

Dates: Medicinal Food of the Qur'an

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Introduction:

Dates can be served with breakfast, lunch, dinner, coffee, and snacks, any day and every day. It can be classified as food, drink, fruit, sweet, nutrient and medicine. An Arabi phrase indicates the significant value of fresh dates, which says:

"Awwaluha Lil Amir, Wa Akhiruha Lil Hamir"

'The first of the crop is for the ruler, and the last of the crop is for the donkey.'

Rasulullah (S) has compared a good Muslim to the date palm tree and said:

"Among trees, there is a tree like a Muslim. Its leaves do not fall"

Dates in the Primary Sacred Literature:

Dates and date palms have been mentioned in the Qur'an some 20 times, indicating their significance, by looking at a few life experiences of Rasulullah (S).

Abdullah Ibn Jafar said:

"Rasulullah (S) ate Qithth'a (cucumbers) with Dates."

(Cucumber has a cold effect and dates have a hot one. By combining the two it becomes mild. From this Hadith we gather that it is recommended that the effect of hot or cold- of things eaten should be taken into consideration. Cucumber is insipid and tasteless, and dates are sweet which results in the cucumber also tasting sweet).

"Rasulullah (S) ate watermelon with fresh dates."

Rasulullah (S) also said:

"The cold effect of one removes the heat of the other, and the heat of one removes the cold effect of the other" [1]

Anas said:

"I saw Rasulullah (S) eat together musk-melon and dates." (Some Ulama have translated this also as watermelon' instead of musk-melon, the reason being as in the first narration, here also the cold effect is intended. But it is clear that musk-melon is meant here. The reason for eating dates is also that it gives the melon a sweeter taste. It is not necessary that one's benefit be gauged everywhere. It is possible that this is due to some other benefits. The eating of watermelon with dates has its own benefit and that is to create evenness in the effect of both, so that it becomes mild. The eating of musk-melon with dates has its own benefit and that is that if the melon is insipid and tasteless, sugar is mixed before it is eaten. Therefore it is not necessary to give the same reasons for both watermelon and musk-melon).

Rubayyi bint Muawwidh said:

“My uncle Mu’az ibn Afr’a sent me a plate of fresh dates, mixed with small cucumbers, to be presented to Rasulallah (S). As He relished cucumbers, I took this to him. At that time some jewelry had been sent to Rasulallah (S) from Bahrain. He took a handful from it and gave it to me.”

(Besides the previously mentioned benefits of cucumbers and Dates, it also makes the body thickset too.

It is related in a weak Hadith that Rasulallah (S) ate cucumber with salt. It is possible that he at times ate it with salt and at times with dates. Sometimes one prefers something that is sweet and at other times a thing that is salty.

One of the wives of the Nabi said:

“Rasulallah (S) ate watermelon with fresh dates.”

When the Ansari saw Rasulallah (S) and his two Ash’ab, he delightfully exclaimed: Alhamdulillah, no one has more honorable guests today than I (have). He then went out and brought them a bunch of ripe dates, some dry dates and fresh dates, and offered: Eat some of them. He then took hold of his long knife (for slaughtering a goat or a sheep). Rasulallah (S) said to him: Beware of killing a milking animal. He slaughtered a sheep for them and they ate of it and of the bunch of dates. When they had taken their fill and had been fully satisfied, Rasulallah (S.) said:

“Wallah! You will certainly be questioned about this bounty on the Day of Qayamah. Hunger brought you out of your house and you did not return until this bounty came to you” [2]

Rasulallah (S) came to visit me, accompanied by Ali who was convalescing. We had some ripe dates hung up. Rasulallah (S) got up and began to eat from them. Ali also got up to eat, but was stopped by Rasulallah (S) who said Ali: Stop, Ali, you are convalescing. She said: I then prepared some barley and beer-root and brought it to Rasulallah (S) who then said: Take some of this, Ali, for it will be more beneficial for you. [3]

One of the wives of Rasulallah (S) said that my mother intended to make me fat so as to send me to the (house of) Rasulallah (S). But nothing came of it till she gave me cucumber with fresh dates to eat. Then I became chunky and curvy (as she desired).

Rasulallah (S) said:

“A family which has dates will not be hungry” [4]

“The people who reaped their new crop of Dates, used to come and present it to Rasulallah (S). He then recited this Dua:

اَللّٰهُمَّ بَارِكْ لَنَا فِي ثَمَارِنَا وَبَارِكْ لَنَا فِي مَدِيْنَتِنَا وَبَارِكْ لَنَا فِي
صَاعِنَا وَفِي مُدَّنَا ، اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ عَبْدَكَ وَخَلِيْلَكَ وَنَبِيَّكَ
وَإِنِّي عَبْدُكَ وَنَبِيُّكَ وَإِنَّهُ دَعَاكَ لِمَكَّةَ وَإِنِّي أَدْعُوكَ لِلْمَدِيْنَةِ بِمِثْلِ
مَا دَعَاكَ بِهٖ لِمَكَّةَ وَمِثْلِهِ مَعَهُ

O Allah! Bless us in our fruits. Bless us in our city. Bless us in our Saa, and bless us in our Mudd (these are two measures used in Madinah to measure dates. O Allah! Verily Ibrahim is Your servant, friend and Nabi since it was an occasion for humbleness Rasulallah(S) did not mention here himself being the Habib - beloved - of Allah.) And (whatever) he has supplicated to You for (colonizing) Makkah. This is mentioned in the Ayah:

"...so incline some hearts of men that they may yearn towards them, and provide Thou them with fruits in order that they may be thankful." [5]

I offer the same Dua to You for Madinah.' He then called a small child, to whom he gave that fruit."

The best food for Ift'ar:

Rasulullah (S) used to say:

"Iftaar your Sawm by eating dates as it is purifying"

"The date that is from high (branches) is a cure" [6]

During the month of Ramazan, every nook and corner of the Muslim world are filled with varieties of dates. The reason is that it is the basic food of Ift'ar. Rasulallah (S) instructed emphatically, "If any one of you is with Sawm, let him do Ift'ar with dates. In case he does not have them, then with water. Verily water is a purifier." Rasulallah (S) used to do Ift'ar by eating dates and if ripe dates were not available, he would substitute them with dried ones. When even these were not available, he used to have a few sips of water, according to some accounts. Dates contain sugar, fat, and proteins, as well as important vitamins. The attachment of the Muslims with dates is due to the recommendation of the Qur'an and the instruction of Saheb al Qur'an.

As dates move faster to the liver and are converted more quickly than any other nutrients, particularly if they are moist, the liver accepts their contents more readily and hastens their distribution to the rest of the body, which is thirsting for energy. Without any doubt, Dates are the perfect food for Ift'ar, as they quickly supply the body with the energy it needs. Dates are also rich in natural fibers and the eating of them helps to fight many of the ailments with which we commonly suffer today. Dates also surpass other fruits in the sheer variety of their constituents. They are the most wholesome food among fruits because of their hot and moist substance. Rasulallah (S) used to eat all varieties of dates, but he had a special liking for the Ajwah. Many who do Ift'ar with dates afterwards don't feel much desire for more. It seems that taking dates after Sawm helps one avoid overeating. Rasulallah (S) would sometimes combine dates with bread. At other times he mixed ripe dates with cucumbers, or mixed the dates with butter.

Medicinal Benefits of the Dates:

The great worth of dates is also indicated in the Qur'an:

"And shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates", so eat and drink and be comforted" [7]

According to Medical studies, the ripe date contains a substance that urges uterine spasms and increases contractions especially in the time of delivery. This substance resembles 'oxytocin' that is secreted by the interior lobe of pituitary gland, which encourages contractions of the uterus. Dates contain some stimulants which strengthen the muscles of the uterus in the last months of pregnancy. This helps the dilation of the uterus at the time of delivery and reduces post-natal bleeding. This was the sacred prescription, for the mother of Essa Nabi (A.S) at the time of delivery, to make the delivery trouble-free and easy.

It enhances the manhood; remove the weakness, if taken with milk, before sleep.

Dieticians consider Dates the best food for breast-feeding mothers, as Dates contain elements that assist in alleviating depression and enrich the breast milk with the nutrients needed to make the child healthy and resistant to disease.

Another factor making dates the ideal food is their digestibility. Within half an hour of eating them, the tired body regains new vigor. The reason for this is that low blood sugar is the main cause of hunger, not an empty stomach as is often assumed.

When the body absorbs the nutritional essence of a few dates the sensation of hunger is abated.

Eating dates in the morning on an empty stomach kills intestinal worms and other parasites, as dates have an antidotal potency which restrains their growth.

Dates contain calcium, sulphur, iron, potassium, phosphorus, manganese, copper, magnesium, volatile oils, Vitamin-B6, folic acid, Potassium, Magnesium, proteins, sugars and vitamins and are rich in natural fibers.

Magnesium is a very important element for to the pregnant women and is hard to find as a natural source.

We shall recommend that they try dates for the new born for the relief of pain. It is important for the functioning of the heart, as well as blood circulation.[8]

Placing a sugary substance inside the mouth of a new-born baby is not only a Sunnah but it also radically reduces pain sensation and heart rate. An interesting scientific medical study proved beyond any doubt the benefit of giving a new-born child sugar, in order to reduce the feeling of any painful procedure like heel pricking for a blood sample, or before circumcision. [9] Abu Buradah reported from Abu Musa, who said: I had a new-born baby; I took him to Rasulullah (S), who named him Ibrahim. He chewed a date then he took it and rubbed the inside of the baby's mouth with it.

The date contains a very high percentage of sugar (70-80%); it has both fructose and glucose which have high calorific values, it is easily and quickly digestible, and very helpful to the brain.

The date contains 2.2% protein, vitamin A, vitamins B1, B2 and nicotruic acid (against Pellagra) it has traces of minerals needed for the body.

Potassium, of which the percentage is very high, has been found to be very effective for cases of bleeding, such as the occasions of birth or circumcision.

Dates are recommended for removal of dizziness. It is now well known that low blood sugar and low blood pressure are among the causes of dizziness.

When the level of trace elements in the body falls, the health of the blood vessels is affected, which leads to increased heart rate and a consequent inability of the heart to perform its functions with normal efficiency?

As dates are rich in calcium, they contribute to healthy bones. For this reason it is recommended that children and older adults, especially women, eat plenty of dates to strengthen their bones.

Dates are also important in maintaining good vision and are effective in guarding against night-blindness.

It is highly recommended for those who have any kind of hearing problem. It is a sacred medicine to treat respiratory disorder, as well as a salve and a heart stimulant. In the early years of Islam, dates were served as food for Muslim soldiers. Being the best stimulant of the muscles, it is a good tonic for one about to engage in battle.

Dates are also rich in natural fibers.

Modern medicine has shown that Dates are effective in preventing abdominal cancer.

In short words, one date satisfies the minimum requirements of a balanced and healthy diet.

It is our firm and staunch believe that further research will open new vista of understanding for those who still doubt the full Hikmah of the Talim of the Qur'an and Sunnah. For this class, Qur'an says:

***"We shall show them our signs on the furthest horizons and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient that your Lord is witness over all things"?** [10]*

Selected varieties out of uncounted range:

There are approximately 552 varieties of dates; the best dates are very rare, the orange-brown Dates are very transparent with a caramel taste. It is an Iraqi Date, from the oasis of Mandali, east of Baghdad. In Iraq, Dates are sometimes filled with clotted cream."

Nubut Saiyf, is a long date, shaped like a sword (Sayf), from the Riyadh region on the Najd plateau in central Arabia.

Sukkari means "sweet one," from the Qasim region north of Riyadh.

Anbar or Anbara dates are expensive and it is from the Madinah region. And finally, the Khlās (quintessence), of Al Hasa.

Besides "Khalal, Busr and Saraban are different varieties, from different parts of the Arabia.

The most popular Dates of Hijaz include Khunaizi, Bukayyirah, Gharr, Shaishi and Ruzaiz, Sufri, Barhi, Sullaj and Khudhairi.

People of Madinah mainly love Anbara, Ajwah, Rothanah, Baidh, Rabiah, Barhi, Hilwah, Hulayyah, Safawi, Shalabi, Khlas and consider them as “the perfection of the Date.”

Ajwah, the Gift of Jannat:

The word Ajwah is a noun from the verb Aja, which means to pacify an infant who is still being breastfed, but who is in the process of being weaned. “*Al Dawau Bil Ajwah*” is a very famous phrase in Arabia, which means treat diseases through Ajwah. It was a common practice among mothers in Arabia to use dates—especially the dry, chewy types, one of which is Ajwah—to wean their infants. They would let their babies chew on the date to pacify them, strengthen their gums and overcome their teething pains. Most likely, Ajwah got its name from this use, as it has the right texture and sweetness for the purpose.” Rasulallah (S) took all varieties of dates, but preferred the Ajwah. “Ajwah date, from Madinah, was the favorite of Rasulallah (S) because of its chewy texture and flavor”. Cured dates are called Ajwah in Arabi.

"Ajwah date is an excellent remedy".[11]

"Ajwah date is certainly an excellent and sufficient food."

"Ajwah is from Jannah and contains an antidote against poison" [12]

I suffered from an illness. Rasulallah (S) visited me. He put his hands between my nipples and I felt its coolness at my heart. He said: You are a man suffering from heart disease. Go to Al Haris Ibn Kaladah, brother of Saqif. He is an expert who gives medical treatment. He advised him to take seven Ajwah dates of Madinah and grind them with their kernels, and then put them into your mouth. [13]

Rasulallah (S) said: Ajwah dates of Aliyah contain healing effects, and act as antidotes in several ailments when taken early in the morning. [14]

Syrup of the Dates:

The syrup obtained from Dates is called “Dibs” which is similar to honey or molasses. It comes from dates when they have fully ripened and are then pressed. The Khunaizi Date from al Qatif Oasis produces excellent dibs. Dibs have a sweet, acidic flavour with a slightly bitter tinge. It is used in making or as a covering for sweets. Dibs are also as an ingredient in a popular fish recipe called Muhammad Ma Samak Maqli, meaning ‘brown or red rice with fried fish.’ In this dish, dibs is used to give the rice a brown color and a distinctive sweet and salty taste. We sometimes use Habit al Barakah (“blessed seeds”) for a special flavor.

Chocolate of the Jannat:

Is it not time for us to correct our wrong approach and forgo the habit of eating large varieties of Chocolate, which is an invitation to several ailments. It is time that not only we but our children should enjoy the benefits of this nutritious gift of Qudrat. Millions of Muslim across the world destroys their wealth as well as health through eating

chocolate. In conclusion, we should try and eat this divine fruit throughout the year and not only in Ramazan.

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