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# dialogue

Muslim Students @ HKU



Cooking Competition "Food Justice, Good Practice"





■ The HKU Eid Festival held at Global Lounge on 16 October, 2013

# Muslim Students @ HKU

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The HKU campus is a culturally diverse one with students coming from various countries and backgrounds. If you pass by the podium of the Kadoorie Biological Building, you may encounter a community of Muslim students gathering for a prayer, especially on Friday – a day during which they would all come together for the congregation prayer. How much do you know about the Muslim culture and the life of Muslim students in HKU? Let us hear from Hassaan Shah, Chairperson of the HKU Muslim Students Association.



The Muslim Community in HKU is a small but very close one. At present, there are more than 130 Muslim students from various countries like Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia etc. Despite the small population, making connection with one another is not as difficult as people may think, "When new students come, they are usually keen to know whether there is a dedicated place for prayer or canteen serving Halal food. With our mass emails, Facebook page, proactive outreach and the tradition of congregation prayer, it is not difficult to connect new Muslim students with the senior ones and for everyone to know one another", explained Hassaan. In fact, the Muslim Students Association is planning to start a mentorship programme for senior Muslim students to orientate new students on general campus life, to help them meet new friends and give them some ideas on academic activities such as course selection. "Muslim students are just like other students of HKU, they care about things like course workload, school regulations and the kinds of resources available for students etc.," said Hassaan.

Most of us know that believers of Islam pray five times a day, we may have also heard of their practice of fasting, which lasts for a month in a year, from sunrise to sunset. But how much do we understand their custom? "People always ask whether it is very hard for us not to eat and even drink during the day in the fasting month, well it may be, but once you get used to fasting you feel fine with it. Also the practice itself is not inflexible, for example, it would not require people who are ill or pregnant women to stick to it," said Hassaan. The important thing is not just to follow the tradition rigidly, but to reflect on the meaning of doing it. "The hunger and thirst remind believers to care about the poor people, to exert proper self-control and not to do anything bad". The HKU Halal Food Corner on the first floor of the Fong Shu Chuen Amenities Centre is popular amongst both Muslim and non- Muslim students.



■ A traditional Muslim lunch was served at the HKU Eid Festival



■ The question on the rights and status of Islamic women was raised and answered during the HKU Eid Festival held on 16 October, 2013.

“Having a Halal food restaurant on campus is important for us. A proper Islamic diet is not as simple as excluding pork. For instance, animals have to be slaughtered in the name of Allah and it has to be done by cutting the blood vessels in the neck and letting all the blood drain from the animal. This is the most humane way to minimize the pain to the animal. Also, Muslims are not allowed to consume any food and seasoning that contain pork or blood ingredients or by-products”, Hassaan explained. The opening of the vegetarian restaurant in the Centennial Campus in 2012 also helped to ease the food demand of Muslim students, but for them, a larger Halal restaurant or even an additional Halal kiosk would be very helpful.

The bonding between Muslim students in HKU is a strong one, and they enjoy reaching out and networking with the non-Muslim community as well. As Hassaan observes, students of HKU are generally open to differences and diversity. Nevertheless, misconceptions about the Islamic culture do exist. At the HKU Eid Festival held by the Association to celebrate this “festival of sacrifice” and promote the sense of togetherness, questions from the non-Muslim attendants were invited and the question on the rights and status of Islamic women was raised. “It is in our teaching that we should respect women, and the person whom we should respect most is our mother. The second and the third person is also our mother” was the humorous response to the question. “People often have the impression that in our religion, women do not enjoy equal status as men because men can have four wives. Though this is legally permissible, the important principle that people may not know is that Muslim men must treat all of their wives equally fairly, and you know, not everyone can afford to do that, and of course, it is not common for Muslim men to marry four wives”, commented Hassaan. As he further explained, equality is central to the teaching of the religion. It is essential for Muslims to treat people the same irrespective of their social status, gender, religion and so on.





Apart from equality, family is regarded highly in the Muslim culture too. When Hassaan heard that sons and daughters in Hong Kong would generally choose to move out when they reach a certain age or when they get married, he was a bit surprised, "for Muslims, the sons would stay with and look after their family regardless of whether they are married or not – unless they are abroad – and they may also look after their wives' family financially". Parents play an important role in their marriage even nowadays. Usually, parents of the two families would talk and arrange meeting between the boy and girl, but after that, it will all be up to the young people whether they will finally get married.

Fancy joining the activities of fellow Muslim students? Check out this Facebook page:



<https://www.facebook.com/HKUMSA>





# COOKING COMPETITION

## "FOOD JUSTICE, GOOD PRACTICE"

Six teams of students came to the final round of the cooking competition "Food Justice, Good Practice" co-organized by CEDARS and Oxfam Hong Kong on Nov 2, 2013. Participants advocated food justice and competed for the prizes "Farmers LIKE" and "Hallmates LIKE" by designing delicious recipes with food waste and cooking them in front of the judges and a large audience.

Let us hear from the two winning teams of the prizes.



Name of Dish: Curry of Life  
Team members: Lew Ken Jean,  
Loo Lynton Edviano  
Winning: Hallmates LIKE



Name of Dish: Tofu Rice Burger  
Team members: Meyi Dwicahyani,  
Jennifer Elizabeth, William Ivan  
Winning: Farmers LIKE







**Q1. Were you already great cooks before the competition? Or you just started to cook before this competition?**

- Not to say great, but both of us have experience in cooking.
- (Meyi) I have always enjoyed cooking and baking, and I am especially passionate about making healthy and hearty dishes.
- (Jennifer) I enjoy cooking although I don't do it that often. Also, I love cooking and eating healthy food, it makes me feel better actually.
- (Ivan) Although I enjoy eating, I am still an amateur in cooking. I have learnt more when thinking about the recipe, cooking and tasting the dish.

**Q2. Why did your team participate in this cooking competition?**

- We usually cook together and when we saw this event and its criteria, we thought we should present one of our dishes as we knew it would be practical and suitable for hallmates in particular.
- (Meyi) I am always eager to participate in cooking competition! This was my second time joining a cooking competition and hopefully not my last.
- (Jennifer) This was actually my first time joining a cooking competition. I was attracted by the "Farmers LIKE" and "healthy" criteria as I always love eating healthy food and looking out for local produce for cooking.
- (Ivan) This was my first time as well.

**Q3. What motivated your team most in this process and which part did you enjoy most?**

- We motivated each other. As our dish was very simple, we were not sure whether we could win this, so we just wanted to give it a try. We enjoyed every moment we cooked together. During the competition, it was a bit stressful for us. However, we felt good about the feedback the audience gave us.
- The competition itself was the ultimate motivation for us. It's pretty rare to get a chance like this where we could experience a real-life "Master Chef" moment.

● Team members cooking "Curry of Life"

● Team members cooking "Tofu Rice Burger"



**Q4. How did you come up with the recipe? How much time did you spend on the preparation for this**

- When we saw this event, we immediately thought of our frequently-cooked dish – curry - due to its flexibility, simplicity and also appetizing look and taste. Actually we did not spend so much time on the recipe design and preparation as we often did this, the time was mainly spent on buying ingredients and cooking them.
- The vegetarian tofu rice burger was inspired by a childhood snack: rice omelette. Instead of adding onions or tomatoes into the beaten egg, (leftover) rice with drier texture was added. The patty itself was inspired by the fact that tofu was quite popular in Hong Kong. Beansprouts were used as well since they were usually sold together with tofu in wet markets. Walnuts were added to give an extra edge and crunch to the tofu patty. Almonds would work as well, but unfortunately, only US almonds were available in HK. Seasonings were kept simple and Asian. Only soy sauce, sesame oil, salt and pepper were used.

We prepared this dish thrice in total - first for the trial and photo-submission, second for a practice before the actual

**Q5. What do you think is the most attractive part of your recipe?**

- The flexibility, simplicity and also appetizing look and taste.
- The flavour, nutritional value, simplicity and flexibility are certainly the highlights of the dish. Besides, it's a burger. Who doesn't love burgers?!

**Q6. Have you had the experience of using leftover food for cooking? Is it difficult to handle?**

- Yes, whenever there are leftovers in the hall, we will use them for our curry for sure. Curry is a miraculous dish which tasted good with anything you put into. Sometimes part of the leftover is inedible, so we just remove that part, nothing difficult.
- (Meyi) Many times. I usually make all-you-can-add fried rice or noodles with leftover food.  
(Jennifer) I actually like to eat stir-fried vegetables mixed with anything. Sometimes I combine my leftover food together with the vegetables and, voila, that become my lunch or dinner.



**Q7. Did the competition change your ideas about leftover food? Will you use it more in your future cooking?**

- It didn't really change our ideas about leftover food, it just strengthened our idea about using leftovers as we always felt helpless when we saw food waste in canteens every day and we could not do anything about it. Of course we will continue to use leftover food in our future cooking.
- (Meyi) Certainly, especially after watching the movie screening of food wastage prior to the competition. I am now able to resist the temptation of binge grocery shopping. I am now buying less and more frequently to avoid food spoilage during storing.  
  
(Jennifer) The documentation about food waste really horrified me and made me become more conscious when buying or ordering food. I always ask the staff in university canteens to give me less rice because I know I won't be able to finish it.

**Q8. What will you do with the prize?**

- We're going to buy something from fair trade for our family.
- Support fair trade products and the farmers!

**Q9. Any further comments?**

- We appreciate the organiser's effort in organising this competition as we know it takes a lot of effort for this to happen. We also hope that Grow@HKU can really change the perception of people not only in HKU, but in HK where there is an abundance of food waste. We hope that the habit of wasting food will come to a halt in the near future.
- Thank you for organising the cooking competition and giving us the opportunity to experience it!

