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I'm a WMD, eat me: Food and drink

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4

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It's the middle of Ramadan in the Middle East and everyone is in holiday mode. The nights are balmy and each evening, after a long, sleepy day of fasting, the streets are packed with throngs of people going to concerts, walking along the corniche or visiting friends. Ramadan is not just a time for socialising: just like Christmas it is also a time for overeating, and in the al-Sahel wholesale souk on the northern edge of Cairo, huge sacks of fruit are arriving on lorries from upper Egypt, destined for the Ramadan dinner table.

There is a tradition in the Middle East that the dates that come to market during Ramadan are given topical names as a marketing ploy. The fatter and sweeter the date, the more valuable it is - and the more prestigious the name attached. Usually these names reflect current events. Last year the big sellers were Saddam Hussein dates, seconded only by Jacques Chirac dates, with George Bush dates - small, shrivelled and tasteless - coming in last. This year Bush dates still feature, but Jacques Chirac dates have all but disappeared, perhaps because of the introduction of the headscarf ban. So have Weapons of Mass Destruction dates.

The big sellers this year are Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein dates - both varieties are big, fat, juicy and red. Each check in at an extravagant 30 Egyptian pounds a kilo (about pounds 2.60). Abu Musab Zarqawi dates are also a big hit, but cost a fraction less at about pounds 2.20. Nancy Ajram dates, a busty Lebanese pop singer and a household name in the Arab world, also features large. "I want a kilo of Nancy Ajram," always gets a giggle in the souk.

But it's not all terrorists and pop stars. Bush and Ariel Sharon dates are still the cheapest, at two Egyptian pounds per kilo - slightly less than 20p. "They're cheap like George Bush," says the shopkeeper. Still, he concedes, they were the first to sell out.

There are also some new contenders in this Egyptian version of a Mori poll. Viagra dates come in at a more sensibly priced 80p a kilo - about the same price as Intifada dates or John Kerry dates. "We call them John Kerry dates because they look like John Kerry," says the shopkeeper, holding one up for me to inspect. "They are long and thin like his chin." There was a certain resemblance, I agree. "What do you call the fruit in England?" he asks. "Granny Smith," I replied. "Is she in the government?" Bearing in mind the Arab view of the British government, she might as well be. Hugh Miles

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