

Halal Food: A History

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With more and more halal food joining the American menu, questions about it abound. *Halal Food: A History* by Febe Armanios and Bo aç Ergene offers timely, comprehensive, and thoroughly researched information on all things halal.

The book begins in the pre-Quran era (before 600 CE), describing the typical peasant diet of the Arab region. Dietary prescriptions came with the Quran. Like many religions, Islam sees eating and abstention as part of faith practice. Hence, some foods and beverages are *halal*, or permissible, and some foods and beverages are *haram*, or forbidden. Dietary rules also apply to how food is produced. Food animals, for example, must be raised, fed, and slaughtered according to certain rules.

The book is scholarly in its depth and sources but easy to understand in its straightforward writing style. Though billed as a history, it is also an invaluable guide for anyone who wants to follow—or know more about—increasingly complex halal traditions, which changed as Islam spread and encountered new cuisines.

Today's commercialization of food, with so many links in the production chain and so little information provided, presents even greater challenges. To make matters even more complex, divisions within the faith often disagree on what is and what isn't halal.

The book includes numerous charts and lists, helpfully showing what qualifies as halal according to each sect. Chapters are well organized, covering such topics as meat, intoxicants, manufactured products, and eating out in detail. There's a glossary at the front, along with a list of abbreviations used in the book. The back matter is especially comprehensive, with an extensive list of sources and a goldmine of a bibliography.

Armanios and Ergene's *Halal Food: A History* is a major addition to food studies, historic as well as contemporary.

SUSAN WAGGONER (Religion 2018)

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