

Conclusion

Islam is not only a religion it is a way of life with protocols, rules and manners governing every facet of life. Since food is an important part of daily life, food laws carry a special significance. Muslims are expected to eat for survival, to maintain good health and not to live for eating. In Islam, eating is considered to be a matter of worship of God like prayer, fasting, alms-giving and other religious activities.

AFIC Halal Services

AFIC Halal Services is the oldest and longest serving Halal Certifying Service Organisation in Australia and continues to engage with Government and International Halal Agencies to ensure that Halal status of products are uniform and maintained according to the Islamic Rules and Regulations.

Muslims Australia – AFIC as the peak Islamic Organisation in Australia has the expertise and knowledge to assist prospective customers obtain Halal Certification. (Contact details in the information section of this brochure).

AFIC Publications

Produced by AFIC, **Muslims Australia** is a quarterly publication which addresses the issues concerning Muslims in Australia including editorials and your comments.

Mosques & Halal Restaurants in Australia is a pocket size guide to mosques and eateries, while **Appreciating Islam** is a glimpse into the beliefs and teachings of Islam, within an Australian perspective.



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For More Information

For more information or help, please contact:



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The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) is the peak body for Muslim organisations in Victoria. The ICV represents Victoria's more than 100,000 Muslims, through its 38 member organisations located throughout metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria. The ICV represents the Muslim community with regards to State and Federal Government call for submissions and legislative reform. The ICV regularly responds to media issues concerning the Muslim community, and provides a weekly update on events concerning the Victorian Muslim community (to join please visit the ICV website: www.icv.org.au).

As part of the ICV services the ICV provide facilities for Islamic worship, including Friday and Eid prayers, and a venue suitable for meetings, seminars, classes and community gatherings in Melbourne's CBD. The ICV also provides the following: Australia - Indonesia Muslim Exchange Program, ICV-La Trobe University Muslim Leadership Program, You Am I Muslim Art Exhibition, City Circle Seminars: www.citycircle.weebly.com/index.html, Muslim Legal Network, Convert Support Group and Victorian Prison and Hospital Chaplaincy Program.



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Muslims Australia (The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils - AFIC) established in 1964 is the national peak Islamic community organisation representing and servicing the needs of Muslims in Australia.

Muslims Australia's vision is to mature Muslims through its affiliated State and Territory Islamic Councils and Islamic Societies to achieve their full potential as Australian citizens.



Muslims Australia | AFIC

What is Halal?

A Guide for non Muslims

The purpose of this brochure is to assist non-Muslims to come to a better understanding of the term 'Halal' and its importance to Muslims.

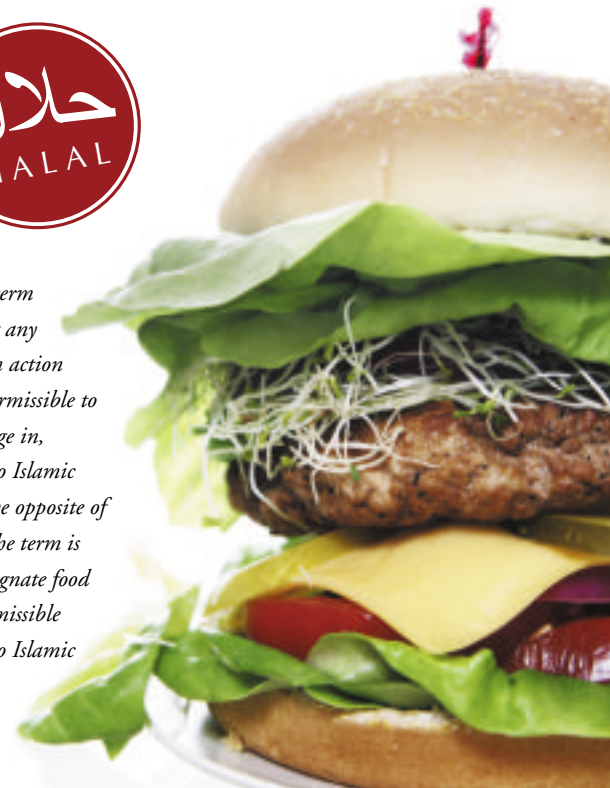
One Islam – Many Muslims

Though Islam is a single religion, it is important to recognise that Muslim people are not a single homogenous group. There are approximately +400,000 Muslims in Australia, who have come from over 70 countries all around the world: from Europe (ie Albania, Bosnia, Turkey), Africa, Asia (including Central Asia, South Asia, South East Asia), Pacific Islands, and North and South America.

Muslims believe in the one God. Allah is the Arabic word for God, and Muslims believe in all the Prophets including Jesus, Moses, Abraham and others including Muhammad, peace be upon them.



Halal is a term designating any object or an action which is permissible to use or engage in, according to Islamic law. It is the opposite of haram. The term is used to designate food seen as permissible according to Islamic law.



What is Halal?

Halal is an Arabic word meaning lawful or permitted. In reference to food, it is the dietary standard, as prescribed in the *Qur'an* (the Muslim scripture). The opposite of halal is *haram*, which means unlawful or prohibited. Halal and haram are universal terms that apply to all facets of life. These terms are commonly used in relation to food products, meat products, cosmetics, personal care products, pharmaceuticals, food ingredients, and food contact materials.

While many things are clearly halal or haram, there are some things which are not clear. Further information is needed to categorise them as halal or haram. Such items are often referred to as *mashbooh*, which means doubtful or questionable.

Definition

In general every food is considered halal in Islam unless it is specially prohibited by the Qur'an or the Hadith¹. By official definition, halal foods are those that are:

- Free from any component that Muslims are prohibited from consuming according to Islamic law (*Shariah*).
- Processed, made, produced, manufactured and/or stored using utensils, equipment and/or machinery that have been cleansed according to Islamic law.

Muslims eat to maintain a strong and healthy physique in order to be able to contribute their knowledge and effort for the welfare of the society. Muslims are supposed to make an effort to obtain the best quality nutritionally. It is mentioned in a *Hadith* that the prayer of a person is rejected by Allah if the food consumed is prohibited (haram).

All foods are considered halal except the following (which are haram):

- Alcoholic drinks and intoxicants
 - Non-Halal Animal Fat
 - Enzymes* (Microbial Enzymes are permissible)
 - Gelatine* - from non-Halal source (fish gelatine is Halal)
 - L-cysteine (if from human hair)
 - Lard
 - Lipase* (only animal lipase need be avoided)
 - Non-Halal Animal Shortening
 - Pork, Bacon / Ham and anything from pigs
 - Unspecified Meat Broth
 - Rennet* (All forms should be avoided except for plant / microbial / synthetic - rennet obtained from halal slaughtered animal is permissible).
 - Stock* (a blend of mix species broth or meat stock)
 - Tallow* (non-Halal species)
 - Carnivorous animals, birds of prey and certain other animals
 - Foods contaminated with any of the above products
- (*May be consumed if derived from Halal animals.)

Halal/Haram

Foods containing ingredients such as gelatin, enzymes, emulsifiers, and flavours are questionable, because the origin of these ingredients is not known.

In the meat and poultry food industry, animals such as cows, veal, lamb, sheep, goats, turkeys, chickens, ducks, game birds, bison, venison, etc, are considered halal, but they must be prepared according to Islamic laws in order for their meat to be suitable for consumption (see below).

Fish and seafood (with the exception of crocodiles, alligators and frogs) are generally acceptable for Muslims but as always check first, as there may be a personal dietary preference or allergy. The preparation of the fish or seafood should not include alcohol (ie batter or wine, or anything considered haram).

In cases of necessity, prohibited things may become permissible (halal) for the duration of the emergency or need, as Islam puts a priority on life over death. Refer to Qur'an at Chapter 2:173 (Al Baqarah)².

Islamic Halal Meat Preparation and Supervision

In Australia, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC – the peak Muslim body) certifies and trains Islamic slaughtermen for the meat and poultry industry. AFIC's Halal Service Manager travels throughout Australia to various abattoirs/farms, meat and non-meat food companies, drugs, cosmetic establishments to perform Islamic supervision, audit/inspection, and halal preparation.

Halal products are derived from animals and/or poultry that have been prepared according to Islamic law under the following statement, "In the name of God – God is the Greatest/Bismillahi Allahu Akbar".

Halal products and production are properly separated and clearly identified from non-halal products.

Life is Sacred

Islam places great emphasis in the way in which an animal's life ends, which has to be in accordance with Islamic regulations. Life is a sacred blessing of God to creation, animals as well as humans.

If the life of an animal has to be ended for human survival, then its life should only be taken in the name of God. Hence, the phrase bismillah ('in the name of God') must be uttered just before slaughtering an animal.

Muslims cannot consume the meat of animals that are sacrificed in a name other than God. Any animal slaughtered in the name of a person alive or dead, any deity or idol will be considered as haram and therefore it is not permissible for Muslims to consume that meat.

Islamic Slaughter

Muslims are only allowed to eat meat that has been prepared according to Islamic law. This method is often challenged by animal rights activists as 'causing unnecessary suffering to the animal'. Muslims disagree and say that Islamic law on killing animals is designed to reduce the pain and distress that the animal suffers.

AFIC has strict rules with regards to Islamic slaughter. These rules state:

- The slaughterer must be a sane adult Muslim.
- The slaughterer must say the name of God before making the cut.
- The name of God is said in order to emphasise the sanctity of life and that the animal is being killed for food with God's consent.
- The animal must be killed by cutting the throat with one continuous motion of a sharp knife.
- The cut must sever at least three of the trachea, oesophagus, and the two blood vessels on either side of the throat.
- The spinal cord must not be cut.
- Animals must be well treated before being killed.
- Animals must not see other animals being killed.
- The knife must not be sharpened in the animal's presence.
- The knife blade must be free of blemishes that might tear the wound.
- The animal must not be in an uncomfortable position.
- The animal must be allowed to bleed out and be completely dead before further processing.

Is this a cruel way to kill an animal?



Some experts say that the animal killed in this way does not suffer if the cut is made quickly and cleanly, because it loses consciousness before the brain can perceive any pain: "*the Islamic way of slaughtering is the most humane method of slaughter and that captive bolt stunning, practiced in the West, causes severe pain to the animal*".³

The argument that halal slaughter is inhumane because animals are allowed to bleed to death is scientifically untrue.

An animal's throat is cut in one swift motion with a razor sharp knife. Unconsciousness is achieved within seconds and death occurs due to cerebral hypoxia not blood loss.

¹ The collection of the sayings and acts of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the first Muslims.

² "He has forbidden to you only carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than God's name has been invoked; but if one is driven by necessity - neither coveting it nor exceeding his immediate need - no sin shall be upon him: for behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace." (Muhammad Assad's translation).

³ Schulze W, Schultze-Petzold H, Hazem AS, Gross R. Experiments for the objectification of pain and consciousness during conventional (captive bolt stunning) and religiously mandated ("ritual cutting") slaughter procedures for sheep and calves. Deutsche Tierärztliche Wochenschrift 1978 Feb 5;85(2):62-6.