

# Foods

The general rule in the *Sharee'ah*, or Islamic law, regarding food and drink

## is that everything is lawful

except for what is expressly forbidden which is bound to affect human health, character and religion. Allah reminds us that He has created everything on the earth so we can benefit from it, with the exception of things He has forbidden. Allah almighty says, "It is He who created everything in and on the earth for you." (*Surat Al-Baqarah, 2:29*)

All types of vegetation that people plant or take off trees, herbs and fungi of all types **are lawful and suitable for human consumption**

**except for**

**alcoholic drinks**

whether they are made from grapes, barley or any other substance

**drugs**

whether they are plant-based or chemical-based.

Allah has permitted us to consume animal meats and to benefit from them

**except for what He has forbidden** in the Qur'an and the Prophet's *Sunnah*

### Animals that are forbidden for human consumption

- Pigs** Pigs and any of their body parts and by-products are considered 'filthy' in Islam and thus forbidden for human consumption. As the Qur'an states, "Forbidden to you for food are dead animals, blood and the flesh of swine." (*Surat Al-Maa'idah, 5:3*)
- All meat eating animals** such as lions and tigers
- All predatory birds** such as falcons and eagles
- Insects** All land insects are unlawful for human consumption with the exception of locusts.
- Snakes and Mice** These are unlawful and Islam even goes as far as to command us to kill them.
- Domestic donkeys** They are used in villages for riding and carrying purposes

### Animals that are lawful for human consumption are of two types

#### domesticated animals

These can be easily caught: They can become lawful only by slaughtering them according to Islamic law.

#### Islamic Slaughter

This means slaughtering animals in a manner which satisfies the conditions of slaughtering stipulated by Islamic law.

#### Conditions for slaughtering animals in Islam:

- The person undertaking the slaughtering process must be Muslim or a member of the People of the Book (that is, a Jew or a Christian). In addition, he must have reached the age of discretion and carries out this act for the intended purpose.
- The tool used for slaughtering the animal must be suitable for the intended purpose and sharp enough to cut and shed blood, such as a knife.
- The name of Allah must be pronounced by saying *Bismillaah* (in the name of Allah) at the time of slaughtering the animal.
- The cut must sever at least three of the following: the trachea (windpipe), the oesophagus (food pipe) and the two blood vessels on either side of the throat.

#### Wild animals, which live in natural conditions

and which tend to run away from humans and cannot be easily caught in order to slaughter them: **These can become lawful only by hunting them according to Islamic guidelines in this respect.**

#### A number of conditions must be met for hunting wild animals, including the following:

- The hunter must be sane and intends to carry out this act for the intended purpose. Therefore, game hunted by a pagan or an insane person is not *halaal* (lawful).
- The game must belong to the category of animals that cannot be easily slaughtered, as they tend to run away from humans. If, however, it can be easily slaughtered, such as chicken, sheep and cows, then it is not permissible to hunt them.
- The hunting weapon must kill by reason of its sharpness, like an arrow or a bullet. If a hunting animal, such as a dog or a falcon, is used, it must be trained in such a way that it abides by the orders of its master.
- The name of Allah must be pronounced by saying *Bismillaah* (in the name of Allah) before the hunting weapon is discharged or the hunting dog is sent.
- If the hunted game is still alive, it must be slaughtered straightaway.

#### Cheese and rennet

Milk does not turn into cheese except by adding a specific type of yeast organism that coagulates it and turns it into cheese. This substance, called rennet, is extracted from the inner mucosa of the fourth stomach chamber (the abomasum) of slaughtered young, unweaned ruminant animals, such as calves.

- Cheese made with rennet extracted from an animal that is slaughtered by a Muslim or a member of the People of the Book (a Christian or a Jew) is permissible. Muslim scholars are generally agreed regarding this.
- Cheese made with rennet extracted from the abomasum of a dead animal is, according to the correct view of Muslim scholars, permissible.
- Cheese made with rennet extracted from the abomasum of a pig is strictly forbidden and impure because rennet extracted from pigs is considered forbidden and impure.



#### Jewish food

Kosher foods

Kosher food is food that is consumed according to Jewish law (*halakha*).

As far as we know, all types of foods that are permissible in the Jewish religion are also permissible in Islamic law, with the exception of alcohol.

Therefore, a Muslim is allowed to consume Jewish foods if he is certain they are alcohol-free. It would be better, however, to look for *halaal* food to spread the *halaal* culture in society.



#### Types of Meat Served in Restaurants and Stores

- Meat from animals killed by a Muslim or a member of the People of the Book (a Christian or a Jew): Muslim scholars are generally agreed that this is lawful.
- Meat from animals killed by a Muslim or a member of the People of the Book but not according to Islamic law such as by electrical stunning or water-bath stunning, is strictly forbidden
- Meat from animals that are slaughtered by other than a Muslim or a member of the People of the Book (a Christian or a Jew) such as a Buddhist or a Hindu, is strictly forbidden. This includes meat served in restaurants in countries where Muslims or People of the Book constitute a minority, unless proven otherwise.
- Meat from animals killed by a member of the People of the Book while the manner of such slaughter is not known or meat of animals generally found in their restaurants and stores: The preponderant view is that it is permissible to eat such meat, making sure, however, to invoke Allah's name at the time of eating (that is, saying *Bismillaah*), but it is better to look for *halaal* meat elsewhere.

#### Amphibians

Muslim scholars have different opinions regarding amphibians: are they considered land or sea animals? Some of them are of the opinion that they are considered sea animals and so all their types, dead or alive, are permissible for human consumption unless they are proven to be harmful. Some others opine that they are considered land animals and so all rulings on land animals apply to them. Therefore, meat eating animals and predatory animals among them are unlawful for human consumption; those that can be easily slaughtered must be slaughtered; those that tend to run away from humans and cannot be easily caught in order to slaughter them may be hunted according to Islamic guidelines in this respect; the meat of the dead ones among them is considered unlawful for human consumption. It is better to adopt this opinion to be on the safe side.

#### All types of seafood

be they sea plants, fish or aquatic animals which live only in water for most or all of their lives

**are permissible for human consumption**

**unless they are proven to be harmful** Allah almighty says, "Anything you catch in the sea is lawful for you, and so is all food from it." (*Surat Al-Maa'idah, 5:96*)

The phrase 'anything you catch' in the above verse refers to aquatic animals that are caught alive, while the word 'food' refers to dead aquatic animals that are washed ashore.

The fresh water life eaten by humans; therefore, all edible aquatic life can be referred to as seafood.