

Examining the HALAL Market

Worldwide growth in Islamic populations has spurred demand for Halal foods and created new opportunities for food processors.

MIAN RIAZ, Ph.D., Contributing Editor

Several of the world's major food companies, including Nestle, Baskin Robbins and Campbell Soup, have addressed the growing demand for foods that meet the Islamic dietary code.

Such foods must pass inspection by an authorized certifying agency such as the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, Chicago, before they are declared Halal, or permitted for consumption by Muslims. Foods that are forbidden are known as Haram.

As with Kosher foods, obtaining Halal certification involves added steps in the food preparation process, but there may be rewards for the extra work: Islam is the fastest-growing religion both globally and in the United States.

According to the Center for American Muslim Research & Information, New York, one-fourth to one-fifth of the world is Muslim. The buying power of Muslims in the United States is estimated at \$12 billion for foods, while the international Halal food trade is estimated at \$150 billion per year.

Halal foods are gaining popularity at grocery stores and restaurants.

■ Certified Halal, Fruitfull® fruit bars from Happy & Healthy Products Inc.™, Boca Raton, Fla., come in flavors such as Pineapple, Rum Runner, Coconut and Peaches 'n' Cream.

Sales of Halal products are climbing as the number of U.S. Muslims grows, and demand is spilling over to other consumers, according to the *Wall Street Journal* (March 5, 1998). Sales of Halal meat are up 70% in the past five years, but thus far many large meat companies, such as ConAgra, Tyson and Oscar Mayer, make Halal food only for export.

Areas of Opportunity

The United States presents numerous opportunities to market and sell Halal products.



■ Mian Riaz





■ Some of the major U.S. Halal food markets are in the New York City and New Jersey metropolitan area, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Dallas/Forth Worth, South Florida, San Francisco, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

Among them are public and private schools, the vending industry, airline meals, and convenience foods such as frozen dinners.

The number of Muslim students in public schools is increasing annually, which makes it more feasible to prepare meals for them. These children have generally brought their own lunches to school or skipped lunch due to lack of Halal foods in the school system. When vendor contracts are awarded, those who can supply Halal meals to the school system will have an advantage over those who cannot.

The increasing demand for convenience foods also stretches over into Halal foods. Currently, there are few Halal prepared meals available. Like many other segments of the population, Muslims have become busier with jobs and other activities. As their time demands increase, the availability of prepared convenience foods will become more important.

A natural progression from the convenience food arena is the airline meal. Currently most domestic and international carriers have no Halal meals on their menus. Instead, they offer vegetarian meals and fruit plates. In the past, Muslims either accepted these meals or passed altogether. Today, however, Muslim travelers are requesting Halal meals on airlines.

Formulating Halal Foods

A food company that wants to introduce Halal products should obtain Halal certification from an authoritative, reliable and independent agency. Qualified Halal certifying agencies include the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America. Halal certification

Kosher & Halal Food Processing Requirements

	Kosher*	Halal**
Pork	Prohibited	Prohibited
Ruminants & Poultry	Slaughtered by a Jew	Slaughtered by a Muslim
Blessing	Blessing before entering slaughtering area. Not on each animal.	Blessing on each animal while slaughtering
Slaughtering by hand	Mandatory	Preferred
Mechanical slaughtering	Not allowed	Poultry yes, but not mammals
Stunning	Allowed sometimes	Allowed
Restrictions	Only front quarters Soaking & salting required	Whole carcass No salting
Blood	Prohibited	Prohibited
Gelatin		
Skin and bones	From Kosher animals	From Halal animals
Dry bones	Maybe	Halal bones only
Fish	Kosher fish only	Any fish
Pork	Allowed by liberal orthodox rabbis	Not allowed
Enzymes		
Microbial	Accepted	Accepted
Biotech-derived	Accepted	Accepted
Animal	Kosher slaughtered	Accepted sometimes
Porcine	Maybe	Generally not accepted
Addition of Cheese Culture	Must be added by a Jew	No restriction
Alcohol	Permitted (depending on source)	Not permitted
Fish	With scales only	Most accept all fish, some only with scales
Seafood	Not permitted	Varying degree of acceptance
Combining Meat & Dairy	Not permitted	Not an issue
Sanitation of Equipment	Cleaning Idle period required Kosherization/ritual cleaning	Thorough cleaning No idle period required
Special Occasion	Additional restrictions during Passover	Same rules year-round

* Source: Dr. J. M. Regenstein, *The Cornell Kosher Food Initiative of the Institute of Food Science, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.*

** Source: Dr. M. M. Chaudry, *Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, Chicago.*

■ Consumers often assume Kosher is similar to Halal, but the two are different entities carrying separate meanings and spirit.

includes an inspection of the production facility, review of sanitation, ingredients and labels, and training of company personnel in understanding and meeting Halal requirements.

The USDA Food Labeling Division Regulatory Program has recently established labeling guidelines for

Halal meat and poultry products. The Codex Alimentarius Commission recently adopted guidelines on the use of the term Halal for assuring fair trading practices in the trade of Halal foods. Chemical analysis methods that test for the presence or absence of Haram substances such as pork,



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animal fat and gelatin are available in the market.

For any product to be certified Halal, it must fulfill several requirements. The product must be free of any substance extracted from a Haram animal or ingredient. All raw materials and ingredients must be Halal.

The food must be derived from natural Halal animals, such as cattle, goat and sheep, and slaughtered according to Islamic rites. Specifically, a mentally sound Muslim must perform the slaughter.

Any utensils, equipment or machinery used in production must be cleansed according to Islamic law. A Halal food must be free of contamination and must not come into contact with Haram substances during preparation, manufacture, processing and/or storage.

Several ingredients are considered Haram and are not allowed in Halal foods:

- Gelatin is classified as food according to EEC's Codex Alimentarius and is a derivative from animals. Unless the label says "Halal gelatin" or "fish gelatin," it is a major concern for the Muslim consumer.
- Emulsifiers processed from vegetable sources are permitted in Halal foods. Mono- and diglycerides derived from beef fat, lard or marine oil are prohibited.
- Enzymes are sourced from animals, plants or microbes. Only those from plants, calves (if slaughtered properly) or microbes can be used in Halal foods.
- Lard is pork fat and is prohibited in Halal foods.
- Glycerine and lecithin from animal fat are objectionable to Muslim consumers.
- Alcohol is prohibited in Halal foods. Some flavors are extracted with alcohol, but the residual alcohol level is very low. Usually this comes under incidental additives, or substances that are present in a food or drink at insignificant levels and do not have any technical or functional effects in that food.

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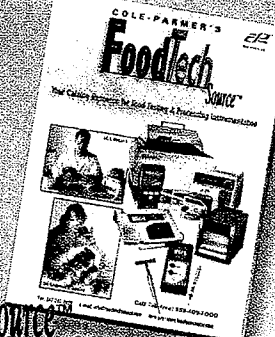
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