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## MSA leader at Memorial University criticizes low “halal level” of Maple Lodge Farms’ Zabiha Halal products

Author: Andrew Robinson

Source: The Telegram (St. John's), 23 Feb 2013, p. A4

Excerpts:

She (Kaif Khan) serves on the executive of the Muslim Students' Association of MUN.

(...) Khan is familiar with halal products sold at Sobeys through the Maple Lodge Farms brand called Zabiha Halal. However, she does not purchase those products because — as she understands it — they are not always hand-slaughtered.

“There’s levels of how halal you want to go,” she said.

### Original title: Eating halal not always easy in St. John's

Access to foods compliant with Islamic dietary guidelines better than before

When Kaif Khan first considered moving from Toronto to St. John's for school, she came here with her family to visit the Memorial University (MUN) campus and have a look around.

“(My mother) spotted someone wearing a scarf, which is a hijab, the Muslim scarf ( for) head-covering,” recalls Khan, a psychology student at MUN. “So she ran up to the woman and she asked her if she knew where halal foods were in Newfoundland.”

For followers of the Muslim faith, knowing whether or not foods are available for purchase that conform with dietary guidelines as dictated by Islamic law is an important consideration when choosing where to live.

Halal means “lawful” in Arabic, so in the context of food, halal foods are permissible to be consumed by Muslims.

People who follow the halal guidelines cannot eat pork or any pork byproduct (pertinent to goods that contain gelatin) and animals that are dead prior to being slaughtered. Halal requires that the animals be slaughtered in a humane fashion that limits the pain they experience. Blood must also be completely drained from the animal.

Eating halal food is comparable to eating kosher foods as a follower of the Jewish faith. Khan says Muslims can in fact eat kosher food.

When Khan first arrived in St. John's, the one store where she could find halal meat carried an inconsistent stock, and it came in bulk quantities.

"Definitely not reasonable for a student," laughs Khan, who serves on the executive of the Muslim Students' Association of MUN.

Khan intended to live on a diet of vegetarian dishes and fish when she first came to the province.

"I didn't think it would be that big of an issue to give up chicken and beef ... and really it wasn't. But once in a while, you get the craving and you go hunting for halal meat. Then it becomes difficult."

That being said, she has witnessed improvements in the availability of halal meats.

The Howley Estates Sobeys on Elizabeth Avenue has been carrying halal foods for approximately 10 years — including a time when the store was situated in a different building on the same street.

According to store manager Wayne Smart, it recently began selling fresh halal chicken. "I guess it was demand at the time," said Smart when asked why his store began selling halal foods.

"Over time, we've increased it. At one time we were all dry goods. We've gone into frozen halal product, and we have processed products ... and now we've gone into fresh chicken." Maple Leaf supplies six chicken products to Sobeys under the brand Mina Halal.

Khan is familiar with halal products sold at Sobeys through the Maple Lodge Farms brand called Zabiha Halal. However, she does not purchase those products because — as she understands it — they are not always hand-slaughtered.

"There's levels of how halal you want to go," she said. "Some people are OK with it being machine-cut, but with machine-cut meat, obviously you stun the meat and then it goes through a very brutal process, and it's not really safe for animals, whereas if you go the halal way, they make sure the animal is not hurt in any way before being slaughtered."

When she travels home to Toronto between semesters, Khan is not very picky when her dad asks what he can make for her.

"The first thing my dad asks me is, 'What do you want me to cook,' and I say, 'Feed me meat.' Just any meat he cooks at home is fine with me, and we go out and eat a lot."

Muslim students at MUN have asked the university to offer halal food at the school. Khan notes that the university's interest in attracting international students makes such a consideration all the more relevant.

“They have taken our suggestions, and they are keen on making some changes in the future,” she said. “The Muslim Students’ Association is the largest student-ratified group on campus. There are a lot of us, but some of them I guess aren’t as strict about halal meat as probably I am.”

Khan grew up eating halal foods, and she believes it promotes healthy eating and the humane treatment of animals. She takes issue with the way some animals raised for human consumption are handled while kept in tight spaces in large facilities.

“It’s really inhumane. So I find, personally, that following halal ... my money would go to people who would keep the animal safe, would hand-slaughter it and give (the) least possible pain to the animal.”

RETAIL

# Eating halal not always easy in St. John's

*Access to foods compliant with Islamic dietary guidelines better than before*

By ANDREW ROBINSON  
THE TELEGRAM

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Howley Estates Sobeys manager Wayne Smart holds a package of Halal chicken the store carries for customers looking for Halal products. — Photos by Keith Gosse/The Telegram

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Uncooked beef burgers are shown at Howley Estates Sobeys.

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arobinson@thetelegram.com  
Twitter: @TeleAndrew



Frozen halal foods on display at the Howley Estates Sobeys. Halal foods are permissible to be consumed by Muslims.