

Q: 69 – Title: Are Muslims allowed to eat cross buns?

Question

Are Muslims allowed to eat cross buns? They are commonly sold during Easter holidays. They don't have animal fat in it.

Answer

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

As-salamu 'alaykum wa-rahmatullahi wa-barakatuh.

A cross-bun is a sweet, yeast-leavened, spiced bun made with currants or raisins, often with candied citrus fruits, marked with a cross on the top. In many historically Christian countries, buns are traditionally eaten hot or toasted on Good Friday, with the cross standing as a symbol of the Crucifixion. [\[1\]](#)

As cross buns are usually available in the Easter period, ate usually on Good Friday and explicitly have a cross symbolising Crucifixion, it will be impermissible to buy and eat such items. It does not befit a Muslim to take part directly or indirectly in the customs of other religions and nations. Allah Ta'ala has blessed us with a unique identity to be proud of. Muslims should have a sense of honour preventing them from adopting the characteristics of others.

The prohibition of consuming the cross bun is not necessarily due to the ingredients; rather the restriction is founded upon the principles of resemblance with another nation (tashabbuh) and assisting in sin.

Technically speaking, the ingredients of the cross bun maybe of a halaal nature, but the impermissibility is due to the external factors of resemblance and assistance in sin. A principle of fiqh states "Acts are judged by the intention behind them." [\[ii\]](#) The intention behind the cross buns are totally un-Islamic, hence the ruling will be issued accordingly. By purchasing a hot cross bun, you will be assisting the cause and intention it was made for. Furthermore, a look at the history of the hot cross bun reveals the ideologies it represents.

The sign of the cross marked into breads was acceptable on Good Friday to the Puritans (and other Protestant groups) because it commemorated the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his death at Calvary. [\[iii\]](#)

It is believed that buns marked with a cross were eaten by Saxons in honour of the goddess Eostre (the cross is thought to have symbolised the four quarters of the moon); "Eostre" is probably the origin of the name "Easter".

English folklore includes many superstitions surrounding hot cross buns. One of them says that buns baked and served on Good Friday will not spoil or become mouldy during the subsequent year. Another encourages keeping such a bun for medicinal purposes. A piece of it given to someone who is ill is said to help them recover.

Sharing a hot cross bun with another is supposed to ensure friendship throughout the coming year, particularly if "*Half for you and half for me, Between us two shall goodwill be*" is said at the time. Because of the cross on the buns, some say they should be kissed before being eaten. If taken on a sea voyage, hot cross buns are said to protect against shipwreck. If hung in the kitchen, they are said to protect against fires and ensure that all breads turn out perfectly. The hanging bun is replaced each year.

With all these un-Islamic concepts and beliefs tied to the cross-bun, it would be naive of a Muslim to even consider consuming it.

Allah Ta'ala states in the Quran,

“And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the Fire, and you would not have other than Allah any protectors; then you would not be helped.” [\[iv\]](#)

We have been ordered by Allah not to even be inclined to the ways of the wrongdoers.

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said,

“Whoever resembles a nation will be regarded as from amongst them.” [\[v\]](#)

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said in another hadith,

“Whoever performs prayer like us, faces our Qibla and eats our slaughtered meat he is a Muslim.” [\[vi\]](#)

This hadith indicates to three actions which cause resemblance:

- 1) Similarity in prayer
- 2) Similarity in venerating a shrine
- 3) Similarity in food consumed

Eating food which is associated to a religion gives the consumer resemblance with the people of that religion.

The ruling on the different types of resemblance (tashabbuh):

- 1) To resemble the disbelievers in belief is tantamount to disbelief. Likewise to wear an emblem of another religion results in kufr. For example, to resemble the Christians in the belief of trinity or wearing a cross around the neck will make one an apostate.
- 2) To resemble the disbelievers in national customs is totally prohibited. For example, to partake in St.Valentines day.
- 3) To make use of permissible (mubah) items and to do permissible deeds will not fall under the category of resemblance (tashabbuh). For example to use a watch, transport, weapons etc. This will be permissible.
- 4) To resemble the sinful believers or the innovators amongst them is also disliked. To wear or act like the sinful will fall under this category and will be disliked (makruh). [\[vii\]](#)

The principle to detect resemblance is: if you look at something and diverts your mind to another religion or tribe, then by doing that will bear the laws of resemblance (tashabbuh). [\[viii\]](#)

Purchasing and eating a cross bun will also be prohibited due to assisting in sin. One who buys and consumes it is promoting the ideology of Easter. Hence, it will be prohibited for promoting un-Islamic values and ideologies. [\[ix\]](#)

In conclusion, it is impermissible to buy and eat hot cross buns, as there is resemblance with the disbelievers and it promotes their false ideology and views. There are many halaal foods available in the market, some of which are tastier than the hot cross bun.

And Allah Ta'ala Knows Best

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[i] See Wikipedia entry ‘Hot cross buns’

[ii] (ہماری کتاب 130 10 بابوں میں سے) میں نے دیکھا ہے

[iii] See ‘The history of the hot cross bun’ at historicalfoods.com

[iv] ہماری کتاب میں ہے کہ ہماری کتابوں میں سے (11 بابوں میں سے) میں نے دیکھا ہے

[v] Sunan Abi Dawud 6/144 Dar ar-risaalah

ہماری کتاب میں ہے کہ ہماری کتابوں میں سے (11 بابوں میں سے) میں نے دیکھا ہے

[vii] Tuhfatul Ulama 2/127-129 and Fatawa al-Mahmudiyyah 19/553

[viii] Tuhfatul Ulama 2/128

[ix] Fatawa al-Mahmudiyyah 18/35