingredients with minimal risk of contamination, thus exempting it from mandatory Halal certification in some contexts.

However, confusion can arise when the term "Red No. 3" is mistakenly associated with carmine, which is derived from insects and not Halal under many standards. IFANCA considers synthetic Red No. 3 Halal when supported by proper documentation, such as a valid Halal certificate.

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Bridging Nutrition and Faith: Ensuring Halal Food Access, One Plate at a Time

By Muhammad Yahya

IN TODAY'S AGE OF BITE-SIZED NUGGETS OF information constantly overloading our senses, critical issues that deserve our immediate attention sometimes get swept away. One such pressing issue is that of food insecurity and global hunger.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization defines food insecurity as the lack of regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth, development, and an active, healthy life. Based on this definition, the FAO estimates that in 2023, nearly 733 million people worldwide were impacted by hunger, approximately one in every eleven individuals globally and one in five across the African continent.

Food insecurity is a silent pandemic that doesn't differentiate

It would be commonplace to associate food insecurity and hunger with third-world and developing countries. However, what's often considered normal is not always

backed by the truth. Food insecurity remains a significant issue in the United States, affecting millions of households, including those with children. According to the 'Household Food Security in the United States in 2023' report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, approximately 13.5% of households in the U.S. experienced food insecurity. This comes out to around 47.4 million people in the U.S., including 14 million children. The Map the Meal Report 2024 goes so far as to say that children are more likely than adults to suffer from food insecurity, resulting in poor health and long-term behavioral challenges.

Breaking these numbers down further doesn't make for pleasant reading. Among households with children under 18, 17.9% or 6.5 million households in the U.S. were food insecure. In 8.9% (3.2 million households in the U.S.), both children and adults experienced food insecurity. Furthermore, approximately 1.0% (374,000 US households) had children who experienced reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to insufficient resources. These

numbers also show a year-on-year progression, which hints at a lack of, or at the very least, inadequate provisions and checks.

A growing crisis of access

While comprehensive data on food insecurity among Muslim children specifically is limited, available statistics highlight an even bleaker picture with regards to the broader challenges faced by Muslim communities in accessing adequate and culturally appropriate food. According to the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding's (ISPU) American Muslim Poll 2022: A Politics and Pandemic Status Report, 10% of Muslims in the U.S. reported "sometimes" or "often" not having enough to eat in the past week, a rate comparable to Black and Hispanic communities.

Does halal matter?

Behind these jarring numbers lies another dimension often overlooked: the need for food that aligns with specific cultural and religious values. According to data from the US Religious Census, Islam, at 1.34% of the total population of the U.S., is the third-largest religion in the country. According to ISPU, 83% of Muslims in the U.S. prefer a halal diet, which goes beyond mere dietary guidelines and encompasses the ethical treatment of

Among households with children under 18, 17.9% or 6.5 million households in the U.S. were food insecure.

(Map The Meal Report 2024)

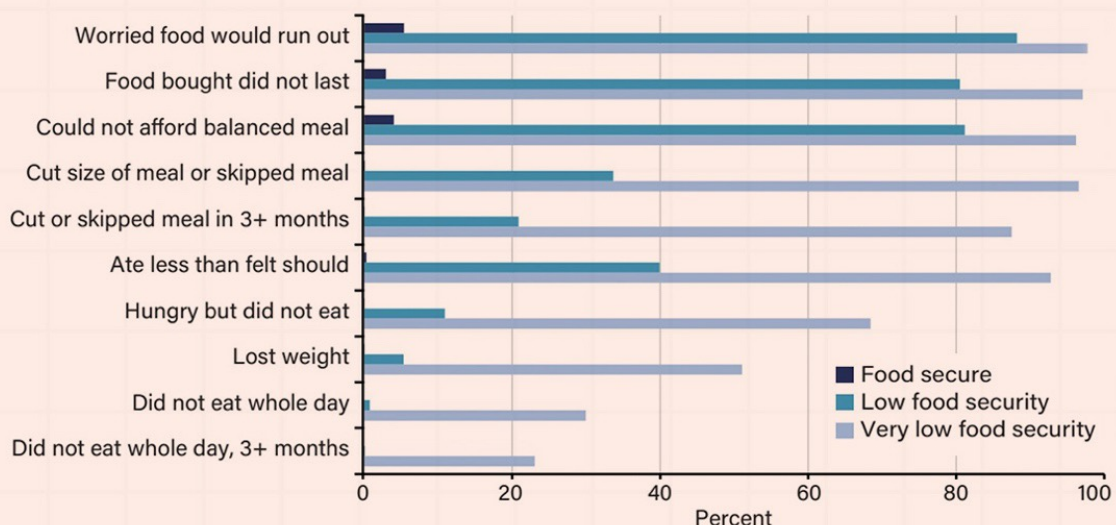


animals, avoidance of certain ingredients, and strict hygiene cleanliness standards. This isn't a matter of preference; it's a matter of necessity.

When these socio-religious obligations are not met, vulnerable families, especially children in school settings where such options are limited, often face an impossible choice. One that makes them choose between violating their faith or going hungry. Health experts point out that such choices have dire consequences, with poor nutrition, in particular, often triggering a lifetime of setbacks—from poor academic performance to long-term health issues and social marginalization.

Percentage of U.S. households reporting each indicator of food insecurity, by food security status

2023



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements data.



10% of Muslims in the U.S. reported 'sometimes' or 'often' not having enough to eat in the past week, a rate comparable to Black and Hispanic communities. (ISPU American Muslim Poll 2022)



Illinois takes a bold step

At its core, the issue is one of acknowledgement and religious/cultural inclusion. A historic turning point arrived on March 28, 2025, when Illinois became the first state in the U.S. to require public schools, hospitals, and other state-run facilities to provide halal and kosher meal options upon request. Known as the "Faith by Plate Act," this legislation reflects a growing understanding that access to culturally and religiously appropriate meals is a matter of equity, not luxury.

The "Faith by Plate Act" which was signed into law by Governor JB Pritzker, was a combined effort by multiple diverse parties, all with a single goal, to ensure Illinois, which has the country's highest per capita Muslim population, to have more access to halal food options at public schools and institutions. IFANCA® (Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America) supported State Senator Ram Villivalam, who was the lead sponsor of the bill, along with the Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition, helping to secure the bill's passage in both houses. Under the new law, schools and state agencies no longer decide if halal is "important enough" to warrant a menu item; they must now ensure it's available.

IFANCA — making halal compliance second nature for institutions

Since its inception in 1982, IFANCA's central focus has been enhancing access to halal products for those requiring them. With over four decades of experience, the organization is a leader in setting and upholding the best practices in halal certification. The IFANCA team, composed of industry experts and scholars in Islamic jurisprudence, has developed standards that have undergone extensive review and are widely endorsed by Islamic scholars and the practicing Muslim community.

IFANCA's reach extends well beyond Illinois, collaborating with more than 70 countries across the food, pharmaceutical, and cosmetics industries to maintain standards of cleanliness, ethical sourcing, and transparency. In the U.S., IFANCA has funded educational programs at places like Texas A&M University, focusing on ethnic and faith-based food systems. It also supports a permaculture garden at Zaytuna College that blends Islamic ethics with environmental stewardship.

IFANCA has also initiated pioneering projects in public institutions such as universities, correctional facilities, and food banks. It published the Handbook for Halal Campus Dining Food Service Programs, a comprehensive guide that provides best practices for institutional compliance with halal standards. Their impact is evident in major initiatives, such as collaborations with Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Alliance to End Hunger, and food banks in Pennsylvania and Delaware, where they help distribute halal-certified products to diverse communities.

These projects aren't just about checking boxes; they're about shaping a new generation of leaders who appreciate how religious practices, ethical considerations, and sound environmental policies intersect.





By showing that large institutions can incorporate halal-friendly systems at scale, Illinois' example offers a blueprint for others grappling with food insecurity among Muslim populations.



A roadmap for inclusive food security

As the global hunger crisis intensifies, inclusive policies become increasingly urgent. Studies show that, in addition to short-term effects such as insufficient nutrition, social exclusion, and psychological distress, unchecked food insecurity among children can lead to poor academic performance, reduced life expectancies, and socio-economic marginalization.

By showing that large institutions can incorporate halal-friendly systems at scale, Illinois' example offers a blueprint for others grappling with food insecurity among Muslim populations. When states or organizations integrate faith-based dietary requirements into their offerings, they take a meaningful step toward inclusive and dignified access to nutrition.

Halal certification, in this context, is more than a religious seal of approval. It's a powerful framework for addressing hunger in a way that respects cultural identity and ethical principles. With the right leadership and collaboration, initiatives like the Faith by Plate Act can be replicated everywhere, from bustling cities to remote refugee camps — anywhere people need both sustenance and a sense of belonging.

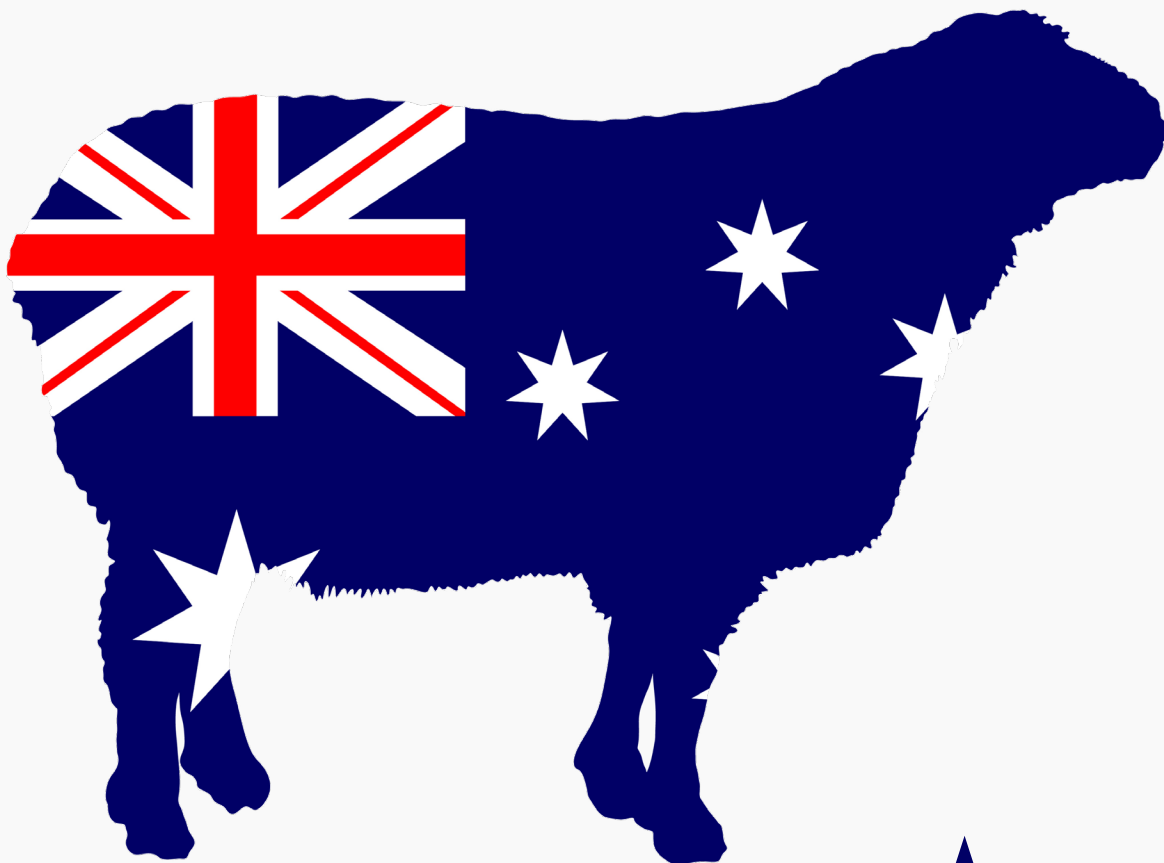
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HALAL FROM DOWN UNDER: Australia's Meat Exports Unpacked

By Dr. Emad Galambo



AUSTRALIA IS GLOBALLY RENOWNED FOR ITS ethical animal welfare standards, expansive green pastures, and thriving agricultural industry. This reputation has made it one of the world's largest exporters of red meat, with a significant portion catering to Muslim-majority countries and communities, where halal certification is crucial. Each year, Australia exports over 1 million tons of meat and offal to more than 160 countries. Seventeen of these countries are Muslim-majority countries, and many others have significant Muslim populations (DAFF).

Thanks to this reputation, many consumers, especially in Muslim-majority countries, have come to associate Australian and New Zealand meat with high quality and even assume it is halal by default. However, halal certification is not automatic. Some Australian meat is processed for domestic or non-Muslim export markets, and may not meet halal requirements. Understanding how halal meat is regulated in Australia is essential for making informed choices.

What Is the AGAHP?

The Australian Government Authorized Halal Program (AGAHP) is a formal, three-way partnership designed to regulate the production and certification of halal meat exports from Australia. The program includes:

1. **The Australian Government**, which provides regulatory oversight to ensure compliance with halal certification standards and food safety.
2. **Approved Islamic Organisations (AIOs)**, which oversee halal practices at every stage of meat processing—from slaughter to packaging—according to Islamic dietary law.
3. **The Australian Red Meat Industry**, which collaborates with the government and AIOs to maintain halal integrity in production processes intended for export to Muslim markets.

This structure ensures that halal-certified meat from Australia aligns with both Islamic guidelines and the importing country's requirements, reinforcing consumer confidence.

How Is It Regulated?

Facilities that process halal meat for export must comply with the "Export Control Act 2020" and the "Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Rules 2021." These laws set clear rules for the treatment, handling, and certification of meat products intended for export. The Australian Government monitors compliance through on-site inspections, audits, and a rigorous accreditation process for Islamic organizations involved in certification.



Is All Australian Meat Halal?

It's important to know that Halal certification is not automatic. Just because meat is from Australia does not mean it meets Islamic dietary standards. Some producers may cater to domestic or non-Muslim export markets where Halal certification is not required. In such cases, animals may not be slaughtered according to Halal procedures or supervised by qualified Islamic authorities. This is why label verification is key. Look for reputable Halal certification logos and check for labeling that states the meat has been processed under the AGAHP.

Importing Australian Meat for Restaurants, Shops, and Processing Meat Factories

Many US meat suppliers are importing Australian meat, particularly lamb, for it is less expensive than American meat. They resell it to food manufacturers for use in various products, as well as to retailers for direct sale to consumers.

Many high-end restaurants in North America import premium cuts of Australian meat, such as Wagyu steaks, ribeye, and lamb chops, known for their exceptional flavor and tenderness. These establishments often cater to Muslim diners by offering halal-certified options sourced from Australia's ethical livestock industry, ensuring the meat has been processed according to Halal standards. This combination of quality and certification allows restaurants to meet the growing demand for

luxury cuts, while ensuring that they remain halal-compliant for their diverse customer base.

What does this mean for Muslim Consumers?

For Muslim consumers seeking Halal options, especially in American markets, Australia remains a trustworthy source when Halal labels and certification are verified. Halal-certified meat exported under the AGAHP has been processed with religious integrity, government oversight, and full transparency. The USA and Canada import a vast amount of Australian beef and lamb, much of which is Halal-certified under the AGAHP. However, not all of the imported Australian Halal meat meets Halal requirements, making proper certification and labeling essential for Muslim consumers.

Conclusion

IFANCA supports robust Halal certification systems that combine religious principles with strict regulatory oversight. The AGAHP program provides a trusted brand to ensure that Australian halal meat complies with Islamic food standards.

Not all Australian meat available in the US domestic market is Halal. Therefore, consumers purchasing meat from convenience stores must ensure that Halal labels are present on meat trays and packaging, and that a Halal stamp is visible on carcasses. Similarly, meat processors using Australian Halal raw meat must ensure the Halal label is present, request Halal certification from suppliers,



Just because meat is from Australia does not mean it meets Islamic dietary standards.



and present it to an IFANCA inspector when supervising the manufacturing of Halal products.

References:

1. Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. *Exporting halal red meat and red meat products from Australia*. Australian Government, 2025.
2. Australian Government. *Export Control Act 2020 (Cth) and Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Rules 2021 (Cth)*. <https://www.legislation.gov.au.> ®

EMAD GALAMBO, DVM, MBA, is an expert in the meat and dairy processing industry, a technical auditor of meat plants, and serves as the Meat Certification Coordinator at IFANCA.



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Nigerian Jollof Rice

By Omolara Funmilayo

Servings: 8-10 | Time: 90 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups long-grain parboiled rice (washed)
- 2 large red bell peppers
- 1 habanero pepper (adjust to taste)
- 2 large sweet onions (half blended, half sliced)
- 2 garlic cloves
- 6 oz. tomato paste
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 cup halal beef or chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon paprika (optional)
- 2 teaspoons salt (or more to taste)
- 2 cups water (for blending)
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Blend bell peppers, habanero pepper, garlic, water, and half of the onion until smooth.
3. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add curry, thyme, bay leaves, and paprika. Cook for 1 minute until fragrant. Add sliced onions and cook until golden brown, taking care not to burn them.
4. Stir in tomato paste and cook for about 5 minutes.
5. Pour in the blended mixture and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally until a rapid boil (about 10 minutes). Then add salt, stir, and adjust to taste.
6. Lower heat and add washed rice and stir to coat with the sauce. Add enough chicken stock to cover the rice by about 1 inch. Stir to avoid burning and cover with a sheet of foil to trap the steam.
7. Transfer to the oven and cook for 30 minutes or until the rice becomes tender.
8. Remove from the oven and taste for flavor. Sprinkle a little water at a time, return to oven until desired texture is achieved.
9. Remove from the heat and add butter to melt. Stir carefully from bottom to top, taking care not to overmix.
10. Let the dish stay covered for 10 minutes.
11. Serve and Enjoy!

Notes:

Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for up to 3 days or freeze if longer.
Add more habanero peppers and garlic for additional flavor.
Serve with salad, fried plantains, baked meat, fish, or chicken. ©



Hyderabadi Dum Ka Gosht

By Haleema Latifi

Servings: 2 | Time: 30 minutes, plus 1-2 hours for marination

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb halal boneless meat
- 12 almonds
- 12 cashews
- ½ cup coconut powder
- 1 teaspoon garam masala powder
- ⅔ cup yogurt
- 3 tablespoons ginger and garlic paste
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric
- 1 tablespoon raw papaya paste (optional)
- 2 teaspoons red chili powder (according to taste)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 medium onions
- 3-4 green chilies
- ½ cup cilantro leaves
- ¼ cup ghee

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the onions into thin slices and fry until golden brown and set aside.
2. Roast almonds, cashews and coconut powder. Then grind to make a powder.
3. Add the powder to a mixture of yogurt, garam masala powder, turmeric, chili powder, salt, papaya paste, ginger and garlic paste. Then mix with the meat and leave it to marinate for 1-2 hours.
4. After a couple of hours, add this meat mixture into a cooking pan and cook for 5 minutes on medium heat. After 5 minutes, add ghee and a little water and let it cook for 20 minutes on low heat until meat is tender.
5. Then add crushed fried onions, some cilantro, and green chilies. Cook again for 5 minutes until the gravy is thick and oil separates.
6. Garnish with cilantro, mint, and onions, and serve with naan or rice. 



Moroccan Lamb Tagine

By Omolara Funmilayo

Servings: 6-8 | Time: 4 hours

INGREDIENTS

- 3 lbs halal lamb shoulder or leg (cut into chunks)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter (softened)
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2½ tablespoons mrouzia spice
 - 1 teaspoon ginger powder
 - 1 teaspoon cumin powder
 - 1 teaspoon turmeric powder
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 2 teaspoon black pepper powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 7 strands saffron (optional)
- 3 large onions (sliced)
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon powder
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup apricots
- ½ cup prunes
- ¼ cup raisins
- ½ cup slivered almonds (toasted)

DIRECTIONS

1. Marinate the meat by combining all the spices including honey and saffron (if using) in the tagine base or heavy-bottomed pot. Add olive oil and butter and mix until a nice paste is formed. Add the lamb and combine well. Set aside for at least 2 hours.
2. In a heavy-bottomed pot or tagine base, brown lamb on high to medium heat on all sides.
3. Add onions, cinnamon, and water. Cover and bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low.
4. Add apricots, prunes, and raisins. Simmer for 2 hours and stir occasionally until the lamb is tender and sauce is thickened. Stir occasionally to avoid burning.
5. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt, pepper, or more honey if needed.
6. Garnish with slivered almonds. Serve and enjoy!

Notes:

Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for up to three days or freeze for longer storage.

Add cayenne pepper or garlic for a spicier flavor.

Add cilantro or parsley for an extra topping.

Serve with rice, Moroccan bread, or couscous. 



Cake Pops

By Sughra Jafri

Servings: 24 cake pops | Time: 4 hours

INGREDIENTS

- 1 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups cake flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup buttermilk or whole milk

Frosting:

- 7 tablespoons butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups powdered sugar
- 2–3 teaspoons heavy cream or whole milk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Coating:

- 24 oz candy melts (or chocolate bars)
- Sprinkles

Other tools:

- lollipop sticks
- food coloring

DIRECTIONS

1. For the Cake:

Preheat oven to 350°F and grease a 9-inch springform pan. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In another large bowl, use a mixer to beat butter and sugar for around 2 minutes until creamy. Then add egg and vanilla and beat until combined. Mix in dry ingredients and milk on low speed until smooth. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for 30–35 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

2. Prepare frosting:

Using a mixer, beat butter for about 2 minutes on medium speed until creamy. Then mix in powdered sugar, cream, and vanilla. Increase speed and beat for 3 minutes until fluffy.

3. Assemble the cake balls:

Crumble the cooled cake into the frosting and beat on low until fully combined. Roll into 1 tablespoon balls and place on a lined tray. Chill in the fridge for 2 hours or freeze for 1 hour.

4. Melt the Coating:

For the coating, use any candy coating, candy melts, white chocolate, semi-sweet, bittersweet, or milk chocolate baking bars. Coarsely chop the chocolate and place it in a microwave-safe bowl or glass liquid measuring cup, along with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vegetable oil to help thin it out. Microwave in 20-second increments, stirring after each 20 seconds, until melted and smooth.

5. Assemble and Decorate:

Working with a few cold cake balls at a time, dip the tip of a lollipop stick in the coating and insert halfway into each ball. Dip cake ball fully into the coating, ensuring it covers where the stick meets the cake. Add sprinkles and stand upright in a styrofoam block to set. Repeat until done. Coating will set in about 1 hour.

Notes:

For best results, make the cake 1 day in advance. Store cake pops in the fridge for up to 1 week. 

SPOTLIGHT

IFANCA's Banquet and Awards Night Celebrates Halal Excellence

By Muhammad Yahya

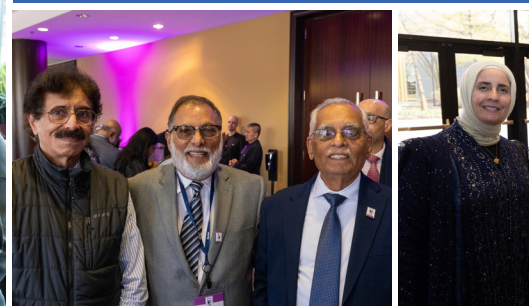
Company of the Year Awards

Crescent-M Awards

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The IFANCA Banquet Dinner offers a rare opportunity for community members to network with industry leaders, global halal accreditation and recognition bodies, and our exceptional IFANCA team. Where else can you find such an exclusive gathering?



ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 13, 2025, THE GRAND Ballroom at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare shimmered with elegance, excitement, and a deep sense of purpose. Hosted by the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA®), the Banquet & Awards Night marked the celebratory opening of IFANCA's 22nd International Halal Food Conference. More importantly, it served as a gathering to honor individuals and companies working tirelessly to elevate Halal standards for consumers across the globe. For those in attendance, the evening was far more than an industry event. It was a moment of reflection and connection, an affirmation of what Halal truly represents: trust, compassion, quality, and community.

A special VIP networking session preceded the event, bringing together IFANCA's leadership, international accreditation and recognition bodies, and industry executives for networking and conversations. Meanwhile, community members, IFANCA staff, and other company representatives gathered in the welcoming hotel lobby for appetizers. It was a relaxed setting where old friends reconnected, colleagues caught up, and new business partners were warmly introduced.

The program opened with a welcoming address by Dr. Muhammad Munir Chaudry, President and CEO of IFANCA, who thanked attendees for their commitment to advancing Halal integrity and recognized the global partnerships that make this work possible. He reflected on IFANCA's ongoing mission to build bridges between consumers, industry leaders, and certifiers through collaboration rooted in ethics and excellence. Shaykh Hamza Yusuf followed with a brief reminder of the spiritual significance of halal and emphasized the importance of sharing food.

The highlight of the night was the presentation of IFANCA's annual industry awards, recognizing companies that have demonstrated excellence, authenticity, and commitment to serving the needs of Halal consumers. This year's honorees were:

AWARD CATEGORY	RECIPIENT
Company of the Year	Kerry
Nutritional Ingredients	Abbott
Flavors	McCormick & Company, Inc.
Dairy	Darigold, Inc.
Retail Products	McCain Foods Ltd.



Networking at the VIP Session—from left to right: Mohamad Samir Bin Sulaiman, Senior Assistant Director at JAKIM, Malaysia; Khathawut Lohmud Murad, Head of International and Public Relations at CICOT, Thailand; Muhammad Faizal Bin Othman, Director of Halal Development at MUIS, Singapore; and Ismail Fitrey, Manager of Halal Certification and Halal Development at MUIS, Singapore.



Welcoming International VIP Representatives.



“We have worked really hard to meet the needs of our customers, and part of that is to meet the spiritual needs of our customers.”—Angela Thibedeau of Kerry, Company of the Year



From left to right: Imam M. Radwan Mardini, Dr. Muhammad M. Chaudry, and Dr. Javed Rashid



Dr. Muhammad Munir Chaudry opened the evening with a welcoming address, expressing gratitude to community members, industry leaders, global accreditation and recognition bodies, and government officials for their dedication to collaboration in advancing halal efforts worldwide.



Renowned scholar Shaykh Hamza Yusuf addressed the audience, reflecting on the role of food in the Muslim faith and emphasizing the ethical responsibility to care for the environment.



The evening's inspiring Keynote Address was delivered by Rafi-Uddin Shikoh, CEO & Managing Partner of DinarStandard, USA.

These organizations were recognized not only for meeting standards, but for integrating Halal values into the core of how they do business. Angela Thibedeau of Kerry, attending for the first time, spoke about the deeper purpose behind their work. “We have worked really hard to meet the needs of our customers, and part of that is to meet the spiritual needs of our customers,” she said.

Chris Swimm from McCain also reflected on the value of the event. “I made a lot of contacts with companies we work with, and the food has been excellent—it was different, and it’s great for us to sample Halal food.” As the night unfolded, it was evident that more companies are committed to meeting the needs of Halal consumers and striving to earn their trust.

Dinner followed the awards with a memorable showcase of Halal cuisine. Tasty Pakistani dishes from Chicago’s renowned restaurant Ali Nihari was complemented by vegetarian and seafood offerings prepared by the Hyatt’s culinary team, along with an exquisite display of desserts. The meal went beyond flavor—it represented the values of hospitality, diversity, and ethical sourcing that define the Halal lifestyle.

Laura LaCourse, Director of Flavor Regulatory, described the atmosphere of the event as uniquely inclusive. “There’s real power in bringing everyone together—industry professionals, international voices, and the community. IFANCA makes that possible.”

Mary Anne Jackson, founder of My Own Meals, Inc. and a trailblazer in Halal-certified ready-to-eat meals, offered a heartfelt remark: “IFANCA is more than a certifier to us—they’re family. Their recognition means so much because it comes from a place of mutual respect and shared purpose.”



“The global Halal economy is driven by 2 billion consumers. With nearly a fifth of global spending linked to Halal preferences, the potential is enormous.”
—Rafi-Uddin Shikoh, CEO & Managing Partner, DinarStandard, USA

"The most valuable experiences at the conference are the connections—we are all working toward the same goal of connecting consumers with products that align with their religious values." —Nooran Riaz, Food Scientist at IFANCA



She was also one of the recipients of the Crescent-M award for her contributions in advancing accessibility to halal-certified meals.

International guests echoed similar sentiments. Professor Dr. Faridah Hj Hassan of Universiti Teknologi MARA and UNITAR Malaysia praised the banquet's organization, the quality of the food, and the spirit of active participation from both industry and academic attendees. She said, "The banquet was well set up, food was healthy and highly nutritious, and the conference was attended by active participants from industries and researchers." She extended special thanks to Dr. Muhammad Munir Chaudry, President of IFANCA, and the organizing committee for their superb hospitality and coordination.

While the banquet was an emotional and symbolic centerpiece, the larger conference that followed reinforced IFANCA's long-standing role as a bridge between the

industry, certifiers, and consumers. In his keynote address, Rafi-uddin Shikoh, CEO of DinarStandard, highlighted the scale and significance of the Halal economy. "The global Halal economy is driven by 2 billion consumers," he said. "With nearly a fifth of global spending linked to Halal preferences, the potential is enormous." His remarks reminded the audience that Halal is not a niche category but a global movement rooted in ethics, faith, and consumer empowerment.

Nooran Riaz, one of the event organizers and a food scientist at IFANCA, emphasized the importance of the conversations that took place during the conference sessions. "The most valuable experiences at the conference are the connections—we are all working toward the same goal of connecting consumers with products that align with their religious values," she said. She noted that the conference theme and speaker selections were designed to address the evolving needs of the Halal industry, and praised the open, honest dialogue between certifiers and companies. Angela Thibedeau and others affirmed the value of these discussions in shaping a more transparent and collaborative future. Muhammad Faizal bin Othman of MUIS in Singapore remarked that receiving direct feedback from businesses about Halal concerns was an especially beneficial part of the conference experience.

Guests left the event inspired—not only by the exceptional cuisine and well-deserved accolades but by a shared commitment to advancing halal and recognizing that it is more than a label. It is a global practice rooted in faith, ethics, and connection. Through integrity and innovation, IFANCA has established itself as a global leader and continues to pave the way toward a future defined by trust and commitment to enforcing Halal values. 



Special thanks to our dedicated IFANCA staff, whose hard work and commitment make it all possible.

FEEDING THE FUTURE:

How IFANCA's Halal Food Conference Is Shaping a More Ethical, Inclusive, and Sustainable World

The conference provided a valuable platform for learning and exchange among IFANCA staff, halal accreditation and regulation bodies, government officials and professionals from the food industry.



A panel discussion with Ihsan Övüt, Secretary General of Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), Turkey; Yousif Alharbi, Deputy CEO for Corporate Services at the Saudi Halal Center, Saudi Arabia; and Abdulla Mohammed Almarzooqi, Director of Certification Bodies Accreditation Department at Emirates International Accreditation Centre (EIAC), United Arab Emirates.



IN AN INCREASINGLY FRACTURED GLOBAL LAND-
scape, where conflict, climate change, and chronic
illness are reshaping the way we live, one question has
become impossible to ignore: What does it mean to eat
well in the 21st century? For the Islamic Food and Nutri-
tion Council of America (IFANCA®), the answer is clear:
halal is not simply about dietary restriction but about
dignity, discipline, sustainability, and shared humanity.

These ethos and vision were front and centre at IFANCA's
22nd International Halal Food Conference, held from
April 14-15, 2025, at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Chicago.
Under the theme "Navigating Change Together: Con-
necting the Global Halal Community," the gathering
brought together scholars, regulators, scientists, and
industry leaders from over ten countries. What unfolded
was more than a technical exchange about certification
standards; it was a call to reimagine the global food
economy through an ethical lens grounded in faith,
justice, and cooperation.

Summing up about the importance of the conference, Dr.
Muhammad Munir Chaudry, President and CEO of
IFANCA, noted, "This conference is not just a platform for
dialogue but a collaborative engine to shape the future of
the Halal industry. Our mission at IFANCA is to ensure
Halal integrity while fostering global cooperation."

From Shared Plates to Shared Purpose

One of the most stirring moments of the conference
came during Shaykh Hamza Yusuf's keynote address,
which wove together prophetic teachings, personal
reflection, and global challenges. He began with a
reminder from the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that encap-
sulated the theme of sharing: "The most beloved dish to
God is the one with the most hands in it" (Sunan ibn
Majah 3272). The act of eating, said Shaykh Hamza, has
always been a communal ritual in Islamic culture that
fosters mindfulness, humility, and presence.

**"This conference is not just a platform
for dialogue but a collaborative engine
to shape the future of the Halal indus-
try. Our mission at IFANCA is to ensure
Halal integrity while fostering global
cooperation." —Dr. Muhammad Munir
Chaudry, President & CEO of IFANCA**



In modern life, however, food has lost much of its meaning.
With business lunches replacing shared meals and eating
on the go, in isolation or haste, becoming the accepted
norm, he said, humans faced a growing disconnect
between our consumption habits and our spiritual, phys-
ical, and ecological well-being. But it wasn't anything that
couldn't be reversed simply by holding onto our tradi-
tional Muslim practices.

From communal eating, the talk shifted naturally to the
ethics of consumption. Shaykh Hamza pointed to the
Qur'anic injunction, "Eat and drink, but not to excess"
(Qur'an 7:31), as a timeless guide in an age of rampant
overconsumption and chronic disease. Citing the rise in
obesity, diabetes, and inflammation-related illnesses, he
emphasized that the crisis isn't simply about what we eat
but how much and how mindlessly we consume. He
praised Islamic practices like voluntary fasting, which
were long recognized for promoting self-discipline and
are now gaining traction in secular health circles through
concepts like intermittent fasting.

"We know how much food the average person needs," he
said. "But we lack self-restraint. That's a spiritual crisis,
not just a dietary one."

The Global Halal Economy: Ethical and Expanding

That ethical framing echoed throughout the two-day con-
ference. With delegates from Indonesia's BPJPH, Malay-
sia's JAKIM, Saudi Arabia's SFDA, Turkey's SMIIC, the
UAE's Emirates International Accreditation Center (EIAC),
Singapore's Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS), Thai-
land's CICOT, and others in attendance, the agenda
covered everything from global standardization and labo-
ratory testing to market development and food innovation.
Speakers stressed the importance of science-based certi-



*Ahmad Haikal Hasan, Chairman of the Halal Product Assurance
Organizing Agency (BPJPH), Indonesia, delivered opening remarks
to commence the conference.*



The Conference was attended by a diverse, global audience representing regulatory bodies, government officials, and industry leaders.

fication and global regulatory alignment to protect the integrity of halal systems in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

Keynote speaker Rafi-uddin Shikoh, CEO of DinarStandard, drove home the economic case: the halal market, representing 2 billion consumers and nearly 20% of global spending, is no longer niche. "If you haven't considered producing for these markets," he said, "then a large opportunity is missed." But more than numbers, Shikoh spoke of a broader shift, one where the halal ethical economy contributes to a new, multipolar world order grounded in values like transparency, sustainability, animal welfare, and fair trade.

Laura LaCourse, representing The Coca Cola Company, highlighted the importance of the gathering: "We truly value the partnership with IFANCA. We need these programs. It is hard to bring everyone from industry, dignitaries from all around the world, and the real community together—bringing this group together is important."

The conference's Banquet & Awards Night on April 13, 2025, served as both a celebration and a symbol of this growing momentum. Companies and individuals were recognized for their leadership in halal-certified innovation. The event, held in the Grand Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency, showcased not just the diversity of the halal food sector but the shared values that drive it.

Food, Faith, and the Fragile Future

Shaykh Hamza's closing reflections circled back to food not just as fuel or commerce but as a symbol of what binds and breaks us as a species. He warned of the environmental costs of our current path: polluted soil, acidic oceans, and dying bees, creatures so vital to food systems that their collapse threatens global agriculture. "There's a chapter in the Qur'an called 'The Bees,'" he said. "That's not accidental. They are essential, and we are failing them."

He called for scientific focus to shift from warfare to food systems, for soil to be seen as sacred, and for the Earth to be treated not as a commodity, but as a trust from God.

A Movement Rooted in Meaning

As halal continues to mainstream global trade and public policy, IFANCA's role has never been more critical. With decades of experience and credibility across 70+ countries, the organization has become a linchpin for halal



"We truly value the partnership with IFANCA. We need these programs. It is hard to bring everyone from industry, dignitaries from all around the world, and the real community together—bringing this group together is important." —Laura LaCourse, Director of Flavor Regulatory, The Coca Cola Company.



Industry leaders shared their valuable expertise on navigating the challenges of ensuring compliance and discussed strategies for managing the complexities of halal supply chains.

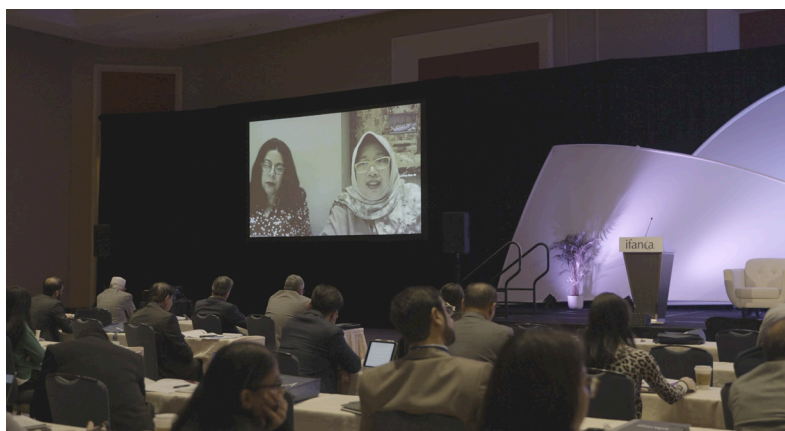
compliance in food and pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and institutional food systems. Whether it's guiding public school districts like Chicago's or advancing food justice through programs like the *Faith by Plate Act* in Illinois, where IFANCA supported the Muslim Civic Coalition in moving the legislation forward, IFANCA is setting the gold standard for faith-based inclusion.

"We are deeply committed to advancing food security and equitable access for children, schools, and underserved communities," says Asma Ahad, Director of Halal Market Development at IFANCA. "Proper nutrition is what enables our future generations to thrive."

At a time when food insecurity, environmental degradation, and social fragmentation dominate the headlines, the halal framework offers a refreshing, holistic approach. It isn't just about what's on your plate, it's about who you share it with, how it got there, and how you treat the Earth that produced it.

In the end, it was Shaykh Hamza who put it best, "Whoever wakes up healthy, safe, and with enough food for the day, it is as if they own the whole world." ®

MUHAMMAD ALI BANDIAL is a writer and editor at Salaam Gateway. This article first appeared on <https://salaamgateway.com>.



Nina Sutrisno, representing BPJPH Indonesia, joins Graciella Tjahjono, IFANCA's Director of Global Relations, for a virtual presentation live from Indonesia.



The last session of the Conference gave industry professionals an opportunity to ask questions and engage in dialogue with the leading halal authorities from Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.



Halal Explained: From Food Fundamentals to Certification

By Dr. Mian N. Riaz

THE DEMAND FOR HALAL FOOD CONTINUES TO rise steadily—not only in the United States, Canada, and Europe, but also across the Middle East, Southeast Asia, North Africa, and Australia. The halal consumer segment is now one of the fastest growing in the global food trade. According to a recent estimate by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, the world's Muslim population has reached approximately 1.57 billion, making up about 23% of the total global population of 6.8 billion. More than 60% of Muslims reside in Asia, and roughly 20% live in the Middle East and North Africa. Additionally, over 300 million Muslims are part of minority populations in other regions. Europe is home to about

38.1 million Muslims, while Canada hosts around 1 million—roughly 3.1% of its total population. In the United States, although figures vary, estimates generally place the Muslim population at around 8 million.

Globally, the halal food industry is valued at approximately \$635 billion annually. In the United States alone, the halal food market is worth an estimated \$17.6 billion, according to the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America. Increasingly, non-Muslims are also purchasing halal products due to their reputation for cleanliness, safety, and lower risk of cross-contamination. As a result, the halal food sector represents a significant business

opportunity for food companies seeking to serve a diverse and expanding consumer base.

Over the last three decades, numerous halal grocery stores, ethnic markets, and restaurants have emerged, especially in large urban centers. Historically, the mainstream food industry has largely overlooked this demographic, instead directing its focus toward exports to predominantly Muslim countries. Traditionally, Muslim entrepreneurs would perform animal slaughter themselves, and the idea of third-party halal certification was unfamiliar. However, beginning in the late 1990s, small and mid-sized enterprises identified this untapped market and began addressing the growing demand. Today, halal certification is becoming just as common for food sold domestically as it is for exports. Products labeled with halal certification are widely trusted by Muslim consumers and are also appealing to individuals of other faiths, particularly when the certification is issued by a credible authority.

Core Principles of Halal Foods

Muslims are permitted to consume all foods that are clean and wholesome, with a few key prohibitions. These include:

- 1. Carrion or animals that died of themselves
- 2. Blood
- 3. Pigs and all related derivatives
- 4. Alcoholic substances
- 5. Animals not slaughtered with the invocation of God’s name

As long as manufacturers avoid these sources, halal food processing closely resembles conventional production practices.

Food manufacturers must pay close attention to certain ingredients and their origins, including additives; amino acids; animal fats and proteins; food colorings; dressings and sauces; emulsifiers; enzymes; fats and oils; lipid-based coatings and release agents; flavors; gelatin; glycerin; hydrolyzed proteins; meat products and by-products; food packaging components; stabilizers; thickeners; vitamins; and whey proteins. To maintain halal integrity, strict measures and precautions must be taken to prevent any form of cross-contamination with non-halal substances.

Food manufacturers must pay close attention to certain ingredients and their origins, including additives...



What is a Halal Certificate?

A halal certificate is an official document granted by an Islamic certifying body, confirming that the products listed comply with Islamic dietary principles. These principles include but are not limited to:

- 1. Absence of pork and its derivatives
- 2. Exclusion of alcohol
- 3. Avoidance of any forbidden ingredients derived from animals
- 4. Production using sanitized and uncontaminated equipment
- 5. Ensuring that any meat or poultry ingredients is sourced from animals slaughtered in accordance with Islamic guidelines

Types and Validity of Halal Certificates

Halal certification generally falls into two main categories, and the length of validity depends on the nature of the product. The first type is a site certification, which verifies that a particular location—such as a manufacturing plant, food processing unit, kitchen, slaughter facility, or food service outlet—has been inspected and meets the standards required for producing halal food. However, it’s important to note that this certificate does not guarantee that all items produced at the site are halal certified. It is not a substitute for individual product certification.

ANIMAL-DERIVED INGREDIENTS <i>Require scrutiny for source and slaughter method</i>	COMPLEX OR MULTI-SOURCE ADDITIVES <i>May come from animal, plant, or synthetic sources</i>	PROCESSING AIDS & PACKAGING COMPONENTS <i>May contact or include non-halal substances</i>
Animal fats and proteins Gelatin Glycerin Hydrolyzed proteins Meat products and by-products Collagen Enzymes (if animal-derived)	Additives Amino acids Emulsifiers Enzymes (if microbial/synthetic) Flavors Food colorings Stabilizers Thickeners Vitamins	Fats and oils Lipid-based coatings & release agents Dressings and sauces Food packaging components



Due to the intricacies of modern manufacturing and widespread use of animal-derived ingredients, virtually any product consumed or applied by Muslims can undergo halal certification.

The second type of certificate is product-specific or quantity-specific. This confirms that a particular product—or a designated quantity of it—has been evaluated and approved under halal standards as defined by the certifying authority. These certificates are often issued for a particular batch or shipment meant for a specific distributor or importer. In the case of meat and poultry products, where each consignment requires validation, batch or shipment certificates are commonly issued.

The duration of validity for a halal certificate varies depending on the product. Batch certificates remain valid for the lifespan of that specific lot in the market, typically up to the “best by,” “best before,” or expiration date. When a product is produced using a standardized and approved formulation, certification may be granted for one to three years. As long as the product continues to be manufactured under the agreed process and meets all certification requirements, its halal status remains valid throughout that period.

Who Can Issue Halal Certificates?

While any qualified Muslim individual, Islamic institution, or agency can issue a halal certificate, the recognition and acceptance of that certificate ultimately depends on the country of import or the local Muslim population being served. For instance, when exporting food to countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, only certifying bodies listed on the official approval lists of those nations are permitted to issue valid halal certificates. In the U.S., more than 40 organizations offer halal certification; however, only five are currently recognized by Indonesia’s Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), as per the latest available information. Malaysia’s Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) recently reduced its list of recognized U.S. certifiers from 16 to just three. According to JAKIM, about half of the delisted organizations were no longer active, while others were removed for not adhering to the required standards.

Therefore, food producers must understand not only halal regulations for specific countries but also which certifying organizations align best with their operational and export goals.

Companies should work with certification agencies that are widely accepted both in their target export markets and among local Muslim consumers.

Currently, Malaysia and Indonesia are the only countries with structured, government-led programs to accredit halal certifiers. Other nations, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Singapore, the UAE, and Kuwait, may evaluate or approve halal organizations for certain purposes, but not through formalized systems.

Which Products Are Eligible for Halal Certification?

Due to the intricacies of modern manufacturing and widespread use of animal-derived ingredients, virtually any product consumed or applied by Muslims can undergo halal certification. This includes items used externally, not just those ingested. While pharmaceutical and medicinal items used for health and wellness are not required to be certified, many informed Muslim consumers still prefer them to meet halal standards whenever possible.

Products that can be halal-certified include:

- Fresh, frozen, and processed meat and poultry
- Ingredients derived from meat and poultry
- Dairy products and ingredients
- Ready-to-eat meals and prepared foods
- All packaged food items
- Personal care and cosmetic products
- Nutritional and dietary supplements
- Pharmaceuticals including vaccines
- Food-related packaging materials

Steps in the Halal Certification Process

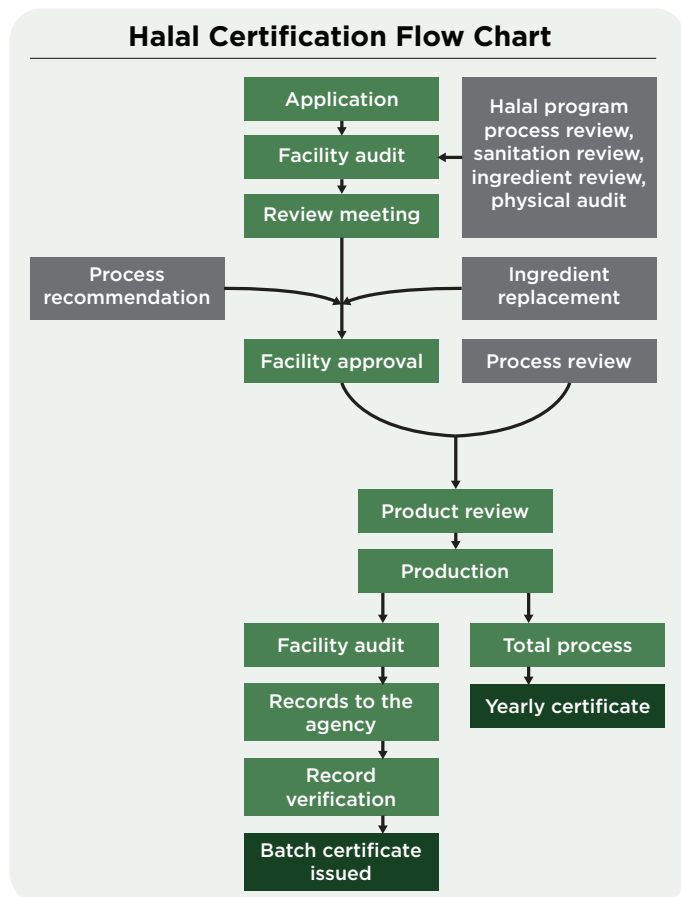
The process of obtaining halal certification begins with selecting a halal certification agency that aligns with your marketing and export objectives. Countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore maintain government-regulated halal certification systems, while nations that primarily export food tend to rely on independent certifying bodies. For exporters targeting specific regions, working with a certifier accepted or officially recognized in that market is advisable. For broader or

global distribution, it's best to partner with a certifier that operates on an international scale.

The initial step involves submitting an application, which details the manufacturing procedures, the specific products requiring certification, the intended sales regions, and complete ingredient information. Once received, the certifying body reviews the submission and typically schedules an audit of the production site. At this point, companies should also confirm and negotiate the associated fees and sign an agreement, as annual certification costs can sometimes reach several thousand U.S. dollars.

During the audit and review of ingredient details, the certifier may require substitutions for any non-compliant materials. A multi-year supervision agreement is usually signed between the certifying body and the manufacturer. Following approval, a halal certificate is issued—either for a single shipment (batch certificate) or for a one-year term, depending on the arrangement.

Overall, halal certification for food products is a structured and manageable process, as represented in the chart below:



Displaying Halal Symbols

Once a product has been halal-certified, it typically features a logo or symbol on the packaging to inform consumers of its compliance.

For instance, the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) uses the Crescent-M “M” symbol to indicate the product is “permissible for Muslims.” Other certifying bodies use variations such as the Arabic letter “ح”, the word “halal” in Arabic script “(حلال)”, or simply the English word “halal.” Products are more likely to gain consumer trust when they carry the mark of a well-known local halal authority—or, for imported goods, the logo of a recognized and reputable international certification agency.



Key Stages in the Halal Certification Process

- Submit an application to the chosen certifying organization—either online or in paper form—along with detailed product and ingredient information.
- The organization conducts a review of the facilities, including equipment, ingredients, sanitation procedures, and potential risks for contamination.
- For food producers handling meat, this also includes an evaluation of animal welfare practices—covering feeding, transport, and humane handling prior to slaughter.
- In the case of slaughter operations, the certification requires employing qualified Muslim slaughter personnel and evaluating areas used for stunning, restraining, slaughtering, and handling before and after the process.
- The certifier provides cost estimates and contract details, which must be reviewed and agreed upon.
- Upon agreement, payment of all related fees and expenses is made.
- A halal certificate is then issued for the approved product or facility.

Final Thoughts

With access to a global halal market of over 2.5 billion people, the opportunity for growth is significant. The halal symbol serves as a trustworthy, third-party validation for consumers seeking religious compliance. Importantly, it broadens market reach without alienating non-Muslim customers. Halal certification improves a product's appeal in Muslim-majority countries and communities and requires only a modest investment—especially when compared to the potential return in sales and revenue. In short, halal certification strengthens a product's reputation and positions it to meet diverse consumer expectations. ⑩

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IFANCA: Pioneering Trust and Innovation in the Global Halal Industry

By Hafiz Maqsood Ahmed



Since 1982, IFANCA has been more than a certification body; it's been a global trailblazer, weaving trust, science, and Islamic values into the fabric of the \$2 trillion halal industry.



work matter to 2 billion Muslims and beyond? Let's dive into the story of an organization that's redefining faith-driven transformation in food, pharma and beyond.

A Legacy Born from Faith and Vision

Back in 1982, a group of visionary Muslim scholars, scientists, and community leaders in Chicago saw a problem: Muslims in America were struggling to find trustworthy halal products. With no standardized certification, navigating grocery stores felt like a gamble. Enter IFANCA, founded to bring clarity and confidence to halal consumers. What started as a small nonprofit has grown into a global powerhouse, certifying over 20,000 products across 75 countries and serving as a trusted partner to industry giants like Nestlé, Unilever, Abbott and Cargill.

IFANCA's mission is simple yet profound: to ensure Muslims can access halal food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and more without doubt. But it's not just about slapping a logo on a package. IFANCA's work is a meticulous blend of Islamic scholarship, cutting-edge science, and rigorous auditing, ensuring every product meets the strictest halal standards rooted in the Quran and Sunnah. "Our goal is to empower Muslims to live their faith fully," says Dr. Muhammad Munir Chaudry, IFANCA's president. "But we're also building bridges—showing the world that halal is about quality, ethics, and inclusion."

How IFANCA Makes Halal Happen

So, how does IFANCA turn a chicken breast or a tube of toothpaste into a certified halal product? It's like a high-stakes detective mission. IFANCA's team—made up of Islamic scholars, food scientists, and auditors—scours every step of the supply chain. They inspect and audit slaughterhouses to ensure animals are slaughtered by Muslims with a prayer, and comb through factories to rule out cross-contamination. For processed foods, cosmetics, or drugs, they dive into ingredient lists, sniffing out sneaky culprits like gelatin, alcohol, or emulsifiers that might be haram (forbidden).

PICTURE YOURSELF IN A BUSTLING SUPERMARKET aisle, scanning labels for that one symbol that guarantees peace of mind—a mark that says the food you're about to buy respects your faith. For millions of Muslims worldwide, that symbol is the Crescent-M, the iconic logo of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA). Since 1982, IFANCA has been more than a certification body; it's been a global trailblazer, weaving trust, science, and Islamic values into the fabric of the \$2 trillion halal industry. From certifying your favorite snacks to ensuring vaccines align with halal standards, IFANCA is transforming what it means to live halal in a complex world. So, who is IFANCA, and why does its



What started as a small nonprofit has grown into a global powerhouse, certifying over 20,000 products across 75 countries...



This isn't a one-time check. IFANCA conducts regular audits to detect traces of non-halal substances. Certifying a single product can take months and cost thousands, but the result is a Crescent-M logo that's recognized worldwide as a gold standard. "When I see that logo, I know I'm safe," says Fatima Ali, a college student from New York who relies on IFANCA-certified products. "It's like having a friend who's done all the homework for me."

Beyond Food: A Holistic Halal Revolution

While food is IFANCA's bread and butter (halal, of course), its reach goes far beyond the kitchen. Did you know that cosmetics, like lipsticks with carmine (a red dye from insects), or medicines with pork-derived gelatin, can be non-halal? IFANCA certifies everything from skincare to vaccines, ensuring Muslims can care for their bodies and

health without compromising their faith. In 2021, IFANCA partnered with UNICEF and Gavi to certify COVID-19 vaccines, addressing concerns about gelatin and building trust among Muslim communities worldwide.

IFANCA also tackles emerging industries. It certifies halal supplements and even packaging materials (some glues contain animal byproducts). As the halal market diversifies—think halal tourism or e-commerce—IFANCA stays ahead, developing standards for new sectors. "Halal is a lifestyle, not just a diet," says Asma Ahad, IFANCA's Director of Halal Market Development. "We're here to make that lifestyle accessible to everyone."

Empowering Through Education and Advocacy

IFANCA doesn't just certify—it educates. Its Halal Consumer magazine, available in print and online, breaks down complex topics like halal ingredients and industry trends for everyday readers. The organization hosts webinars, workshops, and conferences, from Chicago to Dubai, teaching businesses how to go halal and consumers how to shop smart. Its YouTube channel and social media, buzzing with tips and Q&As, make halal knowledge fun and approachable. "I learned from IFANCA's Instagram that some cheeses aren't halal because of rennet," says Zainab, a 15-year-old from Houston. "Now I check labels like a pro!"

IFANCA also advocates for systemic change. It works with governments, like Malaysia's JAKIM, Indonesia's

BPJPH and the UAE's halal authority, to harmonize global standards. In the U.S., where halal certification lacks federal regulation, IFANCA collaborates with the USDA to promote transparency. It's even tackling halal fraud, utilizing technology to create traceable supply chains. "We're not just reacting to the market," says Dr. Chaudry. "We're shaping its future."

A Global Impact with Local Roots

Headquartered in Chicago, IFANCA's influence spans the globe. Its 14 international offices, from Canada to Indonesia, support businesses and consumers in diverse markets. It trains thousands of food industry professionals annually, ensuring halal practices are understood from farm to fork. Major brands rely on IFANCA to tap into the \$2 trillion halal economy, projected to hit \$3 trillion by 2028. Supermarkets like Costco and restaurants like The Halal Guys (before their Long Island closures) proudly display the Crescent-M, knowing it draws Muslim shoppers.

But IFANCA's heart remains local. It engages communities and organizations through school programs, and charity drives, like distributing thousands of turkeys during thanksgiving. Its scholarship fund supports Muslim students in food science, nurturing the next generation of halal experts. "IFANCA feels like family," says Imam Yusuf Patel, a New Jersey scholar who works with the group. "They're not just about business—they're about our values."

It's not all smooth sailing. Certifying products is expensive, which can exclude small businesses, especially in developing countries. Fake halal logos and "halal washing" (when companies falsely claim halal status) erode trust. IFANCA fights back with legal action and consumer alerts, but the battle is ongoing. Harmonizing global standards is another hurdle—different countries have different rules, like whether machine slaughter is halal. IFANCA pushes for dialogue, hosting summits to align certifiers worldwide.



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Celebrating IFANCA's partnership with University of Chicago dining services to provide nutritious, accessible halal options for all students. Beyond food processing plants, IFANCA also certifies food service operations, including campus dining halls, to ensure halal standards are met throughout the supply chain.

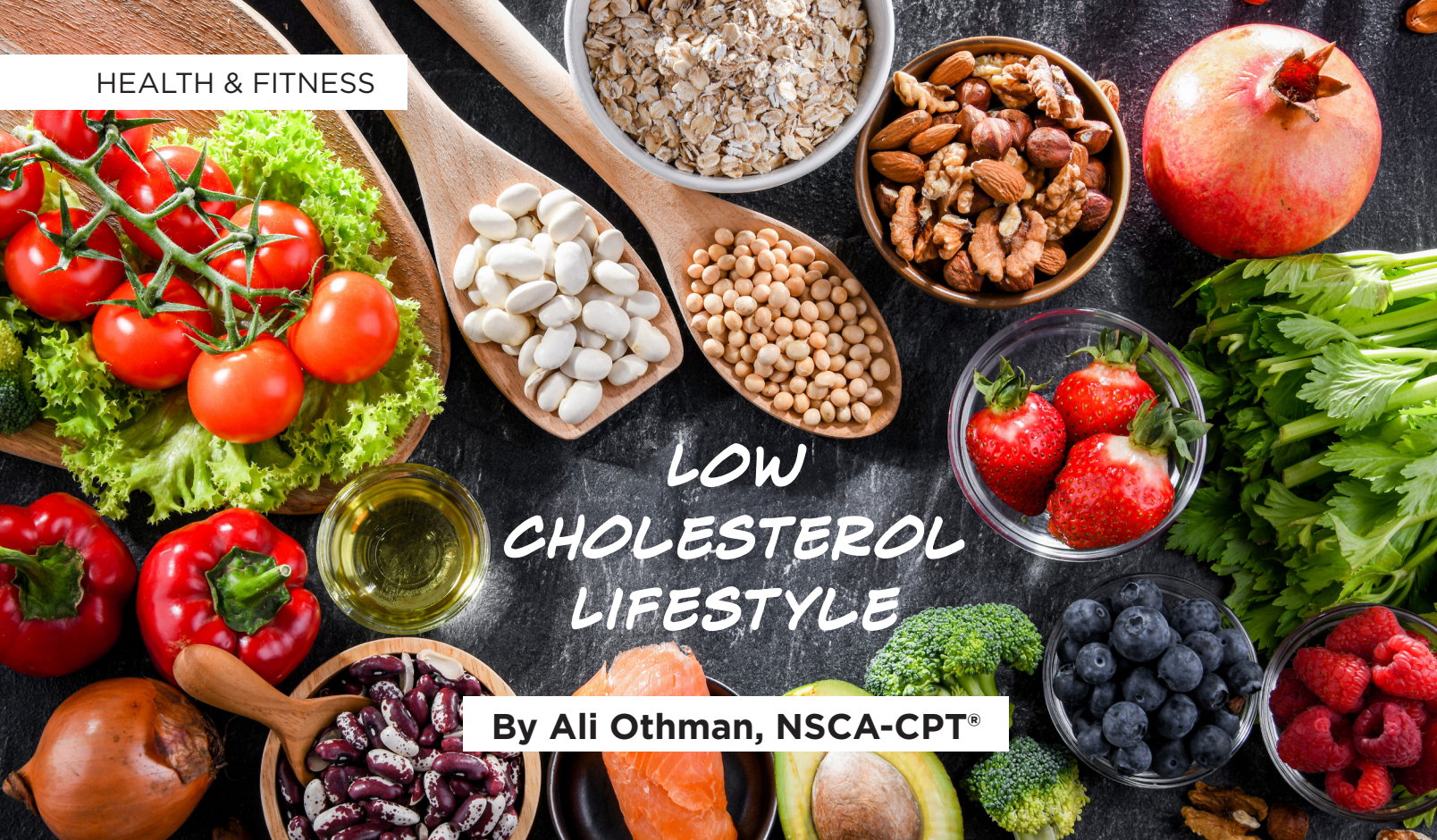
Looking ahead, IFANCA's embracing tech and innovation. With the halal market booming, IFANCA's role as a trusted guide is more vital than ever. "We're not just keeping up," says Ahad. "We're leading the charge."

Why IFANCA Matters to You

Whether you're a Muslim scanning labels, a business eyeing the halal market, or just curious about halal's global rise, IFANCA's work touches your life. Its Crescent-M logo is a promise—of faith, quality, and ethics. It's why Fatima trusts her groceries, why Nestlé reaches Muslim consumers, and why vaccines reached remote villages during a pandemic. It's why halal is no longer niche but a mainstream force, from Walmart aisles to Michelin-starred menus.

IFANCA's story is one of vision, grit, and heart. It's about making halal not just possible but empowering, uniting 1.9 billion Muslims and countless others under a shared commitment to trust and integrity. Next time you spot that Crescent-M, know it's more than a logo—it's a legacy of faith in action, built by a team that's changing the world, one halal product at a time.®

HAFIZ MAQSOOD AHMED is the Editor-in-Chief of The Halal Times, with over 30 years of experience in journalism. Specializing in the Islamic economy, his insightful analyses shape discourse in the global Halal economy.



LOW CHOLESTEROL LIFESTYLE

By Ali Othman, NSCA-CPT®

HIGH CHOLESTEROL IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS the silent killer due to the lack of early warning signs. It has been linked to dietary restrictions, clogged arteries, strokes, and heart attacks, but it's more complex than simply good or bad. Cholesterol's correlation with lifestyle, especially exercise, is becoming better understood as a game-changer for improving cardiovascular health.

Cholesterol is a fatty substance found in every cell of our bodies and is essential for building cell membranes, synthesizing vitamins, and producing hormones. The body needs cholesterol to thrive and survive, and there are two main types.

Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL): LDL contributes to plaque buildup in arteries and increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. LDL is commonly referred to as **bad** cholesterol.

High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL): HDL aids in the removal of LDL from the bloodstream by transporting it to the liver, where it is processed and excreted. HDL is commonly referred to as **good** cholesterol.

Triglycerides are the third important blood lipid, and along with LDL and HDL, make up a number known as total cholesterol. This is the number many of us check at annual exams. Triglycerides are defined in the Mayo Clin-

ic's, *Triglycerides: Why do they matter?* as "a type of fat found in your blood. When you eat, your body converts any calories it doesn't need to use right away to triglycerides." These are stored in your fat cells and released for energy if needed. Elevated levels of triglycerides increase a person's risk of stroke and heart disease.

As we eat, the liver takes in proteins, carbohydrates, and fats, and produces cholesterol. Then it packages the cholesterol for transport throughout the body to help produce hormones, build cell membranes, aid in digestion, and waste excretion. In addition to being produced by the body, we ingest cholesterol every time we consume animal-based products. There is no recommended dietary intake of cholesterol, instead the guidance is to combine a reduced intake of saturated and trans fats with exercise and a healthy lifestyle.

Physical activity is a proven way to help regulate and reduce cholesterol levels. Exercise requires more energy than rest, so the body consumes more nutrients to match this energy need. Increasing physical activity leads to weight loss, and losing just five percent of total body weight can lead to a significant reduction in triglycerides. A 2015 study by J. D. Brown et al published by *Translational Behavioral Medicine* showed, "Patients who lost five-ten percent of their starting weight showed significant reductions in total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides."

A brisk thirty-minute walk, five-days a week is enough to make a difference on your total cholesterol.



All physical activity is beneficial, but not all exercise influences cholesterol equally. Aerobic exercises such as walking, running, swimming, and cycling are most effective at reducing triglycerides and increasing HDL. This type of exercise increases your heart and breathing rate for extended periods. Anaerobic exercises such as lifting weights, High-intensity interval training (HIIT), and plyometrics also reduce cholesterol however not as efficiently as aerobic exercise. The best method is a combination of both.

The American Heart Association recommends, “at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of both, preferably spread throughout the week.” Alongside this recommendation is one to add “muscle-strengthening activity on at least two days per week.”

Consistency is the determining factor when using exercise for cholesterol management. A brisk thirty-minute walk, five-days a week is enough to make a difference on your total cholesterol. Increasing the amount of exercise, or the aerobic intensity, will lead to a higher reduction in total cholesterol.

Along with its physiological effects on cholesterol, exercise is one of the best lifelong methods of weight-management. Excess weight and body fat, especially around the abdomen, is typically associated with higher LDL and triglycerides, and lower HDL. It doesn't matter what you do, do it with passion and consistency.

Exercise is critically important to cholesterol management, but it works best when it's part of a heart-healthy lifestyle. Since some of our cholesterol comes from the foods and drinks we consume, so diet is a central factor in managing cholesterol. A diet high in vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts, legumes, and healthy fats will provide nutrient rich energy sources while reducing saturated and trans fats. So, what are we supposed to eat?

Vegetables and fruits are high in vitamins, nutrients, fiber, and antioxidants. These support healthy digestion and

make you feel full. Fatty fish, like salmon and mackerel, are high in Omega-3 Fatty Acids and are known to lower triglycerides. Unsaturated fats like those found in nuts, olive oil, and avocados provide a healthy source of fat and may improve total cholesterol. Limiting the amount of red meat, processed foods, and high-fat dairy will directly reduce the amount of cholesterol you consume.

While animal products contain cholesterol, they are a great source of high-quality protein, vitamins, mineral, and amino acids. When reducing intake in this category, keep in mind that a well-balanced diet can still consist of red meat, chicken, milk, yogurt, and even ice cream. Lifestyle changes are about sustainability with appropriate size portions.

After a physician clears you for exercise, it's important to manage your expectations. Realistically, it takes three-to-six month of consistent effort to see noticeable changes in total cholesterol. Fortunately, you'll notice physical changes much earlier which should motivate you to continue. After eight-to-twelve weeks of consistent exercise you'll notice positive changes to your body shape and composition.

Some individuals may need medication alongside their lifestyle change, especially those with family history of heart disease or high cholesterol. Exercise is even more important in cases where medication is needed. Regular cholesterol screenings are one of the best tools available to manage your heart health. By choosing to consume a well-balanced diet, exercise regularly, and check your cholesterol, you're playing an active role in physical well-being.

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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.

HALAL-CERTIFIED PRODUCT LOCATOR

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

Brand	Product Type	Company Name	Available At
Cabot®	Cheese	Cabot Creamery	Supermarkets throughout the U.S.
Campbell's®	Food Products	Campbell Soup Company	Supermarkets throughout Canada
Desi Natural™	Dairy Products	Desi Fresh Foods™	Visit their website: desifreshfoods.com
Dr. Chen®, Kandesn®, Oi-Lin®, SunBreeze®, Sunrider®, Sun-Smile®, SunTrim®, VitaShake®	Cosmetics, Food Products, Nutritional Supplements, Personal Care Products	Sunrider International	Visit their website for distributors: home.sunrider.com
Elecare®, Ensure®, Glucerna®, Pediasure®, Pedialyte®, Similac®, ZonePerfect®	Infant / Baby Food Products, Nutritional Supplements	Abbott Nutrition	Supermarkets and drugstores throughout the U.S. and Canada
Enfagrow®, Enfakid®, Enfamil®	Infant / Baby Food Products	Mead Johnson B.V.	Department stores, supermarkets, and drugstores throughout the U.S.
Flipz®, Turtles®	Candy / Chocolate	DeMet's Candy Company	Supermarkets, drugstores, discount stores
Fruitfull®, Happy Indulgence®	Food Products	Happy & Healthy Products Inc.	Supermarkets, convenience stores, mini marts, gas stations
Godiva	Candy / Chocolate	Godiva Chocolatier	Company stores, department stores, supermarkets, gift shops, and drugstores throughout the U.S.
Golden Bonbon™	Candy / Chocolate	Asti Holdings Ltd.	Visit their website: www.goldenbonbon.com
Impossible™	Food Products	Impossible Foods Inc.	Grocery stores and select restaurants throughout the U.S.
J&M®	Food Products	J & M Food Products Co.	Visit their website: www.halalcertified.com
Kontos®	Bakery Items, Bread	Kontos Foods, Inc.	Ethnic (Arab, Indo/Pak) stores and fruit & vegetable markets throughout the U.S.
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	Nutritional Supplements, Personal Care Products	Melaleuca, Inc.	Visit their website for distributors: www.melaleuca.com
Mountain High™	Dairy Products	General Mills	Supermarkets throughout the U.S.
My Own Meal®	Food Products	My Own Meals, Inc.	Visit their website: www.myownmeals.com
National®	Dessert Mixes, Sauces & Dressings, Condiments, Spices & Seasonings	National Foods Limited	Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the U.S. and Canada
Natural Delights®	Food Products	Datepac, LLC	Kroger, Meijer, Publix, Walmart, Whole Foods, and various markets throughout the U.S.
Nutrilite™	Nutritional Supplements	Access Business Group, LLC	Visit their website for distributors: amway.com/en_US/nutrilite
Olympia® Foods	Flat Bread, Gyros	Olympia Food Industries, Inc.	Ethnic (Arab, Indo/Pak) stores and restaurants throughout the U.S. and Canada
Organic Valley®	Dairy Products	Organic Valley	Supermarkets throughout the U.S.
Peek Freans	Bakery Items	English Biscuit Manufacturers (Pvt.) Ltd.	Ethnic (Indo/Pak) stores throughout the U.S. and Canada
POM Wonderful®	Beverages / Beverage Concentrates	POM Wonderful, LLC	Supermarkets throughout the U.S.
Saffron Road™	Appetizers, Food Products, Snack Foods	American Halal Company, Inc.	HEB, Kroger, Publix, Target, Whole Foods, and various markets throughout the U.S.; Visit their website to locate a store near you: saffronroad.com
Tom's of Maine	Personal Care Products	Toms of Maine, Inc.	Department stores, supermarkets, and drugstores throughout the U.S.
Wonderful Pistachios®	Pistachios & Almonds	Wonderful Pistachios & Almonds	Supermarkets throughout the U.S.

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ISLAMIC FOOD AND NUTRITION COUNCIL OF AMERICA

In matters of halal, we take the doubt out of doubtful

The Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, IFANCA, is working with the world's food producers to ensure what you eat is halal and healthy.



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