

No pork, no lard = Halal?

There have been a steady but increasing number of eating establishments displaying the "No Pork No Lard" signage to attract Muslim consumers out of sheer ignorance that the food they served is halal for consumption. Such claims have no merit whatsoever since halal food goes way beyond "no pork no lard" since other ingredients used in the preparation of halal food must also be halal in the first place.

For food to be truly halal, all ingredients used should be halal as well. For instance, if meat (beef, chicken, mutton etc.) are used in the cooking process, the meat in question must also be halal in the sense that it must be slaughtered in the name of Allah in accordance with the Islamic Law. If not, the meat used are haram and all food prepared using the haram meat are considered haram as well. Not only that, additives, chemicals, emulsifiers and enzymes used in the food preparation must also be halal thus one should find out more about the ingredients used before consuming the food produced. For example, gelatin can be either halal (if taken from seaweed) or haram (if taken from bones of non-halal animals). Shortening can be considered halal (if vegetable fat is used) or haram (if sourced from non-halal animal fat). Cheese that are made using rennet taken from non-halal cow's stomach are considered non-halal cheese while cheese manufactured using vegetable rennet are halal. Even MSG (mono sodium glutamate) can be doubtful since recently there's report that pig enzymes are used in the manufacturing process.

Not only that, the cutlery and utensils used in preparing halal food must also be free of non-halal ingredients. For example, using the same pot to cook non-halal meat with halal ingredients (such as vegetables) is not allowed as remains of non-halal ingredients could be mixed with halal ingredients and thus render the halal ingredients non-halal as a result.

Alcohol is haram according to the Islamic Law and as such eateries that serve alcohol on their menu are considered non-halal eating establishments. Even though no alcohol is used in the food preparation process, the mere serving of alcohol on their premises will violate the halal status of the eateries and thus food served will no longer be considered halal out of technicality.