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DECEMBER 26, 2014 BY SAQIB SHAFI

Shake Shack Says They Are Not Halal In Chicago Or The US, Here's Why They Need To Be

Bad news, Chicago Muslims. While the beef used at Shake Shack River North in Chicago was confirmed by management to be all Creekstone Farms beef, Shake Shack corporate has contacted Muslim Eater stating that this is not guaranteed to be the case going forward.

“Creekstone Farm is one of our main beef suppliers, but we work with several suppliers for our all-natural Angus beef. All of the other suppliers meet or exceed the standards that Creekstone sets for humane treatment of animals,

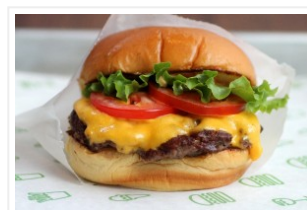
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How and Why You Need to Find Halal Pączkis on Fat Tuesday Without Lard or Alcohol In Them



We Try Epic Burger's New Halal-Friendly Burger and Halal Sauce



MUSLIM EATER *etc., so you should feel comfortable eating our burgers and hot dogs. However, we can't guarantee that our meat in the US is halal, and we can't guarantee that Creekstone is or will always be our supplier in Chicago."*

As such, Muslim Eater no longer recommends eating at any Shake Shack that confirms their beef is all Creekstone Farms, even though all of their beef is processed Halal, and apologizes for any confusion or frustration this may cause.

But there's a bit more to this whole story than what was sent from Shake Shack. There's a history of their handling Halal inquires in their restaurants across the US and a clear indication of how going Halal is in their best interests.

So while Muslim Eater does not recommend eating at Shake Shack if you only eat Halal, here's a bit more on the issue.

Conflicting Communication

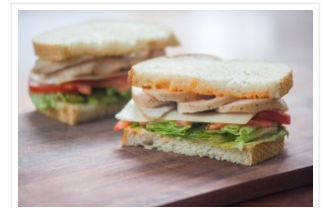


[Photo:

Mark Much/Eater Chicago

Shake Shack Says They Are Not Halal In Chicago Or The US, Here's Why They Need To Be

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The Best Halal Chili Made in a Slow Cooker, Instant Pot, Stove Top, or Dutch Oven

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This issue is due to a conflict in information given to Muslims between locations and corporate communications of the company. On the one hand, the River North location informed Muslim inquirers that their beef is all Creekstone Farms. On the other, the company states that they do not guarantee that their meat is Halal.

This isn't the first time this has happened. Muslims in other cities have reported similar situations in their cities. One source mentioned the purveyor providing beef to the Shake Shacks in his area confirmed those locations were using Creekstone Farms exclusively. Recently, after news that Creekstone Farms is Halal went viral, that purveyor has stopped answering questions about Creekstone Farms and defaulted to the standard position of Shake Shack corporate.

So while management or purveyors may state that all Creekstone Farms is being served at a location, the company's official position is that might not necessarily be the case. Since the company response is the official line of information on their procedures, their position must be respected and adhered to.

A distinction in Halal processed vs. Halal certified

The wording Shake Shack sent is something worth paying attention to. Notice how for every inquiry about whether a location uses Creekstone Farms beef, the company responds with, "we can't guarantee that our meat in the US is halal." Even when the H-word is not asked about, the company responds with it. Clearly they recognize that Creekstone Farms is processed Halal, but they are hesitant to inform which locations use only their beef for Muslims who want to enjoy a Halal burger.

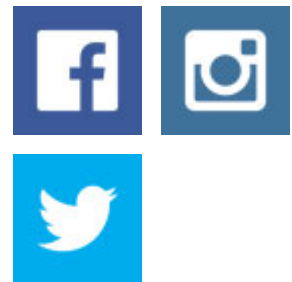
It seems that there is a difference in the effective understanding of the word Halal. Creekstone Farms processes all of their beef as Halal. As the company states:



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[Photograph: Larry W. Smith, New York Times]

“[A]ll Creekstone Farms cattle are processed in a manner that meets the religious qualifications of Halal. However, we only certify it as Halal if it is requested by the customer.”

In other words, all Creekstone Farms beef is Halal processed by default but it's only Halal certified if a restaurant pays for the certificate.

This is something that dozens of restaurants began to understand. After the news that Creekstone Farms is Halal went viral, Muslims all over the US started to hunt down establishments that served items using it. Many restaurants were unaware that their beef was actually Halal by coincidence and not by design and initially were hesitant to respond to Halal eating requests.

But after seeing the enthusiasm and opportunity to serve more customers, they adjusted. Numerous restaurants made accommodations to prepare their Creekstone Farms beef items free of cross-contamination just for Muslim consumers in light of the fact that they serve pork, alcohol, and poultry and lamb that's not Halal. Some even started to order their Creekstone Farms beef with Halal certificates.

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Either way, a common understanding was set between restaurants and Muslim consumers.

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Shake Shack, however, does not want to imply their beef is Halal at any of their US locations. While this makes sense for locations that use suppliers other than Creekstone Farms, the company gives the same message for locations that are confirmed as Creekstone Farms only.

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Is Shake Shack afraid of Islamophobic backlash?

This is a question that many Muslims have asked when they find Shake Shack hesitant to use the H-word. Is the company scared of getting bad press for “Creeping Shariah?” I reached out to Shake Shack who said the following:

“Our restaurants in the Middle East serve 100% Halal meat. In the U.S., however, we source our beef from several suppliers – not all of which process their beef as Halal. And since suppliers and preparation methods at a particular location can shift from time to time, the only responsible thing is to continue to be clear with our guests that we have not and cannot guarantee the certification at any of our U.S. restaurants.”



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Shake Shake Dubai, one of numerous locations in the Middle East.

[Photo:

[Krista Garcia/Goodies First](#)

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The answer, thankfully, is no. Shake Shack openly states that their Middle East and Turkey locations are Halal (a source told me they are using Creekstone Farms beef ordered with a Halal certificate). If they were scared of Halal, they wouldn't be so open about their use of Halal meat overseas.

The real reason they are hesitant about Halal is because they use multiple beef suppliers in the US. A location can change its supplier at any time going from all-Creekstone Farms, to Creekstone Farms with another beef supplier, to no Creekstone Farms beef at all. While Muslim Eater recommends always confirming with restaurants who carry Creekstone Farms if they still have it before dining, perhaps Shake Shack does not want to commit to constantly responding to inquiries of which beef supplier a location may have at a given point in time. Even if a location happens to reveal that they only use Creekstone Farms, as was the case in Chicago, it's just not something they want to verify at one point in case that information were to one day change.

Why Shake Shack needs to cater to American Muslims with Halal

While I understand the position Shake Shack has taken on their use of Creekstone Farms beef, the company needs to pay attention to the power of the Muslim consumer.

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When Muslim Eater published that the Chicago location confirmed they only used Creekstone Farms beef, the news went viral. Thousands of unique viewers accessed the article, the vast majority within Chicagoland itself. Muslims showed up immediately the same day in large numbers to enjoy the Creekstone Farms-only burgers while they could. There was not a single Muslim I know who went except that they saw other Muslims there.

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Shake Shack clearly caught wind of this, as they felt the need to contact Muslim Eater to clarify their position on Halal beef in their restaurants. I can imagine the Chicago management now has their answer to inquiries about Creekstone Farms on repeat. And Chicago isn't the only instance. Just search Twitter for how many Muslims regularly request Shake Shack to be Halal.

Hey @shakeshack random question. Does your DuPoint Circle location get it's beef from @CreekstoneFarms.

— Ali Malik (@lorax786) *July 28, 2014*

@shakeshack Are your burgers halal/kosher?

— Sidrah (@sidrahc) *September 13, 2013*

@shakeshackUK any chance your UK branch will serve Halal meat?!?... would double your revenue easily... 😊

— [naumaan khan \(@naumaan_khan\)](#) June 18, 2013

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What Shake Shack needs to learn from this is the power of the American Muslim consumer. When products that cater to them arise, they mobilize and invest unlike any other demographic. Companies that take advantage of this see clear increases in revenue. As [the American Muslim Consumer Consortium \(AMCC\)](#) writes:

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“[O]ver 50% of businesses who catered to the Muslim consumer enjoyed an “annual growth in revenue of at least 5%, while 34% are registering higher than 15% growth. The same participants are sanguine about the future: over 60% of respondents foresee at least 5% growth in three years, while 43% envisage growth in revenue higher than 15%.

...Published research and studies are continuing to show that American Muslim consumers have over \$170 billion in buying power, yet the market has yet to fully cater to this buying power by providing targeted products and services.”

In an age of a rapidly shifting economy where costs are higher than ever it's critical to have something that elevates your business above the rest. Shake Shack already is using Halal beef to some capacity. Even if they were to convert just some of their locations to all-Halal beef, I am confident that they would see a material increase in revenue and brand recognition.

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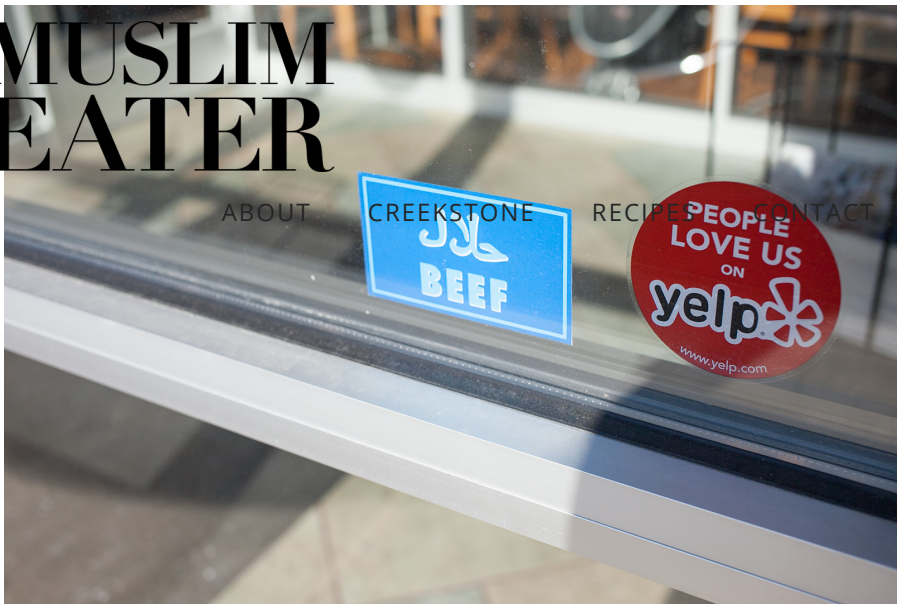
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Halal logo outside Elevation Burger in Ann Arbor, MI [Photo: Saqib Shafi]

Like [Epic Burger posting about Halal on their blog](#) and Elevation Burger putting a Halal sticker on their location's front doors, Halal doesn't have to be something you hesitate about. It's something that will cater to an untapped market with huge potential and a means of more profitability as a company.

Muslims need to tell Shake Shack to go Halal

Shake Shack told Muslim Eater something beautiful.

"We understand that this is disappointing to some of our fans. For that, please know that we continually strive to make our restaurants great, and we always appreciate questions and feedback. Thank you and a huge thanks to your readers for being Shack fans."

This empathy shows the kind of company Shake Shack is. Being a part of the Union Square Hospitality Group, they live up to their group name. Since they're open to feedback, let's let them know how important Halal is to Muslims.

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@shakeshack how many signatures would you need in order to serve halal meat at shake shack in the UK. There is such an enormous demand!

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— *Humza Sheikh (@sheikhy20)* *September 9, 2014*

Write to Shake Shack on their [contact page](#) and politely let them know how you would love to have Halal Shake Shacks in the US. With enough positive pressure, the company may one day consider going Halal at certain locations and maybe even throughout the US.

Even if they don't, at least they'll know who American Muslims are: the most untapped consumer potential in the world. That's a demographic they just can't avoid.

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