

GLOBAL WATCH

HAILING HALAL

Three major trends—the globalization of the food industry, interest in authentic ethnic foods and niche marketing—are coming together to increase the focus on halal foods. By having such religiously certified foods for the U.S. market, certain food manufacturers have found that it has eased their entry into the Middle East and other world regions with large Muslim populations.

Islam—the world's second largest religion—also is the fastest growing, both globally and in the United States. North American Muslims have increased in number since World War I and especially after World War II. Approximately six million Muslims live in the U.S., according to the Center for American Muslim Research and Information (Richmond Hill, N.Y.). About 75% of the Muslims follow halal practices in one form or another in America. The buying power of the U.S. Muslim food consumer is estimated to be more than \$10 billion.

Muslims use two major terms—halal and haram—to describe food. Makrooh, mash-booh, and

dhabiha are other terms less commonly used. (See definitions.)

A Muslim's life revolves around the concept of halal. Halal is a universal expression covering not only the issues of food and drink, but all other matters of daily life. Food is considered one of the most important factors which unites the various Islamic ethnic and religious groups.

Just as Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish religions provide guidance to their followers on the types of food to be consumed, so too are Muslims instructed to consume foods which are halal. Several times in the Koran (the divine book), Allah (God) prohibited Muslims from eating haram food. Except for a few foods, most foods are halal.

The majority of haram foods are primarily pork and its by-products, the meat of animals slaughtered in unacceptable fashion, blood and alcohol. In order to make meat halal, it must be properly slaughtered. Meat from animals which have died of natural causes, accidents, hanging or having been beaten to death is not acceptable.

Any by-products or derived ingredients must also be from duly slaughtered animals in order to be halal.

■ The halal seal is already used by companies such as Fancy Fruit, Huntington Beach, Calif., My Own Meals, Deerfield, Ill., Happy and Healthy Products Inc., Boca Raton, Fla., and Texas Best Beef Jerky Inc., Forth Worth, Texas.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FANCY FRUIT.

ARABIC WORDS CATEGORIZING FOODS

Halal means permitted or lawful. Halal foods have no restrictions on consumption or use.

Haram means forbidden or unlawful. There are absolute restrictions on consumption and use of such foods in normal circumstances.

Makrooh means religiously "discouraged" or "disliked." It covers any foods or liquids which are harmful (physically, mentally, spiritually) to the body.

Mash-booh means "suspect." It covers the gray area between halal and haram.

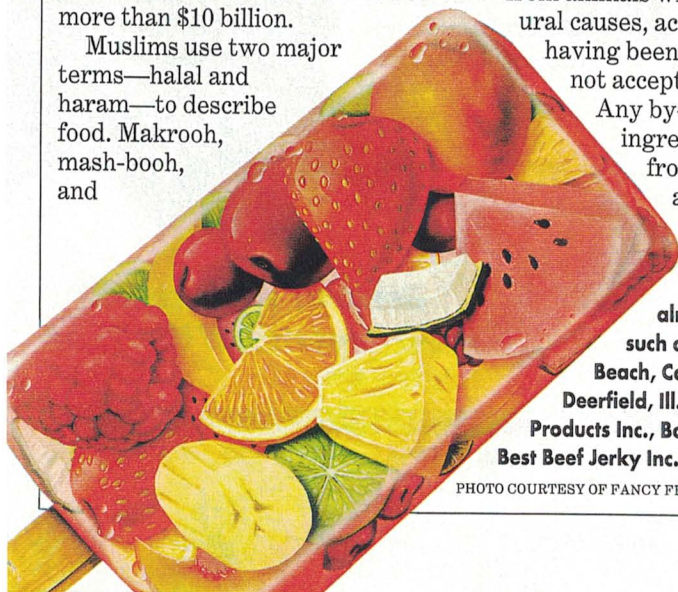
Dhabiha means "slaughtered." When an animal is slaughtered according to Islamic methods, the meat is considered to be dhabiha.

HARAM INGREDIENTS

Most Muslims living in non-Islamic society read food labels for pork and alcohol. However, their absence does not guarantee a halal product. Here are some of the most common problems.

■ **Emulsifiers.** Soybeans, egg yolks and animals are commercial sources of lecithin. Mono- and diglycerides are manufactured from vegetable oils, beef fat or lard. Only lecithin produced from soy, egg yolks or other vegetable sources, and vegetable mono- and diglycerides would be considered halal. This impacts the foods in which they are used.

For example, milk is halal. However, when milk is fortified with vitamins in an emulsified oil carrier it may become haram. Similarly, vegetable shortening may contain emulsifiers, which again may be driven from animal sources. Most breads, cookies and crackers also contain mono- and diglycerides of unknown sources. Ice cream, salad dressings



and many other foods use emulsifiers of unknown sources.

■ **Gelatin.** The main sources of the gelatin are cattle and pigs and their by-products. Unless the label lists halal gelatin or fish gelatin, Muslims should not consume the food. Typical foods which may contain gelatin include frosted cereals, cereal bars and ice cream (some with gelatin-based marshmallows), yogurt and some dairy drinks, chocolate, candies, and so on.

■ **Enzymes, whey, enzymatically treated ingredients.** Enzymes derived from pigs' stomachs have been used to manufacture cheese. Such cheese or whey (a by-product from cheese processing) would be haram. Today, it is more common for cheese processors to use plant- or microbial-derived enzymes.

■ **Alcohol.** Many liquid flavors (e.g., vanilla) contain alcohol as an ingredient. Foods such as salad dressings or sauces may contain wine in their

formulations.

■ **Others.** Some ingredient legends will contain objectionable ingredients relatively easy to spot; others do not provide enough information. Some baby foods contain meat and other animal-derived ingredients; salad dressings or seasonings may contain bacon or meat-based flavors. Ingredients on a typical chewing gum wrapper may read "sugar, gum base, high fructose corn syrup, flavor, and softeners." The gum base and softeners often contain sodium and potassium stearate which may be derived from animal sources.

SERVING THE MARKET

To better serve the Muslim market, food manufacturers should not only list all ingredients on the food label, but also give the source of appropriate ingredients.

Foods formulated and processed for this market can use special wording on the label such as "halal" meat,

"according to Islamic laws" or even "Muslim food."

Food manufacturers can be referred to qualified halal certifying agencies such as the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA, P.O. Box 425, Bedford Park, Ill. 60499), and The Muslim Consumer Group for Food Products (P.O. Box 8538, Rolling Meadows, Ill. 60008).

These agencies provide consultation services and help food professionals develop products that comply with Islamic food laws. They also offer supervision and certification for foods, consumer products and halal slaughtered meat and poultry. Their registered certification symbol, the Crescent "M," or the halal symbol "H" appears on the product packages.

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