

# Halal demand rises among U.S. Muslims

Continued from Page 1G

laws that, among other things, require meat to be slaughtered in a prescribed manner. (Muslim law also sets out actions that are haram, or "prohibited." These include drinking alcohol and eating pork.)

Halal slaughtering must be done by a pious Muslim who says a prayer immediately prior to the act, uses only healthy animals, slaughters each one away from other animals, employs a sharp knife to the neck to ensure a quick death, and lets the blood drain. According to most authorities, slaughtering must be done by hand, not machine. Some companies marketing themselves as halal sell machine-slaughtered poultry — a source of controversy among Muslims.

Crave Foods, which now employs about 100 people, exemplifies the growth of the American halal food industry in recent years. Estimates on the size of the industry are hard to come by, but Muslim-friendly restaurants are easier to find than ever before, and packaged halal foods, once found only in ethnic shops, are increasingly stocked by mainstream supermarkets.

Ms. Sayed might even be able to enjoy a Happy Meal today. Two McDonald's restaurants in Dearborn, Mich., serve halal Chicken McNuggets and McChicken sandwiches.

"The Muslim consumer population is becoming much more savvy, and the market has grown up around them," said Shahed Amanullah, who runs the Web site [zabihah.com](http://zabihah.com), which lists halal restaurants in cities around the world. ("Zabihah" is the word for the type of slaughter that makes meat halal.) "Muslims are starting to demand higher quality."

Mr. Amanullah's site started in 1998 with 300 restaurants. Now, it lists more than 3,000 establishments, "everything from Mexican to Brazilian to Philly subs to pizza," he said. "That diversity only happened in the last year or two."

Still, many Muslims say the industry has a long way to go to fully serve the needs of America's Muslim community, estimated at anywhere from 2 million to more than 6 million people, and growing quickly.

"The halal industry has not reached maturity," Mr. Amanullah

said. "There's a market opportunity there for somebody."

When Muslims can't find foods that have been certified as halal, they rely on ingredient lists on labels. Or, they look for symbols marking a product as kosher, since the Jewish dietary laws are similar to Muslim ones.

But labels sometimes omit ingredients found in minute quantities. Or they're vague — what, exactly, are "natural flavors"? And the kosher laws, while similar to halal, are not identical: Jews, for example, are not prohibited from consuming alcohol. And halal does not share the kosher ban on mixing meat and dairy ingredients, so relying on kosher symbols can be overly restrictive for Muslims.

There are other pitfalls, said Rasheed Ahmed, founder of the Muslim Consumer Group, which educates Muslims about halal products and certifies products as halal.

Many Muslims, for example, might eat a fast-food fish sandwich, figuring it's acceptable since fish need not be slaughtered in any particular way. But if the fish is cooked in the same oil as non-halal meat products, it is haram, Mr. Ahmed said.

And marshmallows — found in sweetened cereals and other packaged foods — may be made with pork products.

As a result of problems like these, many devout Muslims feel they have few choices.

"Muslims who are serious about halal have been avoiding mainstream food," said Muhammad Munir Chaudry, president of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, the largest U.S. organization that certifies products as acceptable for Muslims.

Mr. Chaudry hopes to turn American Muslims from a people of label readers into one of symbol spotters.

The council's symbol, a crescent with the letter "M," graces the products of nearly 2,000 companies, attesting that they are halal. That's up from around 50 in 1990, he said.

Other groups have their own symbols, such as the Muslim Consumer Group's "H" in a triangle.

"The trend is there," Mr. Chaudry said of halal certification by mainstream food producers. "Companies have realized there's a good-sized Muslim market here."

For a processed food to be certified as halal, it must pass muster with a certification group such as Mr. Chaudry's. Representatives visit the production plant to in-



FILE 2001/Special Contributor  
Butcher Yahya Bachichi enters the meat locker at International Food Land in Central Arlington. The store specializes in Middle Eastern foods and follows halal law.

spect the ingredients used as well as the manufacturing and packaging methods.

Representatives then revisit at least once a year. For companies that produce meat, the council has a halal supervisor on premises at all times, since the rules for slaughtering meat are complex, Mr. Chaudry said.

His group's fees range from about \$2,000 a year to as much as \$40,000 for large companies for which many products are certified.

With the growth of the halal food industry, debates have broken out in the Muslim community over the rules and standards for deeming food acceptable. Must meat be hand-slaughtered or are machines acceptable? Must food businesses be Muslim-owned? Can a restaurant be considered halal if its food is OK but it serves alcohol?

For many, such debates signal that the market has grown large enough to give Muslim consumers choices: It's good if they have the luxury of discussing standards.

If all that's available is, say, machine-slaughtered meat, people will "make do with what they have," Ms. Sayed said.

But increasingly, Muslims do not want to — nor are they forced to — simply make do. Muslims

## DallasNews.com/extra

**Halal sites:** Log on to search for halal eateries in Dallas and around the world.



Crave Foods Inc.

**Crave Foods sells frozen prepared foods, including Crave Rolls filled with chicken.**

born and raised in America are more likely than their immigrant parents to call companies and request halal certification, Mr. Chaudry said.

Advocates say certification brings benefits beyond helping America's Muslims. For one thing, it helps U.S. companies export their products, since some Muslim countries mandate that all imports be halal.

And certification can be used to market a product as wholesome. Being halal means a food has no hidden ingredients, and in the case of meat, that it does not come from a giant, automated slaughterhouse.

"It's going back to a simpler way of life," Ms. Sayed said. "What we eat affects who we are and what we are, and our spirituality."

Such arguments were compelling to Cabot Cheese, a Vermont-based company that received certification in December 2003.

The idea came up when company officials were discussing their

kosher status, and the decision was based largely on demographics: Cabot services Northeast cities such as New York and Boston, which have large and quickly growing numbers of Muslims, as well as their Jewish populations.

But the company was looking beyond these religious communities, hoping that kosher and halal certification sent a message to all consumers looking for healthy, natural foods.

"If these foods are made in such a way that they can be both kosher and halal, it just speaks to a certain attention to detail and attention to food quality," said Jed Davis, Cabot's marketing director. "A lot of times, customers are looking for that type of third-party endorsement."

Becoming halal did not involve changing any Cabot products, so it's "an inexpensive way of potentially dramatically increasing the market for our products," Mr. Davis said.

For now, Cabot's decision is a minority one.

Though finding halal food has become easier in recent years, many American food manufacturers still aren't rushing to certify their products — at least, not yet. "But we are educating them," said Mr. Ahmed of the Muslim Consumer Group.

Michael Kress is a freelance journalist and the editor-in-chief of [MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com). He can be reached at [michaellkress@yahoo.com](mailto:michaellkress@yahoo.com).

*"This music helps remind people that God is much bigger than any one of our cultural perspectives."*

The Rev. C. Michael Hawn

## Professor works to bridge cultures within Christianity

Continued from Page 1G

Methodist University, has been working on for the past several years.

He spends several months of the year traveling around the country and the world promoting the joys and value of the music and traditions other cultures. He hopes his global workshops, like the one he taught at Holy Covenant, help congregations become more willing to consider different perspectives of Christianity.

"I just hope to bring a sense of the gift that other cultures can give to us in their music and their prayers," Dr. Hawn told the congregation.

Rose Lovell, who took part in one of the Sunday services, said the service did help her gain a "sense of community with the whole world."

Choir member Simone Thomas said that singing and different music "just brought such joy to us. It inspires and educates us."

While some members reveled in the experience, eagerly joining in the movement and singing, others were more tentative. A few seemed even confused. But for Dr. Hawn, it was all good.

"I think it's important to try to take some things that may feel a little strange to us and try them on, to perhaps see how other Christians view the world," Dr. Hawn said a few days before the service, as he prepared the choir to lead church members into their exploration of music from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Native America.

Dr. Hawn said that while members of most churches are happy about participating in the

workshops, this kind of service is "not everyone's cup of tea."

He added that young people are usually the most enthusiastic because they want new and different experiences in church.

Dr. Hawn has been teaching these workshops for years and remains booked months, if not years, in advance.

The 56-year-old has been at SMU since 1992. He's also taught church music at two Baptist seminaries and served as music minister at churches in Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina and Texas.

His interest in global music was heightened in 1989, when he received a fellowship to study in

Nigeria and Kenya. He also has studied and taught church music in Cuba, Haiti, Mexico and Nicaragua. In 1996 he received a grant from SMU to study Asian Christian worship. During that time he traveled to Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and the Philippines.

"The kind of music I do at these workshops is kind of a hybrid, something between Western music and the real indigenous music, but it is enough to give people an idea, and a lot of it does bridge cultures," Dr. Hawn said.

"I have no trouble with a community wanting to feel at home with their worship and their music, but in trying to make God into our image we are really limiting

God," he said. "This music helps remind people that God is much bigger than any one of our cultural perspectives."

The Rev. Debbie Chapman, Holy Covenant's music minister, is a former student of Dr. Hawn and had been trying to schedule a visit from him for more than a year.

Ms. Chapman noted that the hymnal Holy Covenant uses, adopted in 1989, already includes several global music pieces.

"But when you have someone like Dr. Hawn working with you, he really gets them to experience it," Ms. Chapman said. "He's so charismatic and talented ... It helps congregations realize that

the church is global, that Christianity is all over the world and that there is something we can learn by looking at how other countries worship."

A congregation often has a handful of favorite hymns, she said — a challenge to music ministers.

"I'd like for them to sometimes think out of the box and having experienced new music through Dr. Hawn, they'll be more open to trying new things," Ms. Chapman said.

That's exactly what Dr. Hawn got Holy Covenant to experience during the services he led at the Carrollton church.

Dr. Hawn shared with the con-

gregation the parable of the blindfolded men and the elephant. Each of the men felt a different part of the elephant and thought he knew what an elephant looked like. In the same way, Dr. Hawn said, each culture experiences only a portion of God. Experiencing others' views of God and Christianity helps to develop a more complete picture, he said.

Dr. Hawn explained that Western Christian music focuses on the message, while music in places like Africa often is about helping to build a sense of community.

Global music is more than just singing. During the Sunday services, Dr. Hawn spoke to the suburban congregation about how essential movement is to African music.

"Africans would think that if you're not dancing, why even bother to sing," he said.

He taught worshippers to clap and sway and even the "hum-grunt" that accompanies some African music.

He also showed the members an example of how some Asian Christians greet each other — hands extended and sandwiched, with a respectful bow to the center. The service included Spanish and Native American songs, as well as African and Japanese.

During children's time Dr. Hawn asked the youngsters gathered around him at the altar how that day's activities differed from most other Sundays.

One boy volunteered that "there's a lot more action." Another said: "It's not boring."



MEI-CHUN JAU/Staff Photographer

**The Rev. C. Michael Hawn sings Psalm 136 in Swahili while the Holy Covenant choir and congregation sing a refrain. Church members Patti Jenkins, Joy Lasley and Rose Lovell joined him at the altar.**



5 25 50 75 95

G3 \_ 06-04-2005 Set: 19:03:40  
Sent by: twright News

BLACK