

Kosher vs Halal

It seems that there are a lot of confusion and misconceptions among Jews and Muslims alike with regards to kosher and halal. Many appears to have the idea that kosher foods are indeed halal and vice versa. Kosher is derived from Hebrew which means proper or fit (to be eaten by Jews) while halal is an Arabic word for permissible (to be eaten by Muslims). Although it appears that kosher and halal are similar in the sense that swine are prohibited and haram (non-permissible) in Kashrut and Islamic dietary laws respectively, they are 2 different entities since the Jewish dietary laws (Kashrut) have their roots in Holy Bible and Torah while the Islamic dietary laws (Halal) are mentioned in the Quran.

Let's take a look the differences between kosher and halal:

- 1) Kashrut allows the use of alcohol (must not contain non-kosher ingredients though) in food preparation. Islam on the other hand does not allow the use of alcohol of any kind to be used in preparing food.
- 2) Gelatin as a whole is considered kosher, even if taken from non-kosher animals. On the other hand, gelatin taken from non-halal origin such as from swine or animals not slaughtered according to Islamic Law is haram.
- 3) For an animal to be considered kosher, it must chew cud as well as have cloven hooves and as such restricted to certain animals only such as cattle, cow and sheep. In Islam though, animals that survive on grasses and leaves are halal (if slaughtered according to Islamic Law) and as such includes animals such as camel.
- 4) According to the Kashrut, the hindquarters of kosher animals are considered non-kosher and as such Jews will only eat the forequarter parts. In Islam, as long as the animal is slughtered according to Islamic Law, the entire body parts are halal.
- 5) Shellfish such as clams and oysters are considered non-kosher according to the Kashrut but not so in Islam as all seafood are considered halal.
- 6) When preparing kosher food, mixing dairy and meat together are not allowed. The same cannot be said of halal food as there's no issue with regards to the mixing the two together.
- 7) According to Kashrut, any enzymes can be used to make cheese whether it's from kosher or non-kosher animals since enzymes are just mere secretions and not part of the animal body. In Islam, the cheese obtained is haram if the enzymes used are taken from non-halal sources and as such the common practice of using rennet (enzymes taken from stomach lining of cow) is haram if the calf is not halal.

Now let's take look with regards to animal slaughtering. The Jewish ritual of slaughtering is called Sechita while the Islamic ritual of slaughtering is termed Dhabh.

- 1) According to Sechita, the carotid arteries, jugular veins and trachea must be severed when performing slaughtering before the meat can be called kosher while in Islamic Law, it is agreed upon that the 2 big veins on both sides of the veins should be severed before the meat can be considered halal.
- 2) In Sechita, it is sufficient to recite God's name just once before carrying out an interrupted period of slaughtering while in Dhabh, God's name must be recited on each and every animal to be slaughtered without exception with the words "Bismillah, Allahu Akbar" (In the name of Allah, Allah is the Greatest).
- 3) In kosher slaughtering, the slaughtering is performed by a licenced slaughterman (sochet) while in Dhabh slaughtering, although experienced individuals are preferred, any sane man or woman can also perform the task.