



Islamic Dietary Restrictions—A Brief Guide



Halal

(Permissible)

Halal meat is meat that is both sourced from a permissible animal and slaughtered in accordance with Islamic law.

Halal animals include most livestock: (except pigs, see Haram), cattle, sheep, goats, chicken, duck, turkey and other poultry, as well as deer, rabbit, and other wild game. However, the meat has to have been killed in accordance with specific law at an Islamic slaughterhouse—meat that matches this will be sold as **Halal certified**. While there are differences between Halal and Kosher standards, many Muslims will also eat Kosher meat if Halal food isn't available.



Fish with scales (tuna, salmon, cod, tilapia, etc) are always considered Halal, and do not require any particular slaughter. Other seafood such as eel, crab, shrimp, octopus or squid, crustaceans (such as crab) or shellfish is generally considered Halal, although there are some schools of thought within Islam that disagree—if serving these it is best to have other options available.



Eggs from any bird that is halal (so, any bird that is not a bird of prey) are always considered halal.



Sources & Further Reading:

<https://www.halalrc.org/images/Research%20Material/Literature/Guide%20to%20Halal%20Foods.pdf>

Haram

(Forbidden)

Pork and it's byproducts are always considered haram, along with any animals that have not been slaughtered in a halal way or who were dead before slaughter. Carnivorous animals and birds of prey, while rarer on menus, are also considered haram.



Pork products can be included in a surprising amount of processed food: gelatin is a frequent part of desserts and confectionary and is often made from pork products, or from non halal animals. Many Muslims will avoid all dessert they do not know the full ingredients of, as the chances of it containing pork gelatin are high. Pork fat (lard) is also frequently used as a cooking ingredient. Sometimes, farmed fish (as opposed to wild caught fish) will be fed animal products as a part of their diet, which may include pork.

Alcohol is *always* haram, both to drink and when used as a cooking ingredient (such as *penne alla vodka*, or some desserts).



Blood is considered haram, but halal butchers will drain all blood from meat.

Borderline Cases

Depending on individual practice, there are some foods where opinions differ on whether they are Halal. This includes food that appears to be Halal, but where it is unclear exactly where it is sourced from (such as whether meat has been slaughtered in a halal way), as well as foods about which there is some debate.

Alcohol as a drink is forbidden, but there is some debate within Islam about brewer's yeast, a byproduct of the beer-making process, is sometimes used as a flavoring in some food. While it is not itself alcoholic, this is also a point of contention. Similarly, small amounts of alcohol are involved in the creation of extracts (such as vanilla or peppermint extract) and some flavorings, and there are also differing schools of thought about whether eating food made using these is acceptable.

Some cheeses and other dairy products are made with rennet, an enzyme sourced from cattle. Since it is harder to trace the provenance of these cattle and whether they were slaughtered in accordance with halal law, many Muslims will also avoid them. There are increasingly certain hard cheeses, such as parmesan, which have specific vegetarian versions available that should be Halal.

Whey, which is often used as a protein supplement, to produce soft cheeses such as ricotta or as an additive in other processed food, is not always halal, as rennet is also used in its production.

Some of the more common logos to show that commercially produced food has been Halal certified.