

Dates in the Qur'an and Sunnah:

Nutrition, Heritage Revival, and Contemporary Muslim Culture

Qazi Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany al-Waleed

Ph.D. (USA), NDI, Shahadat al Aalamiyah (Al Hawzah al 'ilmiyyah, Najaf, Iraq), M.A, LLM (Shariah)

Musheer: Fed. Shariat Court of Pakistan

Member: Ulama Council of Pakistan

Chairman: The Guardian Pakistan

The Writer is an Attorney at Law & a Religious Scholar

Website: www.durrenajaf.com

Academia: <https://durrenajaf.academia.edu/QaziBorhany>

Contact for spiritual help: najafspiritualcenter@gmail.com

Published: Mag Weekly, Pakistan.

Revised; 2026

Abstract: Dates (*Phoenix dactylifera*) occupy a central role in the dietary, medicinal, and spiritual traditions of Islam, as reflected in both the Qur'an and Sirah Literature. Rasulullah(S) frequently consumed dates alone and in combination with other foods such as cucumber, watermelon, muskmelon, bread, and butter, thereby illustrating principles of balanced nutrition through the pairing of foods with contrasting thermal effects. Dates are highlighted in over twenty references of Qur'an and numerous Nabavi Traditions, underscoring their nutritional completeness, medicinal benefits, and symbolic significance. Historical accounts document their role in hospitality, recovery from illness, and ritual practices such as the breaking of the fast during Ramadan. Furthermore, varieties of dates across the Arabian Peninsula-including Ajwah, Sukkari, and Anbara-demonstrate the botanical and cultural diversity of this fruit. Date syrup (dibs), with culinary and medicinal applications, further expands their utility. This paper synthesises classical sources of Islam with nutritional observations, advocating for the revival of Sunnah practices related to date consumption for both physical health and spiritual enrichment. Natural products are always beneficial for health and serve as effective remedies for several diseases. They are also relatively more accessible to underprivileged communities. Among these natural products, Tamar (date) holds a significant position due to its abundant health benefits. The Qur'an has discussed the medicinal importance of the date palm, and many Hadith narrations describe its virtues-findings that have been validated by modern scientific research. The objective of this paper is also to encourage people to use dates as a healthier alternative to chocolate, as long-term chocolate consumption can lead to various health issues. Millions of Muslims across the world compromise both their wealth and health through regular consumption of chocolates, while dates offer a more nutritious and Sunnah-aligned option.

Keywords: Dates; *Phoenix dactylifera*; Sirah literature; Sunnah diet; Qur'ani nutrition; Nabavi traditions; food pairing; Ramadan; Ajwah dates; date syrup; Islamic dietary practices.

1). Dates in the Sirah Literature:

Dates can be served with breakfast, lunch, dinner, coffee, and snacks, any day and every day. It is not only a fruit but also a complete food, a sweetener, a nutrient, serves as a healthy drink and a medicine. An Arabic phrase specifies the significant value of fresh date, which says:

"Awwaluha Lil Amir, Wa Aakhiruha Lil Hameer"

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 says:

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

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 while dates produces heat in the body. Combining the two, produces a mild effect as the hot elements of the dates are cancelled by the coolness of the cucumber.

From this Hadith, we gather that it is recommended that hot and cold foods should be eaten ideally together to cancel out their negative effects on the body. Cucumber is insipid and tasteless while Dates are sweet.

Rasulullah (S) ate watermelon with fresh Dates. He says:

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

Anas said:

"I saw Rasulullah (S) eat together musk-melon and Dates."

Some Ulama have referred to it as watermelon instead of musk-melon the reason being as mentioned in the first narration. In this narration, the cold effect is intended. The reason for eating Dates is also that it gives the melon a sweeter taste. It is not necessary that one's benefit is gauged everywhere. The eating of watermelon along with Dates has its own benefit and that is to create evenness in the effect of both so that it becomes mild.

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 Rasulullah (S). He relished cucumbers I had brought to him. At that time some jewellery had been sent to Rasulullah (S) from Bahrain. He took a handful from it and gave it to me."

A Hadith says: Rasulullah (S) ate cucumber with salt. It is possible that he at times ate cucumber with salt and at times with Dates. One of the wives of Rasulullah(S) mentioned that:

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

When one of the Ans'ar saw Rasulullah (S) and his two Ash'ab, he delightfully exclaimed:

Al Hamdulillah! No one has more honorable guests today than me.

He then went out and brought a bunch of ripe, dry and fresh dates to offer them. He then took hold of his long knife (used for slaughtering a goat or sheep).

Rasulullah (S) said to him:

"Beware of killing a milking animal."

He slaughtered a sheep for them which they ate along with the dates. When they had taken their fill and had been fully satisfied, Rasulullah (S.) says:

"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."

Umm al-Manzar said:

Rasulullah (S) visited her house accompanied by Ali (as) who was recovering from an illness. He (S) got up and began to eat from the food. Ali (as) also got up to eat, but was stopped by Rasulullah (S) who instructed Ali (as): "Stop Ali! You are recovering. You recently recovered from illness, you are weak hence don't eat more. Therefore, Umm al-Manzar prepared a dish from barley and beetroot. Then, Rasulullah(S) told Ali (as): Eat this, it is better for you."

(Tirmidhi)

One of the wives of Rasulullah (S) relayed:

"My mother intended to make me mature to send me to the (house of) Rasulullah (S), but nothing came of it till she gave me cucumber with fresh Dates to eat. Then I became chunky and curvy".

Rasulullah (S) said:

"A family which has Dates in their house; will not be hungry."

The people who reaped their new crop of Dates used to come and present it to Rasulullah (S).

He then recited the following Dua:

O Allah! Bless us in our fruits. Bless us in our city. Bless us in our Saa, and bless us in our Mudd (two measures used in Madinah to calculate Dates). O Allah! Verily Ibrahim (as) is Your servant, friend, and Nabi.

2). Delicious Food of the Qur'an:

The value of Dates is provided 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."

Abu Buradah reported from Abu Musa:

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 baby's buccal cavity with it. It is our firm and staunch belief that further research will open a new vistas of understanding for those who still doubt the full Hikmah of the Talim of the Qur'an and Sunnah. For those who doubt, 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 a witness over all?"

Al Qur'an, Surah Fusilat, Ayah 41-53

Rasulullah (S) used to say:

"Ift'ar (break) your Sawm (fast) by eating Dates as it is purifying"

Another Hadith says:

"The date that is from high (branches) is a cure."

During the month of Ramadan, Sufreh or Dastar Khaw'an of the Muslim world is decorated with varieties of Dates. It is the energetic food which addresses many deficiencies. Rasulullah (S) instructed emphatically:

"If anyone 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."

Rasulullah (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, as mentioned in some scriptures. Dates contain sugar, fat, and proteins, as well as essential vitamins. The attachment of the Muslims with Dates is due to the recommendation by the Qur'an and the instruction of Saheb al-Qur'an.

As Dates move faster to the liver and are digested quickly, particularly if they are moist, the liver absorbs its contents more readily and hastens their distribution to the rest of the body, which are in need of energy. Without any doubt, Dates are the perfect food for Ift'ar, as they quickly supply the body with the energy it was deficient of. Dates are also rich in natural fibres and eating them helps to fight many of the ailments with which we suffer commonly. 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 pulp. Rasulullah (S) used to eat all varieties of Dates but he had a particular liking for Ajw'ah. Many who do Ift'ar with Dates afterward don't feel much desire for more food. It seems that consuming Dates after Sawm helps one to avoid overeating. Rasulullah (S) would sometimes combine Dates with bread. At other times he mixed ripe Dates with cucumbers or mixed the Dates with butter.

There are approximately five hundred and fifty two (552) varieties of Dates. The best Dates are scarce, one of which are the orange-brown Dates which 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.

3). A few varieties of Dates:

- i). Nubut Saiyf, is a long date, shaped like a sword (Sayf), from the Riyadh region on the Najd plateau in central Arabia.*
- ii). Sukkari means "sweet one," from the Qasim region north of Riyadh.*
- iii). Anbar or Anbara Dates are expensive, and it is from the Madinah region.*
- iv). Khlas (quintessence), of Al Hasa is well known.*
- v). Khalal, Busr and Saraban are different varieties, from different parts of the Arabia.*
- vi). The most popular Dates of Hijaz include Khunaizi, Bukayyirah, Gharr, Shaishi and Ruzai, Sufri, Barhi, Sullaj and Khudhairi.*
- vii). Anbara, Ajwah, Rothanah, Baidh, Rabiha, Barhi, Hilwah, Hulayyah, Safawi, Shalabi, Khlas are popular in Madinah and natives consider them as "the perfection of the Date."*

4). Dates Syrup:

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 compressed to get the syrup. 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 the making or as a replacement for sweets. Dibs also serves 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 unique flavour.

These recommendations to consuming Dates as illustrated by Rasulullah (S) would encourage Muslims to adopt the Sunnah of Date consumption in order to fulfil the spiritual and nutritional needs and health of the body.

Conclusion:

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that dates occupy a distinctive place in the Islamic moral imagination: they are simultaneously sustenance, symbol, and Sunnah. Nabavi Sirah and Hadith Literature portray dates not as an occasional delicacy but as an everyday, versatile food-served across meals and moments-valued for nourishment, sweetness, and therapeutic benefit. The Nabavi practice of pairing dates with foods of contrasting qualities (such as cucumber, melon, and watermelon) illustrates a broader ethic of balance and moderation in diet: foods are not consumed merely for taste, but with a view to harmonising effects on the body and fostering well-being. The narrations also disclose a social dimension-hospitality, gratitude, and accountability-where even simple provisions like dates are framed as Naimah (bounty) for which one remains answerable. Qurani reference further elevates the date palm as a sign of divine care and provision, most memorably in the narrative of Maryam, where fresh ripe dates are presented as comfort and nourishment. The Sunnah practice of breaking the Sawm with dates, and the emphasis on dates as a household safeguard against hunger, positions them as both a spiritual and physiological restorative-quickly replenishing energy, aiding digestion, and curbing excess after fasting. In this way, dates emerge as an exemplary "Nabavi food": simple, accessible, and profoundly integrated into Ibadah, daily routine, and communal life.

Finally, the survey of varieties and derivative products such as dibs (date syrup) highlights the cultural heritage embedded in date cultivation and consumption across Muslim societies. The breadth of varieties, regional preferences, and culinary applications reflects a living tradition rather than a static relic. Taken together, the scriptural and Nabavi emphasis on dates offers contemporary Muslims a practical pathway to revive a Sunnah that is at once spiritually meaningful, nutritionally beneficial, and culturally unifying-linking everyday dietary habits with gratitude, moderation, and continuity with the Nabavi way of life.

Note: Effort has been made to trace all the copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked, I will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity. This document may be used, only with this copyright notice included. Permission is granted to circulate among private individuals and groups, to post on internet forums, and include in not-for-profit publications subject to the following conditions: (1) Material used must be produced faithfully in full, without alteration or omission; (2) The author's subject title must remain unchanged, in whole or in part; (3) Material must be attributed to the author. Contact the author for all other rights, which are reserved. Copyright © 2026 Qazi Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany al-Waleed