

THE PROPHETIC TRADITION AND NUTRITION: ISSUES OF MIXING RAISINS AND DATES

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Abstract

Raisins and dates are among the fruits mentioned in the *Quran* and the Prophetic Tradition that are beneficial to man. From the perspective of nutrition, both fruits i.e. raisins and dates contain vitamins and minerals as well as other nutrients in terms of nutritional content. Notwithstanding the *Quranic* perspective, the Prophetic Tradition highlights interesting issues on consuming raisins and dates mixed together in a drink. The preventive stance of the Prophet regarding the issue of mixing raisins and dates in a drink reflects the legal opinion of Muslim jurists. In this regard, the high level of sugar content in both raisins and dates particularly in the form of mixing drink indicates the harmful affect to human body. Therefore, this article aims to examine the issues of mixing raisins and dates from the perspective of Prophetic Tradition. Nutritional content of both fruits, i.e. raisins and dates, is also examined in correlation to the preventive stance of the Prophet pertaining to the issues of mixing raisins and dates in a drink. The qualitative method of the Prophetic Tradition's references as well as nutritional content of raisins and dates was applied in this study. Based on reliable facts of the study, it is proposed that the preventive stance to avoid consuming raisins and dates mixed together in a drink is an important step to be taken to maintain the health of human body.

Keywords: Dates, raisins, nutrition, Prophetic Tradition, health.



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Introduction

From the Islamic perspective, dates are mentioned 20 times in the *Quran* using several terms such as *nakhil*, *al-nakhl*, *rutob* and *nakhlah*, while grapes are mentioned 11 times in the *Quran* using terms such as *a'nab* and *al-a'nab*. These fruits are particularly mentioned in the *Quran* as the best food for human. As stated in Surah al-An'am verse 141: "*It is He Who produceth gardens, with trellises and without, and dates, and tilth with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in variety): eat of their fruit in their season, but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess: for Allah loveth not the wasters.*" For scholars of *Quranic* exegesis, this verse indicates the benefit of fruits as the best food and its prosperity of life to humankind. Regarding dates and grapes or raisins, the Prophet prohibited the mixing of raisins and dates and mixing of *busr* (type of dates) and *rutob* (fresh dates) particularly in the form of drink.¹

In terms of nutritional fact, raisins and dates are plants that have high sugar content and this would be harmful to the human body if the consumption of both fruits is taken together in the form of a mixed drink. In this context, the preventive stance of the Prophet and the nutritional fact of raisins and dates on mixed drink are therefore not only a dietary issue but also a religious issue. For this reason, this study aims to examine the issues on

¹ Muhammad b. Isma'il Abu Abd Allah al-Bukhari. *The Translation of The Sahih Bukhary, Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhary, Arabic-English*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Chicago: Kazi Publication, 1979).

mixing dates and raisins on both perspectives i.e. Prophetic Tradition and Nutrition. The authentic texts of the Prophet as well as the views of Muslim jurists regarding the mixed drink of dates and raisins are examined in correlation with the nutritional facts of both fruits. Prior to the academic discussion on this topic, it is significant to reveal the fact of date and raisin from the botanical perspective.

Date palm is a plant belonging to the genus *Phoenix*. The botanical name for the dates (*Phoenix dactylifera*) was derived from the Phoenician word “phoenix,” which means trees, and “*dactylifera*” comes from the Greek word “*daktulos*” which means the radius, which is reflective of the fruit. The Arabic word “*nakhl*” refers to date-palm tree and the word “*tamr*” refers to its fruit. Dates undergo four stages of maturity termed as *kimri* (*zahw* in some Arab countries), *khalal* (*busr* in some Arab countries), *rutob* (fresh dates) and *tamr* (dried dates). At the *rutob* stage, dates start to soften and begin to lose water before it reaches the fourth stage known as *tamr*. At the *tamr* stage, dates become dry and quite firm.² Raisins are made from dehydrated grapes either through a natural drying process by sun-drying or via a mechanical process by oven-drying. Raisins are dried grape fruits of *Vitis vinifera*. Grapes are Mediterranean in origin. The genus *Vitis* is distributed mainly in East Asia, Europe, Middle East and North America. 90% of the world’s grape production is from the species *Vitis vinifera*. Raisins are among the fruits that yield the highest phenolic compounds.³

In terms of business and commercialization, many manufacturers have produced health food products inspired from plants mentioned in the *Quran* and *Ahadith*, hence promoting Sunnah Food (food of the prophet). Most of these products are mixtures of extractions of plants mentioned in the *Quran* and *Ahadith* such as grapes or raisins (*Vitis vinifera*), dates (*Phoenix dactylifera*), olives (*Olea europaea*), pomegranates (*Punica granatum*), figs (*Ficus carica*), and blackseed (*Nigella sativa*). However, there were doubts about the law of mixing raisins and dates in drinks according to the Hadith narrated by Jabir that the Prophet prohibited the mixing of raisins and dates and mixing of *busr* (*khalal* stages) and *rutob*.⁴ Therefore, the discussion of the findings on this topic is based on the applied qualitative methodology of study.

² Shahib dan Marshall, “The fruits of the datepalm: Its possible use as the best food for the future?” *Taylor and Francis Health Science*. 54 (2003): 247-259.

³ Zao B. and Hall A.C., “Composition and antioxidant activity of raisin extracts obtained from various solvents,” *Food Chemistry*, 108 (2008): 511–518.

⁴ Al-Bukhari. *Sahih Bukhary*.

Methodology

This study applied the qualitative method in finding the result. To begin with, the study examined ten authentic texts of the Prophetic Tradition regarding the significance of raisins and dates for human dietary. In order to focus on the main topic, the study was conducted by reviewing the authentic texts of Prophetic Tradition regarding the prohibition of mixing dates and raisins in drinks.

Comprehensive and detailed elaboration were analyzed from two books of *Ahadith's* elaboration, i.e; *Fath al-Bari* written by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani and *Sharh Imam al-Nawawi* written by Imam al-Nawawi. In correlation to the nutritional perspective, the research examined the USDA Nutrient Database regarding the nutritional content of raisins and dates. The elements of nutritional contents of raisins and dates are examined in connection with the consensus of Muslim jurists regarding the prohibition of mixing dates and raisins in drinks that derives from the text of Prophetic Tradition.

Result and Discussion

From the perspective of the Prophetic Tradition, there are ten authentic texts of the Prophet regarding the consumption of dates as a main study on this topic. The study reveals that dates and raisins are classified as a main food of fruits chosen by the Prophet on a daily basis.

This fact is derived from the texts of the Prophet as follows:

1. A'isyah said, "The Prophet died when we were satisfied with two things, namely dates and water."⁵ (Book of food, *Sahih Bukhari*, 2000).
2. Anas Ibn Malik narrated, "During the wedding ceremony of Prophet and Safiya, he invited Muslims to this occasion and asked his people to lay the mat and served dates, cheese and ghee."⁶

⁵ Al-Bukhari. *Sahih Bukhary*.

⁶ Al-Bukhari. *Sahih Bukhary*.

3. Abu Huraira narrated, "One day the Prophet divided the dates into portions to give to his friends. He gave each one, seven dates and one was damaged. None of these dates is more amazing to me compared with the damaged date. It hardened in my chew."⁷
4. Anas Ibn Malik said, "Surely the Prophet will not go to Eid prayer until he ate some dates."⁸
5. Ibn 'Amir narrated, "The Prophet said, whoever takes seven *'ajwah* dates every morning, poison and magic will not hurt them."⁹
6. Ja'afar ibn Abi Talib narrated, "I saw the Prophet eating fresh dates with cucumber."¹⁰
7. Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet said, "Dates are blessings of *sahur*."¹¹
8. A'isyah narrated that the Prophet said, "Members of a household will be hungry if there are no dates in the house."¹²
9. Anas ibn Malik said that the Prophet broke his fast with *rutob* before prayers, if there is no *rutob*, he will take dates, if there is no date, he will drink a sip of water."¹³
10. Dailami said: "We went to the Prophet and we said, 'O Messenger of Allah, you know us, from where we are and where we say to Allah and His Messenger.' We said, 'O Messenger of Allah, surely with us are grapes, what can we do with it?' The Prophet said, 'Make it into raisins.' We asked, 'What can we do with raisin?' The Prophet said, 'Soak it during lunch break and drink it at dinner time, soak it during dinner and drink it at lunch time (next day).'¹⁴

⁷ Al-Bukhari. *Sahih Bukhary*.

⁸ Al-Bukhari. *Sahih Bukhary*.

⁹ Al-Bukhari. *Sahih Bukhary*.

¹⁰ Al-Bukhari. *Sahih Bukhary*.

¹¹ Sulayman bin al-Ash'ath Abi Dawud al-Sajastani. *Sunan Abu Dawud in Mawsu'ah al-Hadith al-Sharif al-Kutub al-Sittah* (Riyadh : Dar al-Salam li al-Nasr wa al-Tauzi', 2000).

¹² Abi Dawud al-Sajastani. *Sunan Abu Dawud*.

¹³ Abi Dawud al-Sajastani. *Sunan Abu Dawud*.

¹⁴ Abi Dawud al-Sajastani. *Sunan Abu Dawud*.

The above texts of the Prophet clearly indicate the permissible way to consume the dates and raisins as a regular source of food from fruits. Nevertheless, there are three texts of the Prophet that clearly prohibited the mixed drinks of raisins and dates as follows:

1. Jabir said that the Prophet prohibited raisins and dates, and about *busr* (*khalal* stages) and *rutob*.¹⁵
2. Jabir ibn Abdillah al-Ansariyy said that the Prophet forbids making *nabiz* from mixing dates and raisins and *busr* and *rutob*.¹⁶
3. Abu Sa'id al-Khudriy narrates that the Messenger said, "Those who make *nabiz*, then make the drink using raisins only or dates only or *busr* only."¹⁷

The above three texts of the Prophet regarding the prohibition of mixed drinks of raisins and dates reflect the views of Muslim jurists particularly the view of Imam Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani as well as Imam Nawawi. For Imam Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, this prohibition is not due to intoxication, but this prohibition is generally because of the act of mixing the two fruits. His opinion on this matter is referred to Ibn Bathal's view.

In addition, Ibn Munir claims that this prohibition is either because this mixture will speed up the production of alcohol or this action will lead to wastage. For Imam Nawawi, it is the consensus of the jurists that these restrictions are classified as abominable for prevention (*makruh tanzih*) and legal if it is not intoxicating.

However, Imam Maliki and other scholars who were his followers, believed this restriction is considered as prohibited (*haram*). The opposite opinion made by Imam Abu Hanifa and Abu Yusuf who claim that this mixture is obligatory but no reason is given on their view.

Based on the above discussion, there are two conclusions that can be made. Firstly, this prohibition is due to the prevention of making intoxicant drinks from a mixture of raisins and dates. Secondly, this prohibition is because a mixture of raisins and dates will lead to wastage. Therefore, the review from nutritional perspective will be based on these two reasons.

¹⁵ Al-Bukhari. *Sahih Bukhary*.

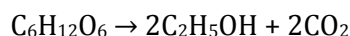
¹⁶ Muslim bin Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, *Sahih Muslim in Mawsu'ah al-Hadith al-Sharif al-Kutub al-Sittah* (Riyadh: Dar al-Salam li al-Nasr wa al-Tauzi', 2000).

¹⁷ Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*.

Mixture of Raisins and Dates: Intoxicating?

Raisins and dates are plants that have high sugar content. This will speed up the fermentation process of the drink. Typically, the manufacture of alcoholic beverages use yeast as enhancer to convert sugar to ethanol. A long time is taken to process alcoholic drinks in order to get the highest quality. The process of making alcoholic drinks is as follows:

According to the *Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*, liquor or wine is generally made from any fruit juices which go through the fermentation process.¹⁸ The process of wine making starts from the time of selecting the grapes or other fruits till to the bottling stage. The first stage is primary fermentation where yeast is added to the fruit juice. Primary fermentation takes one to two weeks. During this stage, the yeast will convert the sugar derived from the fruit juice to ethanol and carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is then released into the air. The chemical equation of fermentation process is as follows:



The second stage is secondary fermentation which takes three to six months. During secondary fermentation, the wine is placed in airtight containers to avoid oxidation. Protein from grapes or other fruits are separated, while the remaining yeast and small particles from grapes or fruits will be processed. Potassium bitartrate precipitates, and the process will be improved with cold stabilization to prevent the formation of tartrate crystals after bottling. This process will produce a crystal clear wine. The third stage is the fermentation malolactic. This fermentation occurs when lactic acid bacteria convert the malic acid into lactic acid. This fermentation will give a good taste to the wine. The next stage in the process of making wine includes laboratory tests, refining process, filtration and preservation.

From the explanation above, the fermentation process used in the manufacture of wine is different from the fermentation process that would occur if raisins and dates are mixed in a drink. However, this does not mean that the production of alcohol will not occur. As raisins and dates are fruits that contain high carbohydrate content, it

¹⁸ Edward J. W., "Wine," *Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*, 19 (New York: Mc-Graw Hill, 2007), 589.

allows the fermentation process to occur naturally. Fermentation process of alcohol takes three to four weeks. Thus, fruit juices which are not soaked within three to four weeks are free from elements that can be intoxicating.

Mixture of Raisins and Dates: Wastage?

The scholars of Prophetic Tradition also describe another relevant reason for prohibiting the mixture of raisins and dates as it leads to wastage. To review from the nutritional aspect, the nutritional facts of both fruits are as follows:

**Table 1: The nutrient content of 100gram raisins and dates.
(USDA Nutrient Database year 2010)**

Nutrien	Dates	Raisins
Water (g)	22.50	16.57
Energy (KJ)	1151	1238
Carbohydrate (g)	73.51	78.47
Protein(g)	1.97	2.52
Fiber(g)	7.5	6.8
Fat(g)	0.45	0.54
Vitamin A(IU)	50	0.0
Vitamin B6(mg)	0.192	0.188
Vitamin C(mg)	0.0	5.4
Vitamin D(mcg)	0.0	0.0
Vitamin E(mg)	0.100	0.0
Folate(mcg)	13	3
Potassium(mg)	652	825
Magnesium(mg)	35	30
Zinc(mg)	0.29	0.010
Copper(mg)	0.288	0.017
Calcium(mg)	32	28
Manganase(mg)	0.298	0.267
Selenium(mcg)	1.9	0.6

From Table 1, it can be concluded that the nutritional content of raisins and dates are almost the same except for some vitamins and minerals. Hence, the idea of

wastage by Muslim jurists may be due to the nutritional content of both fruits which are almost the same. Man can acquire the same benefits of both fruits and this means that people can choose either one of these fruits. Among other possibilities could be as follows.

Excessive Intake of Antioxidants

Raisins and dates have high antioxidant properties. Raisins contain phenolic compound,¹⁹ while dates have phenolic compounds.²⁰ It also contains flavonoid and procyanidin compounds.²¹ Antioxidants are agents that help maintain the cells which were exposed to oxidation caused by free radicals. Proper antioxidant intake is to follow the oxidation status. Antioxidants can be a barrier to cancer but can also cause cancer. Antioxidants can reduce the rate of Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) for individuals who generate excessive ROS and protect them from cancer, cardiovascular disease, cataracts and other diseases caused by ROS. Excessive intake of antioxidants for cancer patients may block therapeutic activity of "anticancer drugs"²² Thus, it is harmful for the patient. Excessive antioxidant action may adversely affect key physiological process.²³

Excessive Carbohydrate Intake

Raisins are considered to be one of the richest sources of sugar.²⁴ Even though glucose is the most common source of energy available to cells, it is essential only in a few organs: the brain, the kidney (medulla) and the red blood cells. The adult brains require 140g

¹⁹ Williamson, G. and Carughi, A., "Polyphenol content and health benefit," *Nutrition Research*, 30(8) (2010): 511-519.

²⁰ Biglari, F., Abbas F.M. and Azhar M.E., "Antioxidant activity and phenolic content of various date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*) fruits from Iran," *Food Chemistry*, (2008): 1636-1641. See also Hasan, S. N., Amom, Z. H., Norhafizah, M., Norhaizan M. E. and Azrina, A., "Nutritional composition and in vitro evaluation of the antioxidant properties of various dates extracts (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.) from Libya," *Asian Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 2(4) (2008): 208-214.

²¹ Hong, J. Y., Tomas-Barberan, F. A., Adel A. K. and Mitchell A. E., *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, 54 (2006): 2405-2411.

²² Karakaya S., El S.N., and Tas A.A., "Antioxidant activity of some foods containing phenolic compounds," *International Journal of Food Science Nutrition*, 52 (2001): 501-508.

²³ Herbert. V., "The antioxidant supplement myth," *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (1994).

²⁴ Herzallah M. S., "Effect of dried raisin and apricots extract on the growth of Bifidobacteria in cows and goats milk," *Pakistan Journal of Nutrition*, 4 (2005): 170-174.

glucose/day and the red blood cells about 40g/day. The most widely quoted harmful effects of high carbohydrate diets is dental caries. Individual carbohydrate rich foods have different cariogenic potential. Sucrose, glucose and fructose are amongst the most cariogenic, but starch is also fermentable by dental plaque bacteria. The potential to cause caries is greatly influenced by the mode and frequency of intake.²⁵ A study entitled "Caries, Oral hygiene status and dates consumption among Saudi Female University Student" found that only a small percentage of the students had good oral hygiene and eight out of every ten students were eating dates daily.²⁶ Other diseases that are linked with excessive intake of carbohydrate are: cardiovascular diseases, ulcer, constipation, appendicitis, obesity, varicose vein, colorectal cancer and diabetes mellitus.²⁷ According to Diabetes Mellitus Information web site, it states that for patients with diabetes mellitus, fruits such as grapes need to be avoided because of their high sugar content. In addition, dates are not good for patients with diabetes mellitus because of the high calorie content.

Conclusion

Islam emphasizes the concept of moderation in all aspects of life. Synergy of raisins and dates were found to have excessive elements, for examples, excessive antioxidant content and excessive sugar. Benefits of raisins and dates would be obtained if consumed separately due to their similar nutritional values. As already suggested by the Prophet, "Those who take soaked drink, then drink raisins only or dates only." From the research conducted, it can be concluded that mixing raisins and dates is not beneficial to human's health.

²⁵ Miller J. B., "Carbohydrates in Essentials of human nutrition," in ed. Jim Mann & A. Stewart Truswell (Oxford University Press: New York, 2001).

²⁶ Noura A. Al Essa, Manal A. Al Mutairi, Hadeel M, Al Ohali, Ahmed El Hejazi and Arham Chohan, "Caries, Oral hygiene status and dates consumption among Saudi Female University Student," Retrieved from <http://repository.ksu.edu.sa/jspui/handle/123456789/7935>.

²⁷ M. Muzaffar Ali Khan Khattak, "Physiological effects of dietary complex carbohydrate and its metabolites role in certain diseases," *Pakistan Journal of Nutrition*, 1 (2002): 161-168.

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