

Solar Cooking Expo at Northern Virginia Mosque

By Pat McArdle

Tags: solar cooking, solar cooker, solar cook, Muslim, mosque, Dar al Noor Mosque, Pakistan, Morocco, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Egypt, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Touloum, Iridimi, Solar Cookers International, Farishta, McArdle, Solar Household Energy, energy, renewable, Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, fuel efficient stove

Solar cooking in Islamic countries is on the rise, but its wide-spread acceptance as a significant way to reduce the damage caused by smoky cooking fires will need greater support from the international development community. [Solar Cookers International](#) (SCI) board member Patricia McArdle and Afzal Syed of the [Dar al Noor Mosque](#) congregation contributed to this goal by hosting a well-attended solar cooking demonstration at Syed's mosque in Manassas, Virginia on Saturday July 9. Louise Meyer, co-founder of [Solar Household Energy](#), and two of the organization's volunteers from Washington DC also participated in this event.

A [popular DC radio show interview](#) with McArdle about her novel [Farishta](#) two days before the event drew large crowds from around the northern Virginia/DC metro region. Visitors sampled a variety of traditional and modern foods (lentils, rice, eggs, spiced potatoes, mixed vegetables, dahl, popcorn, chai tea--and for dessert, chocolate, yellow, lemon and spice cakes) all of which were baked, boiled, fried and roasted in the many solar cooker models on display. McArdle also demonstrated a [StoveTec rocket stove](#) and a [retained heat cooking basket](#) in her [integrated cooking](#) display.

Members of the Dar al Noor Mosque community and other Muslim visitors told McArdle that solar cooking technology would be an extremely useful addition to the cooking devices currently used by people in their sun-drenched, fuel-starved home countries, including Pakistan, Morocco, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Egypt, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and by [Darfur refugees in Chad](#).

The event was initially proposed by Mr. Sayed, a member of the Dar al Noor community, who attended a January 2011 solar cooking demonstration at the UN in New York, organized by SCI board member AJ Lederman and hosted by SCI Executive Director AmyJo Mattheis. Soon after seeing that exhibit, Mr. Sayed traveled to his home country with several [Cookits](#), which he demonstrated to amazed friends and neighbors in Pakistan. Mr. Sayed and his family are convinced that the widespread introduction of solar cooking technology in Pakistan could dramatically reduce the quantities of wood, charcoal and LPG that are currently consumed at great expense and with serious environmental costs. The many visitors attending the Dar al Noor Mosque solar cooker exhibit agreed, as does McArdle, who has served for the past six months as a solar cooking expert on the [Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves](#) Fuel and Technology working group.



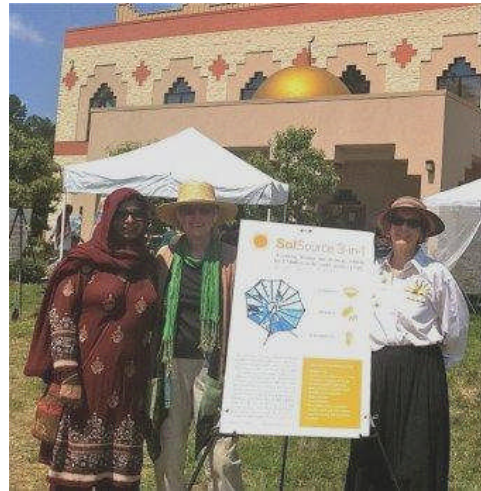
McArdle is continuing with her efforts to convince the [GACC](#) and the [U.S. Department of Energy](#) to give as much support to R&D for solar thermal cooking technology as they are currently devoting to the improvement of wood burning fuel efficient stoves (\$12.5 million).

Pat McArdle of Solar Cookers International and Louise Meyer of Solar Household Energy with members of the Dar al Noor Mosque congregation

Dar al Noor mosque leaders said they would like to host another solar cooking demonstration next year. Under clear blue skies and with large enthusiastic crowds attending the event, Mr. Sayed and the solar cooking team were convinced that they had accomplished their goal of spreading the word about solar cooking to a whole new audience.



Sampling solar cooked lentils, rice, potatoes, eggs, mixed vegetables, dahl, popcorn, tea, and for dessert, chocolate, yellow, lemon and spice cakes at the Dar al Noor Mosque.



Pat McArdle, Louise Meyer and Mrs. Sayed with One Earth Design's Sol Source poster, Dar al Noor Mosque, Manassas, Virginia



Pat McArdle, explaining the principles of solar thermal cooking technology to high school girls at Dar al Noor Mosque.