

## How to Host an Interfaith Iftar Party

Iftar is the meal eaten to break one's fast during the holy month of Ramadan. During this month, also the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, Muslims believe the first verses of the Qur'an (Sacred book of Islam) were revealed to Prophet Muhammad - Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH). In essence, from sunrise until sundown, Muslims around the world focus on practicing abstinence in its entirety, particularly by **refraining from eating and drinking** from sunset through sundown. The act of fasting during Ramadan is one of the [five pillars of Islam](#). Ramadan in 2016 is estimated to start on June 6<sup>th</sup> (or with the [sighting of the new moon](#)) and last through July 6<sup>th</sup> (or until the next sighting of the new moon). During the hours of fast, Muslims are encouraged to read the Quran, refrain from smoking, sex, ill-thinking and ill-doing. Want to know more? Read up [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

### Want to host an interfaith Iftar? Here are key points to know:

1. If you're not Muslim, it is best to work in close collaboration with a Muslim individual and/or community on planning an interfaith Iftar. There are a lot of things to take into consideration, as you'll see below!
2. Iftar (literally, break-fast) starts after the evening *Maghrib* prayer *adhan*, or call for prayer. The prayer time for Maghrib differs based on geographical location. Individuals can find prayer times based on their location on [Muslim Pro](#) or [Islamic Finder](#). You'll want to arrange someone to lead the call to prayer and to lead prayer (talk to your Muslim friends or contacts about who can do this!).
3. As the host, it is important to allow for your guests to make personal duas (prayers) while waiting to break their fast. It is believed that the minutes leading to Iftar is a special time in which duas will be accepted. Some guests may also need to perform their [wudu](#) (ablution) before the Maghrib prayer. So, do facilitate their need to perform this purification ritual by providing a clean space and clean water. (It would also be helpful to lay down a bathroom rug or mat by the sink to absorb water from those performing wudu.) A clean bathroom works for this!
4. It may be useful to print the dua below to have available for attendees. Non-Muslims will likely notice their Muslim counterparts murmuring it right before breaking their fast:  
*Allahumma laka sumtu wa `alaa rizqika aftartu* – O, God. I fasted for your sake and now I am breaking my fast with the food provided by you.
5. It is recommended to hasten to break one's fast, preferably with dates (the fruit!) and before the Maghrib prayer (**after the adhan**). Guests can also be presented with milk or water (preferably at room-temperature) in place of, or in addition to, dates. Keep large food platters away from eyesight as it may understandably distract those who fasted (they'll be hungry!). Other small finger-foods or appetizers may also be served with the initial iftar to supplement the dates. **Please note that absolutely no food or drink can be consumed before the adhan.**
6. During the prayer, make sure the prayer area is clean, and that there are clean prayer rugs/mats or similar. Be sure to lay them facing in the direction of the "[qibla](#)"- there are phone apps that can help to guide you in determining the exact angle.
7. Do present your guests with a full meal **after** the Maghreb prayer. There is [no one way](#) of breaking one's fast after the Maghreb prayer. In many cultures, Iftar consists of hot soup, sweet

treats, and savory meals. The idea is to start with some hot/warm food. Cold foods or drinks have to be heated by the body, requiring more energy from the body, when ingested and consequently exhausting the fasting body. You can ask people to bring food, potluck style, but make sure any meat/meat products are halal (and NO Pork products or alcohol)! **Note:** It may be some of your guests' first Iftar Dinner so do not forget to ask individuals to dress modestly but comfortably.

**8. Presentations and content considerations:** We recommend having any presentations or speakers *before* breaking fast, rather than *during* the meal, in part because you'll have more attention from the guests and also because people will likely want to use the meal time to talk and more casually enjoy one another's company. The meal time itself is also somewhat short (about an hour), because Muslim guests will be praying the evening prayer- 'isha prayer- in the later part of the evening (around 10 pm or so ET in June- you can find prayer times [here](#)), and they may want to get to a mosque for those prayers, since during Ramadan there are special [Taraweeh prayers](#) that follow 'isha prayers, and often go later into the night. So, you don't want to have too much programming during the dinner itself so that people have time to eat and leave for a mosque if they want to pray there. Additionally, if these events are to serve the purpose of letting people get to know each other, you'll need to leave ample time for that to happen!

**So, say you're hosting an Iftar on June 7, 2016. Here's what the timeline might look like:**

7:00- Guests begin to arrive- try to create a setting for people to spend this time in reflection and prayer if desired.

7:15- Welcoming remarks, guest speaker(s) or presentations-- you could allow a shorter time for this, depending how much "content" you're wanting to integrate into the event, but basically, you'll want to be sure to wrap up any presentations by the time of the call to prayer (which is right at sundown!) so that you don't delay people from breaking the fast and praying Maghrib prayer.

8:25- Call to prayer, duas, and Breaking Fast (dates & milk and or water)

8:35- Maghrib prayer

8:55- Eat, share stories, and have a great time together!

9:40- Guests head out (or stick around for 'isha prayer- the Muslim planning partners can determine what is best for this)

A few more helpful resources:

<http://productivemuslim.com/ramadan-series-how-to-organise-a-productive-iftar-party/>

<http://hotsweetspicyrecipes.com/iftar-party-planning/>

<http://detroitinterfaithcouncil.com/2013/07/02/what-is-ramadan-and-why-is-it-important-in-the-muslim-faith/>

<http://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/06/18/ramadan-begins>