



Your Seal of Assurance

Halal BULLETIN

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The Newsletter of the Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification

Halal certification growing by the leaps

Halal Certification and Its benefits

The word halal is increasingly becoming a part of daily usage as a growing number of companies have gone a step further to ensure that the dietary needs of Muslims are catered for.

The halal industry is one of the fastest growing consumer industries with global market now estimated to be worth US\$2 trillion a year.

The Halal marketplace is emerging as one of the most lucrative and influential market arenas in the world today. Halal is no longer just a purely religious issue, as it has become a global symbol for quality assurance and lifestyle choice. It is a new market force that should not be overlooked.

All major food, pharmaceutical and personal care product manufacturers produce and market at least some of their products as halal certified. These companies symbolize a growing movement, influenced by halal conscious consumers to provide halal certified products.

In its gradual progression the halal certification movement, which started with meat and poultry, then food products and food ingredients, has now expanded to nutritional products, cosmetics and banking among other areas.

In recent years, it has become clear that the halal industry has an impact on the way companies view their markets and this phenomenon has helped to spur the growth of halal

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A growing number of establishments are increasingly seeking certification from the Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification (KBHC). From a couple of companies since the concept was introduced four years ago, halal certification is on the rise in the country as more companies see the need to ensure that their products are certified as halal giving Muslim consumers an assurance that the products on offer meet Islamic dietary laws.

After many years when Muslims faced a huge dilemma in adhering to their dietary laws as defined by their faith, the situation has changed drastically in the last four years as there is a wide range of products that are available which meet Islamic dietary guidelines.

In Islam, eating is considered also to be a matter of faith and worship and Muslims are required to ensure that whatever they eat conforms to Islamic dietary standards.

At present, 36 food processing companies, 14 butcheries, 13 abattoirs and 5 restaurants are fully halal certified.



The Managing director of Choice Meats James W. Taylor proudly shows off the company's Halal certificate.

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Exercise your right as a halal consumer

Welcome to the second edition of the KBHC newsletter. By the grace of the Almighty, the KBHC activities are ongoing and expanding in various areas. We first express our thanks and gratitude to Allah without whose Tawfeeq nothing could have been achieved, As a result, the fruits of KBHC's efforts are slowly being seen and the aim of establishing such an organisation being met-streamlining the Halal industry in an era of excessive deceit and false labelling, by constant monitoring and inspections from the source to the consumer, implementing the stringent criteria to ensure the Islamic regulations are adhered to and providing assurance for genuine Halal products.



Fauz Qureishi-Trustee

Through this publication and other medias, we intend to educate Muslim consumers in regards to what they eat. We would like to urge all of you to use this kind of publicity to create awareness and campaign for genuine Halal wholesome food in whatever capacity and whatever means you can at homes and various institutions.

We also pray to Almighty Allah, that He accepts the sacrifices of all those involved in establishing and running of KBHC by any means. They include; trustees, inspectors, managers, administrators, supporters, well-wishers and consumers of certified products. We pray to the Almighty that he enables us to serve the community in the manner which is beneficial to all.

It is worth mentioning here that being able to fulfill a task and the task being accepted by Allah are two separate goals. Many times, success is gained in fulfilling the task, however, that does not guarantee that the task has been accepted in Allah's court. We pray to Almighty Allah to accept this effort from all of us and make it a means of our salvation. We would also like to remind all that the struggle has not ended. In fact, the achievements are not even equal to a drop in the ocean but just a tip of the iceberg.

To the Muslim consumer we say, insisting on halal is not a choice but a religious obligation. It is your right to ensure that the product you are purchasing meets the required Islamic dietary laws and if this aspect is missing, you need not to shy away from making your opinions known. It is through this halal conscious attitude which will drive more producers and manufacturers to take into consideration the needs of the Muslim

consumers.

Some of the major hospitals on their menu provide meals which include pork which is prepared with same utensils like other meals provided to Muslim patients. According to the new constitution, this is a violation of the rights of Muslims as their faith is violated and it is our obligations to ensure that such attitudes do not continue. We salute the Aga Khan hospital which has taken a leap forward to become the first health institutions to respond to the needs of Muslims and it is our hope that others will follow suit.

Consumers are the ones who drive the change towards halal ingredients in the food industry, and the best consumer is an educated one. Just

because no alcohol or swine is listed in the ingredients panel does not mean that the product is halal. It may have been contaminated or may have hidden haram ingredients and this is why there is need for ensuring that the products being purchased meet halal guidelines.

A product may be halal by "definition" like yoghurt but without a trained and independent evaluation by an Islamic halal certifying agency, the consumers and buyers just do not know for sure if it complies to the Islamic dietary rules.

How do you know that the chicken you are buying from butchery is not among those who are strangled at the Kariakor market or the numerous farms? How are you sure that the walima order you made at a hotel function was prepared together with pork dishes? Do you know that sumptuous meal you are having at a city hotel or a cake purchased at your favourite town bakery contains a substance which you detest, Brandy or Cognac?

We cannot discern these happenings but this is what is taking place in many of the food outlets around. Such issues of concern continue and we will keep on educating Muslims on this matters but at the end of the day we should remember that It is every Muslim consumer's responsibility to be conscious of what he/she does- in the consumption of food, nutritional supplements, pharmaceuticals or cosmetics items in order to gain the pleasure of Allah.

We request all to help KBHC in fulfilling the obligation on behalf of the Muslims through these difficult and testing times by whatever way possible and particularly with your pious sincere dua.

Halal certification growing by the leaps

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And these are not alone. More establishments have already submitted their applications which are awaiting approval subject to meeting the halal certification procedures.

"It has been a challenging route but with the grace of Allah we have managed to get this far giving this all important service to the Muslim community," said Fauz Qureishi the KBHC trustees.

"The response has been tremendous from those seeking certification and Muslim consumers who have welcomed the development which has given them peace of mind on what they consume," he added.

Some of the recent companies to have joined the KBHC certification include Kenya Tea Packers (KETEPA), which has gained global accolades for producing the finest Kenyan tea.

Choice Meats, a subsidiary company of leading meat processor also recently gained the KBHC seal of assurance.

As a way of ensuring that halal standards are maintained, KBHC has conducted several training programmes for slaughter men in abattoirs on the Islamic ritual method of slaughtering animals. This training is aimed at equipping the par-

ticipants with adequate knowledge and information about slaughtering of animals in accordance with Islamic laws. It is also meant to train the participants on the duties and guidelines which are supposed to be adhered to in a slaughtering and processing facility.

The trainings are conducted by officials from the Majlis Ulamaa Kenya, the national council of scholars and Kenya Council of Imams and Ulamaa (KCIU).

Participants have been drawn from various certified abattoirs that include, Marula Estates in Naivasha, Kiserian Slaughterhouse in Kiserian, Choice Meats abattoir Kahawa, Wan Limited of Tigoni, Ruaraka Ducks based in Naivasha, Olpejeta Ranching of Nanyuki, Kenchic Limited based in Tigoni and Nguku Products of Makutano. Other participants came from Nightingale from Naivasha, Dagoretti Slaughterhouse in Nairobi, Kakuzi Limited of Thika and the Kwa Michael abattoir in Huruma, Nairobi.

As a member of the World Halal Council, KBHC has been represented at various forums of the council which deliberates and sets global halal standards.



The passing on of the KBHC chairman

By Fauz Qureishi

On March 18 2010, the founding chairman of the Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification Abdulghafur Ganatra passed away after a long illness. His death was the culmination of his efforts which spanned several decades in service to Islam and Muslims.

He was also the founder chairman of the Parklands Mosque and Madrassa Society, a Trustee Committee member of City Park Mosque and a Trustee of Ummah Foundation.

His legacy as a strong pillar in formulating for the first time a systematic approach to halal certification in the country will be remembered and appreciated by Muslims for years to come.

Born 63 years ago, Abdulghafur has led a simple life much of which was dedicated to furthering the needs of Muslims in the country.

At the time of his death, he was the chairman of the Parklands Mosque and Madrassa Society, a body entrusted with Islamic activities around the Parkland area in Nairobi.

He also served as a member of the Nairobi Joint Masaajid Programme (NMJP) the forerunner to Ummah Foundation which is widely known in Muslim circles for its benevolent role in uplifting the social and economic welfare of Muslims in the country.

Seeing the existing void in halal certification in Kenya, Abdulghafur worked tirelessly with other players to ensure that an adequate mechanism was put in place to regulate the halal industry in the country. The quest towards this started way back in 2003 when Muslim

leaders from various Muslim organisations which included the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), Jamia Mosque Committee, Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK), Kenya Assembly of Ulamaa and Imams (KAULI) among others met for a retreat in Makindu to formulate future strategies for the Ummah. Among the pertinent issues which came up for dis-



His legacy as a strong pillar in formulating for the first time a systematic approach to halal certification in the country will be remembered and appreciated by Muslims for years to come

cussion was the issue of halal certification where a unanimous decision was reached to establish a body that will oversee the implementation of this important task.

Abdulghafur was among the key personnel in this team who were mandated to come up with strategies towards establishing a body that for the first time will actively regulate the halal framework in the country.

As a first step in realizing this objective, the team traveled to South Africa to get a first hand experience on the phenomenal success the Muslim community has achieved in the political, social and economic stratum of the country despite their seemingly numerical small numbers which stands at 3 percent of the population.

Among the areas where the South African Muslims have made tremendous progress

is the halal industry where its standards have earned the country international recognition as an important player in the global halal industry.

His learning experience did not stop in the Rainbow nation but he made another step of traveling to Malawi to get more insight in the inner working of the halal industry with a view of replicating the successful model in his country.

From the experience gained, the Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification (KBHC) was finally registered in 2006, ready to take on the daunting and onerous task which lay ahead.

Ummah Foundation provided the office space at the Village Plaza in Ngara and to kick start its operations Abdulghafur contributed the finances to set up the operations of the offices.

He put aside his full time activities and role at the family owned businesses Ganatra Plant and Equipments to dedicate his time in furthering the goals of the Kenya Bureau of Halal

Certification.

He was instrumental in persuading several large corporate food production companies to come on board and have their products regulated and approved as halal by KBHC.

At the time of his death, more than 50 companies had already subscribed to the Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification with the products bearing the KBHC certification mark as a symbol that they have met the rigorous halal standards which meet international benchmarks.

May Allah have Mercy on him, forgive his sins and grant him the everlasting abode-Jannat al Firdaws-Ameen.

Benefits of Halal Certification

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products.

The Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification (KBHC) opens the door to the world of halal for you through certifying your products. With the KBHC Seal of Assurance, the certified products will access emerging markets among Muslims both locally and internationally. The KBHC mark on your product is ample proof to the halal consumer that the product meets the dietary needs of Muslims.

In addition, once your company is halal-certified by KBHC, your company name and products will be included in our listings on our website at www.kbhc.info and our publication Halal Bulletin.

Further through other Muslim publications in the country, your products get acknowledged among Muslims that they are halal and fit for consumption.

“That which is Halaal is clear and that which is Haraam is clear, and between the two of them are ambiguous (mutashabihat) matters about which many people do not know. Thus he who avoids ambiguous matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honour, but he who falls into ambiguous matters (eventually) falls into that which is Haraam, like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Truly every king has a sanctuary, and truly Allaah’s sanctuary is His prohibitions. Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh, which, if it be whole, all the body is whole, and which, if it is diseased, all of (the body) is diseased. Truly, it is the heart.”

[Related by al-Bukhaari and Muslim.]



Farmers Choice sets ball rolling in halal production

Farmers Choice, the leading food processor in the country has taken an ambitious path to venture into halal food production. The firm recently commissioned a US\$4 million beef



slaughtering facility at Kahawa West which will only deal with Halal food products. The facility is located at a different location at its main plant which specializes in pork products.

Trading under a new brand name Choice Meats, the plant is a joint venture between Farmers Choice and Nortura, Norway's largest meat processing company.

"Farmers Choice will remain as a brand name for non-halal products while Choice Meats will be for those who are for halal," Jim Taylor the company's managing director said after receiving the halal seal from Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification (KBHC).

Choice Meats has a modern slaughtering facility and is involved in processing of beef products for the domestic market with export potentials in the mainly Muslim Middle East markets also being explored.

"Our meat is being supplied to various hotels and hospitals. Kenyans should expect to see the new Choice Meat brand which has been halal certified in the supermarket shelves in the near future," he said.

At present Farmers Choice beef products are yet to be certified as halal pending the commissioning of a processing plant at the new facility.

First Halal Chinese Restaurant opens in Nairobi

Concerns in the Chinese cuisine where pork serves forms a major ingredient has been the main reason for Muslims shunning Chinese restaurants.

For lovers of the Chinese cuisine, these concerns have been overcome with the opening in Nairobi of the first halal Chinese.

Chopstix Chinese Restaurant located at APA Arcade Hurlingham was certified by the Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification joining the growing list of establishment which have gone at length to ensure that the dietary concerns of Muslims are taken to account.

"We turned to halal to provide an alternative for the Muslim consumers to ensure that they also enjoyed the popular Chinese meals without concerns on the food," said the restaurant manager Kassam

The family orientated establishment restaurant is open daily between 11.00am and 2.30pm, and from 4.00pm to 10.00pm.

The necessity for a halal certification mechanism

Muslims in the country have for many years been expressing deep concerns as to the authenticity of many food products, especially meat and poultry in the market. While there were lingering questions about the halal status of some products, on the other hand, some manufacturers and business establishments even resorted to deception and false labelling of products as halal to attract Muslim consumers.

Many Muslim consumers faced a big dilemma when buying meat, poultry or products labelled as Halal from butchers, fast food outlets, restaurants or supermarkets as they were not certain about the halal status or the genuineness and authenticity of the Halal label. Even with the development of the halal certification mechanism, this practice continues to thrive and unsuspecting Muslims have been hoodwinked to purchase products which do not meet their dietary laws.

The word 'Halal' continues to be the most abused term in the food industry. It is displayed anywhere and everywhere without any kind of regulation and the consumers are led to believe that it is genuinely Halal. Sadly, in some cases even some Muslims were culprits in this aspect. Some have disregarded Halal prerequisites with the main factor being increase of production and its returns.

In order to overcome this unfortunate situation, it was imperative that uniform verification and certification body be put in place to oversee, recommend, facilitate, implement the Shari'ah requirements of Halal, and create a credible certification procedure.

This is how the Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification (KBHC) was born to answer to the growing calls of Muslims to regulate this practice and ensure that their religious obligations were being fulfilled.

In recent years since its establishment, KBHC has through its certification procedures helped Muslim consumers to make an informed choice and help them consume genuine Halal meat and poultry.

Through KBHC, a growing number of food producers and business establishments have found the need to respect the dietary laws of Muslims and have had their products certified to give a stamp of approval to Muslims that the products meet their faith dietary obligations.

Know the common fats and oils in our food

SHORTENING: A blend of fats and/or oils used in baked products, it is solid at room temperature and made with animal fat or vegetable oil.

BUTTER: Butter is a dairy product made by churning fresh or fermented cream or milk.

TALLOW: Solid fats obtained from cattle, sheep or goats. They are used in making shortenings and frying oils.

LARD: It is a solid fat obtained from pigs and used in making shortenings and frying oils.

Vegetable oils: Vegetable fats and oils are derived from plants. Common vegetable oils include coconut oil, sunflower oil, peanut oil, sesame oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil and soybean oil.

MARGARINE: Margarine is a butter-substitute made from vegetable oils and in some instances vegetable and animal fats.

KBHC halal-certified vegetable oil companies include: Bidco Oil Refineries, KAPA Oil Refineries, Pwani Oil Products, Premier Oil Mills and Darfords Enterprises.



Halal an essential part of Islamic faith

Consuming halal is an order from Allah and an essential part of the Islamic faith. Allah has repeatedly emphasised the consumption of halal in His book. The following are some examples of such verses:

“O Messengers, eat from the pure foods and work righteousness” (Holy Quran 23:51)

“O you who have believed, eat from the pure things which we have provided you” (Holy Quran 2:172)

“O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth (that is) lawful and pure” (Holy Quran 2:168)

“So eat of that (meat) upon which Allah’s name has been mentioned, if you are believers in His verses” (Holy Quran 6:118)

“And do not eat that upon which the name of Allah has not been mentioned, for indeed it is a grave disobedience”. (Holy Quran 6:121)

By being careless about the dietary laws of Islam a believer puts himself in harm both in this world and the world hereafter. In this world, due to consuming such a product he deprives himself from having any of his good deeds and duas accepted by his creator while in the hereafter he suffers the greatest loss ever imaginable i.e. refusal from being admitted to Paradise . All this is confirmed in the following traditions:

Abu Hurairah RA related, “Allah’s Messenger peace be upon him said: Verily Allah is pure and He accepts only what is pure and indeed Allah has given those orders to the believers, which he has given to the Messengers. He has said, “O Messenger, eat from the pure foods and work righteous”. He also has said: “O you who have believed, eat from the pure things which we have provided you.” Then (the Prophet peace be upon him) made mention of a man who undergoes a lengthy journey in a state that he is dishevelled and dusty. He spreads his hands towards the sky (calling), “O my lord, O my lord”, however his food is Haram, his drink is Haram, his clothes are Haram and he has been nourished with Haram! So how will his call be answered?” (Muslim)

Sa’ad may Allah’s Mercy be upon him relates: Allah’s messenger peace be upon him said “O Sa’ad purify your food (and as a result) you will become one who’s supplications are accepted. I swear by He in whose hands the soul of Muhammad lies, verily a servant (of Allah) tosses a Haram morsel in his stomach (due to which) no deed is accepted from him for 40 days” (Tabarani)

Abu Bakar May Allah Mercy be upon him narrated that Allah’s Messenger peace be upon him said “That body will not enter Paradise which has been nourished with Haram” (Baihaqi)

In our times, it becomes even more important to ensure the meat and poultry consumed is genuinely Halal due to the excessive deceit, cheat and false labelling of halal in the industry.



Sheikh Ishaq Ismail and Idris during an inspection tour of the New KCC factory in Kiganjo.



Sheikh Abdullatif Abdulkarim explains to participants the Islamic method of slaughtering. This was during the training programme for slaughtermen at Parklands mosque



Mr. Fauz Qureishi, Sheikh Ishaq Ismail, Mr. Samson Mugwe of Murula Farm, Naivasha and Idris Sambuli during an inspection of the abattoir.



In the footsteps of the Prophet's diet

Allah's Messenger Muhammad peace be upon him said, "The stomach is the central basin of the body, and the veins are connected to it. When the stomach is healthy, it passes on its condition to veins, and in turn the veins will circulate the same and when the stomach is putrescence, the veins will absorb such putrescence and issue the same"—hadith,).

In a Muslim's life, one is constantly searching for opportunities to gain the favour of the Creator. In Islam, the term worship or ibadah, encompasses a lot of aspects. From prayers, giving the alms, fasting and supplications to menial daily tasks. A simple example of this is eating. It is a necessity of life, yet it can also be a form of worship to Allah.

Eating as a Form of Worship

Eating can be looked upon as an act of worship since the Prophet peace be upon him emphasized that interacting with food was an act which is pleasing to Allah. He exhibited this having the intention—niyyah—of seeking Allah's favour. When he put his hand on the food, he would say, "Bismillaah (in the Name of Allah), and he told people to say this when eating. He said, "When any one of you eats, let him mention the name of Allah. If he forgets to mention the name of Allah at the beginning, let him say Bismillaahi fi awwalihi wa aakhirih (in the name of Allah at its beginning and at its end).

In the Islamic realm, one's primary obligation concerning eating is to ensure that the food is halal (lawful) and tayyib (pure). In fact, the Sahaba, the companions of the Prophet were more concerned with the purity of the food they consumed, than they were with their night prayers. Utmost care was taken to ensure that the food was not derived from prohibited sources and also met Islamic guidelines.

In one of his traditions, the Prophet, may peace be upon him said, "Verily Allah is Pure and He does not accept that which isn't good and pure." Thus when one presents himself to Allah he should be in a state of purity from the inner depths of his body to his outer appearance so that his prayers and supplications may be accepted.

Another narration from the Messenger of Allah tells the story of a disheveled traveller who was in a confused situation. He raised his hands to Allah and called upon him, yet his supplications and prayers were not answered. The Prophet commented that his food is haram (unlawful), his drink is haram, his clothing is haram, and that from which he is nourished is haram, so how can his supplications and prayers be accepted? This state of impurity was something that the Sahaba, the companions strove to avoid.

Allah states, "O Messenger – eat from that which is wholesome and pure and do righteous deeds." Many hadith or sayings of the Prophet also relate the importance of the purity of one's body and how impurity results in the loss required for the growth, strengthening and repairing of the human body. The Quran goes on to teach the believer the best method of eating. The believers are advised to be moderate in every aspect of life. Islam is the middle path – the essence of which is moderation – thus our consumption of food should also be moderate. Direct reference has been made in the Noble Quran regarding moderation in eating and drinking: "And eat and drink, but waste not in extravagance, certainly He (Allah) likes not those who waste in extravagance."(7:31).

Diet plays a very important role in the daily life of a believer. The Quran has not restricted itself to mentioning permissible and impermissible foods, but goes to the extent of giving useful tips regarding a healthy diet, a diet which contains most if not all the useful ingredients required for the growth, strengthening and repairing of the human body. In the Quran, Allah states: "And

the cattle, He has created them for you, in them there is warmth (clothing) and numerous benefits, and of them you eat," thus establishing the importance of meat in a Muslim's diet.

The importance of milk in one's diet is related in the following verse: "And verily in the cattle there is a lesson for you. We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies, from between excretion and blood, pure milk, palatable to the drinkers." (16:66)

Islamic Etiquette and Food

Prophet Muhammad related in a hadith that one's worst weakness is one's belly. If you must eat make sure you fill one third of your stomach with food, one third with water and leave one third for air i.e. leave it empty.

Among the etiquettes of eating is mentioning Allah's name prior to eating, being grateful for the food after eating by saying Alhamdulillah (praise be to Allah.)

Being content with the food and not criticizing it, eating with three fingers, eating from the food closer to you, and licking the fingers (used while eating) are Sunnah.

Restricting the size of each mouthful of food, and washing the hands (afterwards) are of also among the Islamic manner related to eating.

By following these simple commands we can avail the opportunity to manipulate a simple necessity of life, eating, into a form of worship thereby earning the pleasure of Allah.

Remember while eating to invoke His name and thank Allah while enjoying His blessings, and practice the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet for in this lies all success.

"When any one of you eats, let him mention the name of Allah. If he forgets to mention the name of Allah at the beginning, let him say Bismillaahi fi awwalihi wa aakhirih (in the name of Allah at its beginning and at its end)"

KBHC Halal-Certification?

Muslims span the globe, belong to every ethnic group on earth and the majority of 1.6 billion of them are committed to consuming products that are certified as halal. The concept of halal is basic to every Muslim and even the least observant Muslim would avoid consuming foods that are not considered halal.

With KBHC halal-certification your product can go from appearing doubtful in the eyes of the Muslim consumer to a staple item on the food list.

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Eating out for Halal consumers

Eating out at a restaurant can be a fun treat for an individual or the family.

But for a Muslim it can also be a challenging experience. With few Muslim owned halal conscious restaurants in the Nairobi Business District and other major towns in the country, it becomes a difficult choice to choose where you are taking that much needed lunch or dinner.

There may be times when you have to go to a restaurant, whether with family, colleagues, for a friend's party, or function. Unfortunately, restaurants providing a halal menu are not found everywhere.

These are some of the likely possibilities in the menus of many restaurants and the fast food outlets in Nairobi and other major towns in the country.

- ▶ Sauces and soups may contain animal fat or meat based flavors which are derived from non-halal items.
- ▶ In many restaurants, wine is used in preparing meals especially those with a sauce. Do not expect this information to be made to you by the waiter.
- ▶ If the food outlet serves fried foods made from haram sources like pork products, there is a high likelihood that your favourite

chips or kebabs was fried in the same cooking oil.

▶ Buffets can be a Muslims worst nightmare. How often do you think people switch the serving spoons between dishes which contain pork or alcohol? In addition, how do you know what is really in that dumpling? Is it pork, beef, or vegetarian? How comfortable are you with utensils touching your dish, and a non-halal dish? Non halal certified-Chinese restaurants should generally be off limits for Muslims as this atmosphere is a normal experience.

More so visiting a restaurants serving pork and alcohol, is not a good experience for a believing Muslim who minds about his religion.

At the end of the day, each of us has to realize that we are responsible for the food we eat and the food we provide to our families and it is an obligation to ensure that whatever is consumed not only at home but even outside is halal. It all begins with you.

Before ordering that sumptuous and finger licking meal, ask yourself if the food you will be eating will earn you the pleasure of Allah or his displeasure. Remember Allah told us to eat what is halal and pure.

Issues of Concern for the Halal Consumer

Non-Alcohol Beer

Alcoholic beverages are prohibited in Islam, and the culture associated with drinking alcoholic beverages is not Islamic.

But what about non-alcoholic alternatives such as non-alcoholic beer, and non-alcoholic wine?

These "non-alcoholic" drinks in fact, contain small amounts of alcohol. Non-alcoholic beer is manufactured the same way as normal beer, i.e., it is brewed, but at the end of the process, the alcohol is removed. This process does not however, remove all the alcohol and small amount of alcohol remains in the "non-alcoholic" beer.

Non-alcoholic wine also goes through the same process like the non-alcohol beer. Regardless of the small amount of alcohol remaining in non-alcoholic beer, we need to be mindful of our religious commitment. The best thing we can do is avoid the temptation, and not consume these so-called "non-alcoholic" beverages. This is an obligatory precaution.

More so, buying these drinks is financially supporting breweries companies whose main line of businesses is alcoholic drinks. Allah tells us in the Quran, "And help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression. " Surah Al-Maidah (5: 2)

Cooking with Wine

Some foods served in restaurants contain wine or other alcoholic beverages that were added to produce a certain flavor characteristic to that food. This mode of cooking has gained root and is common in many major restaurants and food outlets. When any amount of alcoholic beverages such as beer, wine, liquor, etc. is added to food, the food automatically becomes haram.

Cooking, to reduce the ethanol content does not make the contaminated food halal. This is not a grey area, rather, it is clearly outlined in the Quran that alcoholic beverages are haram and should be completely avoided. The alcohol from wine that has been added to food will not completely be evaporated even after cooking as some people think.

Animal Welfare

The treatment of animals is an integral part of the Islamic faith. From the way the animals are raised to the process of killing for food, it is an obligation to treat them with kindness.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged kindness not just amongst human beings but towards all living souls. He forbade the practice of cutting tails and manes of horses, branding animals in a soft spot

and keeping horses saddled unnecessarily. (Muslim).

If he saw any animal over-loaded or ill-fed he would warn the owner, saying "Fear God in your treatment of animals." (Abu Dawud). On another occasion he stated, "Verily, there is heavenly reward for every act of kindness done to a living animal."

"Verily God has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters." (Muslim.)

The Islamic method indeed demands that the knife to be used for slaughtering animals must be sharp and used swiftly. The swift cut of vessels of the neck disconnects the flow of blood to the nerves in the brain responsible for pain. Thus the slaughtered animal feels no pain.

These sayings of the Prophet clearly illustrate the importance of treating animals with care. All Muslims agree that raising animals with care and killing them with mercy for consumption, is a requirement of their faith.

'Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters'- Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h)

