



***Your Food and Drink***

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Permissible (*halal*) food occupies a magnificent position in Islam, for it causes our supplications to be answered by Allah and makes Allah bless our wealth and children.

*Halal* food is lawful food that is acquired by lawful means, without wronging anyone or encroaching upon anyone's rights.

## Contents

### **The General Rule Regarding Food and Drink**

#### **Plants and Fruits**

#### **Intoxicants**

#### **Drugs**

#### **Seafood**

#### **Wild Animals**

- Islamic Slaughter
- The Islamic Ruling Regarding Meat Sold in Restaurants and Shops Owned by Non-Muslims

#### **Islamic Hunting**

#### **The Etiquette of Eating and Drinking**

## Your Food and Drink

### The General Rule Regarding Food and Drink

The general rule in the *Sharee'ah*, or Islamic law, is that everything is allowed except what is expressly forbidden which is bound to harm people's health, character or 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, as the Qur'an states, "It is He who created everything in and on the earth for you." (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:29)

### > *Plants and Fruits*

All types of plants that people plant or take off trees, herbs and mushrooms of all types are lawful and suitable for human consumption, with the exception of those ones that are hazardous to health or life or those that intoxicate and cloud the mind, such as alcoholic beverages and drugs, which are strictly forbidden due to the great harm they are bound to cause.





## > Intoxicants and Alcoholic Beverages

An intoxicant is an agent that clouds the mind and produces in a person a state ranging from elation to stupor, usually accompanied by loss of inhibitions and control. As the Prophet ﷺ said, “Every intoxicant is *khamr* (wine), and every *khamr* is forbidden.” (*Saheeh Muslim*: 2003) Therefore, any alcoholic drink is unlawful, whether it is made from fruit, such as grapes, dates, figs and raisins, or from grains, such as wheat, barley, corn and rice, or from sweet substances such as honey. Thus, the definition of *khamr* extends to any substance that intoxicates, in whatever form and under whatever name it may appear, even if it is added to natural fruit juice, sweets and chocolate.



> Islam protects the mind against anything that is bound to harm it in any way.

### Preservation of the Mind

Islam seeks to realise people's benefits in this life and in the hereafter, and amongst these ultimate benefits are the five necessities, namely, religion, life, the mind, property and progeny.

The mind is the basis of legal responsibility (*mana'at at-takleef*) and the main reason behind divine honour and favour on the human race. It is for this reason that Islam seeks to preserve it and protect it against anything that is bound to weaken it or derange it.

### The Islamic Ruling on Alcoholic Drinks

Consuming alcoholic drinks, such as wine, is one of the major sins and its prohibition is confirmed by textual evidence from the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions, including the following:

- The Qur'an says, "O you who believe, intoxicants, gambling, stone altars and divining arrows are abominations devised by Satan. Avoid them so that you may be successful." (*Soorat Al-Maa'idah*, 5:90) Allah ﷻ describes all types of intoxicants as a type of filth and abomination and commands the believers to avoid them in order to secure success in this life and in the hereafter.
- The Prophet ﷺ said, "Every intoxicant is wine (*khamr*), and every wine is unlawful. Whoever drinks wine in this world and dies addicted to it without repentance will not drink it in the hereafter." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 2003)
- Explaining once that drinking wine decreases faith and contradicts it altogether, he once declared, "When somebody takes an alcoholic drink,

then he is not a believer at the time of drinking it.” (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 5256; *Saheeh Muslim*: 57)

- Allah has imposed corporal punishment on drinkers, and so they lose their dignity and credibility in society.
- He ﷺ warns those who persist in drinking wine, and all intoxicants for that matter, and die without ever repenting with a severe punishment in the hereafter. As the Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, made a covenant to those who drink intoxicants to make them drink *Teenat al-Khabaal*.” (*Saheeh Muslim*: 2002). *Teenat al-Khabaal* refers to the pus and other unpleasant fluids that ooze out of the bodies of those doomed to Hellfire.
- In fact, this severe warning also extends to those who get involved in any way in any action related to the production and drinking of alcohol, for the Prophet ﷺ “cursed ten types of people in connection with alcoholic drinks: those

who produce them, those for whom they are produced, those who drink them, those who carry them, those for whom they are carried, those who serve them, those who sell them, those who benefit from the price paid for them, those who buy them, and those for whom they are bought.” (*Sunan At-Tirmidhee*: 1295).

## > Drugs

Taking drugs, whether such drugs are plant-based or manufactured and whether they are inhaled, swallowed or injected, is considered to be one of the major sins in Islam, for while they serve as intoxicants they destroy the nervous system and afflict those who take them with various psychological and neurological disorders and even lead to their death. Allah ﷻ, the Most Merciful, says in the Qur’an, “Do not kill yourselves. Allah is Most Merciful to you.” (*Soorat An-Nisaa*, 4:29)

## > Seafood

Seafood comes from edible sea plants as well as aquatic animals which live only in water for most or all of their lives.

The term seafood also applies to any freshwater life eaten by humans; therefore, all edible aquatic life can be referred to as seafood.

All types of sea plants as well as aquatic animals are permissible to be used for food, whether they are caught or found dead, unless they are hazardous to life or health. As the Qur’an states, “Anything you catch in the sea is lawful for you, and so is all food from it.” (*Soorat 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.



## > Land Animals

For land animals to be lawful, two conditions must be met:

- 1 They must be considered lawful for their flesh to be used for food.
- 2 They must be hunted or slaughtered according to Islamic law (*Sharee'ah*).

### What are the lawful animals?

The general rule in Islamic Law is that all animals are allowed to be used for food except for those that are expressly forbidden in the Qur'an or the Prophet's traditions.

Forbidden animals are as follows:

- 1 **Pigs:** Pigs, indeed 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." (*Soorat Al-Maa'idah*, 5:3)
- 2 **All meat eating animals,** whether they are large, such as lions and tigers, or small, such as cats and dogs are also included in this category.
- 3 **All predatory birds,** such as falcons and eagles.
- 4 **Insects:** All land insects are not lawful because they cannot be slaughtered, with the exception of locusts, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "Made lawful for you is the flesh of two dead animals: locusts and fish." (*Sunan Ibn Maa'jah*: 3218)

5 **Snakes and Mice:** These are also considered unlawful and Islam even goes as far as to command us to kill them. The Prophet ﷺ said, "There are five animals for which there is no blame on the one who kills them even if he is in a state of consecration for the pilgrimage (*ihraam*): crows, kites (hawk-like birds), mice/rats, scorpions and mad dogs." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaare*: 3136; *Saheeh Muslim*: 1198)

6 **Domestic donkeys,** which are generally used in the countryside for riding and carrying loads.



> Any animal that is not specifically forbidden in the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions is considered lawful for Muslims to eat.

## Types of Lawful Animals

Animals which Allah has made lawful for Muslims are of two types:

- Wild animals, which live in natural conditions (that is, not kept in a house or on a farm), 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.

- Domesticated animals which can be easily caught: These 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

- 1 The person undertaking the slaughtering process must be Muslim or a member of the People of the Book (that is, Jews or Christians). In addition, he must have reached the age of discretion and carries out this act for the intended purpose.
- 2 The tool used for slaughtering the animal must be suitable for the intended purpose and sharp, such as a knife. It is forbidden to use anything that may kill the animal due to its heavy weight, hit its head to death or shock it and render it unconscious by resorting to electric stunning, for instance.



> Allah ﷻ has made the food of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) lawful for us as long as they observe the legal method of slaughtering animals.

- 3 The name of Allah must be pronounced by saying *Bismillaah* (in the name of Allah) at the time of slaughtering the animal.
- 4 The cut must sever at least three of the following: the trachea, the oesophagus and the two blood vessels on either side of the throat.

**If these conditions are met, the meat of the slaughtered animal will be lawful; however, if one single condition is not met, its meat will not be lawful.**

## Types of Meat Served in Restaurants and Shops

- 1 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.
- 2 Meat from animals killed by a Muslim or a member of the People of the Book is lawful. Muslim scholars' opinions on this point is unanimous.



**3** 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 electric stunning or drowning, is strictly forbidden.

**4** 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 shops: 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.

## > *Hunting according to Islamic Law*

**Muslims are permitted to** hunt lawful animals and birds which cannot be easily caught and slaughtered, including non-meat eating animals such as deer and wild rabbits.

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

- 1** 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 lawful (*halaal*).
- 2** 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 slaughtered, such as sheep and chicken, then it is not permissible to hunt them.
- 3** The hunting weapon must kill by reason of its sharpness, like an arrow or a bullet. Meat from animals that are killed by anything else by reason of its weight, such as a rock, is not lawful for eating, unless one manages to slaughter the game before it dies.
- 4** The name of Allah must be pronounced when the hunting weapon is discharged.
- 5** If the hunted game is still alive, it must be slaughtered straightaway.
- 6** Hunting is permitted in Islam only when necessary for food. Taking the life of an animal for sport, without intending to eat from it or otherwise benefit from it, is prohibited.





## > The Etiquette of Eating and Drinking

Allah ﷻ has laid down a number of rules relating to eating and drinking, which generally serve to realise certain divine purposes, such as reminding people of Allah's bounty upon them, protecting them against diseases and avoiding extravagance and pride.

These rules include the following:



- 1 **Avoidance of eating or drinking in gold and silver** dishes or gold-plated dishes, as this is a form of extravagance which also breaks poor people's hearts. The Prophet ﷺ once advised, "Do not drink out of gold and silver vessels, nor eat from gold or silver plates, for they are for the unbelievers in this world and for us in the hereafter." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 5110; *Saheeh Muslim*: 2067)
- 2 **Washing one's hands before and after eating**: Doing so becomes all the more emphasised if the hands are dirty or there are some food residue on them.
- 3 **Pronouncing the name of Allah (that is, saying *Bismillaah*) before eating or drinking**: If, however, a person forgets to mention Allah's name at the beginning of

the meal and remembers that he has not said so only after he has already started eating, he must say upon remembering, *Bismillaahi awwalihi wa aakhirih* (I begin with the Name of Allah at the beginning and at the end)".

Perceiving once that a young boy was not observing the Islamic etiquette of eating, the Prophet ﷺ advised him, "Young man, mention the name of Allah, eat with your right hand and eat from what is directly in front of you." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 5061; *Saheeh Muslim*: 2022)

- 4 **Eating and drinking with the right hand**: The Prophet ﷺ said, "Do not eat with your left hand, for Satan eats with his left hand." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 2019)

- 5 It is recommended not to eat or drink while standing.
- 6 Eating from the side of the dish nearer to oneself, for it is not polite to eat from other sides of the dish that are nearer to other people. Advising the young boy, the Prophet ﷺ said to him, “Eat from what is directly in front of you.”
- 7 It is recommended to pick up a morsel that has fallen down, clean it, wipe off any dirt on it and eat it, so as not to be wasteful.
- 8 Not to criticise food for any reason. One must either praise it or leave it without saying anything. The Prophet ﷺ never criticised any food presented to him; he would eat it if he liked it; otherwise, he would leave it without expressing his dislike. (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 5093; *Saheeh Muslim*: 2064)
- 9 Avoiding excessive eating, for doing so generally causes diseases and laziness, while moderation is the best course of action in this respect. As the Prophet ﷺ once observed, “No man fills a vessel worse than his stomach. A few mouthfuls would suffice to give him the strength he needs. But if he must eat more, then he should fill one third [of his stomach] with food, one third with drink and leave one third for easy breathing.” (*Sunan At-Tirmidhee*: 2380; *Sunan Ibn Maajah*: 3349)
- 10 Expressing thanks to Allah by saying *Al-hamdu lillaah* (All praise is due to Allah). One may, however, add the following words: *Al-hamdu lillaah-illadhee at‘amane haadhaa wa razaqaneehi min ghayri hawlin minnee walaa quwwah* (Praise be to Allah who has fed me this food and provided it for me, without any strength or power on my part).

> The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah is pleased with a slave of His who eats something and praises Him for it and drinks something and praises Him for it.” (*Saheeh Muslim*: 2734)

