

# HEADS UP

## UPDATES AND ISSUES

### DIVERSITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS



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#### **Using Foods in Extension Programs: A Cultural Sensitivity Issue**

Some cultures and religions have rules about what foods people can eat and what foods they cannot eat. Some people also choose specific diets—such as being vegetarian—for reasons that are not based on their culture, religion or faith. Extension programs often include foods in planned events and training programs. Having an awareness of some of the many dietary guidelines of other cultures and religions helps maintain cultural sensitivity in work with stakeholders.

#### **ISLAM**

According to Islamic law, some foods are permitted and others are not. The permitted foods are called *halal*. *Halal* is Arabic, and it means “permitted.” For Muslims, most foods are *halal*. Some foods, however, are called *haram*, which is another Arabic word, that means prohibited. It identifies foods that Muslims are not supposed to eat.

When it comes to Extension programs that include food, *haram* foods include: products made from pigs, products that were made from animals that were not slaughtered according to Muslim laws, carnivorous animals, and blood and blood byproducts.

#### **JUDAISM**

Jewish dietary law establishes foods that are fit or allowed to be eaten. Those that adhere to dietary or ceremonial law are called *kosher*. *Kosher* is Hebrew, and it means “proper” or “pure.”

When it comes to Extension programs that include food, kosher food excludes: shellfish, products made from pigs, products that were made from animals that were not slaughtered according to Jewish laws, and blood and blood byproducts. Kashrut, or the rules about keeping kosher, also prohibits eating meat and dairy products together.

#### **HINDUISM**

Many Hindus are vegetarian, meaning that they eat only foods that come from plants rather than animals. Hinduism does not specifically prohibit eating animal products, but it identifies the benefits of not eating meat. So for many Hindus, vegetarianism is part of *sadhana*, or spiritual practice. There are many other reasons that people choose to be vegetarian. Some people find that vegetarian eating is healthier than eating meat products. Others believe that it is morally wrong to eat animals. Still others choose to eat vegetarian because doing so puts less stress on the natural environment.

When it comes to Extension programs that include food, vegetarians would eat only plant products, such as vegetables and fruit. They would not eat animal products, such as meat. Some vegetarians eat eggs and dairy products, like milk, but others do not.

Resource: Teaching Tolerance.org

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