



Nisa-Nashim

Jewish Muslim Women's Network

Nisa-Nashim: Celebrating Ramadan

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month on the Islamic calendar, and begins on the sighting of the new moon. Muslims believe that God first revealed verses of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad during Ramadan.

It is a time when Muslims focus intently on prayer, but also self-examination and charity. They observe an all day fast, beginning at sunrise each day and lasting until sunset, which they believe will purify the body and spirit and bring the faithful closer to God.

Hosting an Iftar

Iftars (literally 'break fast') — the meals eaten after sunset during Ramadan — feature special dishes and desserts — particular to the countries where the world's 1 billion Muslims live — and can last until the early hours.

Ramadan is a time of hospitality and sharing and it's customary for Muslims to invite extended family and friends to share the evening meal – and so this provides a good opportunity for Nisa-Nashim groups to meet and talk about Ramadan and the customs and meaning behind the festival.

Interfaith iftars have grown in popularity over the last few years; the [Big Iftar](#) initiative has encouraged British Muslims to open up Ramadan to a wider audience: in schools, in mosques, in homes and in the streets with the homeless.

We would encourage both our Muslim and Jewish sisters to host iftars for each other.

- Sunset is the time when the fast is broken with iftar. Check with Muslim guests before they arrive what time that will be and maybe invite people 45 minutes - 1 hour before that. Sunset times vary slightly in different parts of the country. Hosts should allow for their 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.



Nisa-Nashim

Jewish Muslim Women's Network

- Some guests may also need to perform their wudu (ablution) so that they can pray after they have broken their fast.
- Non-Muslims will likely notice their Muslim counterparts murmuring a short prayer 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.*
- It is customary to break one's fast with dates. Guests can also be presented with milk or water. Other small finger-foods, fruit or appetizers may also be served with the initial Iftar.
- Most people will want to pray after their fast has broken. This just needs to be a small, clean area and they will need to face South East. Phone apps and compasses are very useful nowadays if you don't know which way that is in your house. They will decide among themselves whether to pray in a group or individually. Most Muslims are very happy to be observed praying and will happily answer any questions after the prayer.
- Do present your guests with a full meal after the Maghreb prayer. There is no one set way of breaking one's fast. In many cultures, Iftar consists of hot soup, sweet treats, and savoury 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 can be harder on the fasting body. You can ask people to bring food, potluck style, but make sure any meat products are kosher/ halal (and NO alcohol!)
- 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 enjoy one another's company. The meal time itself is best kept relatively short due to the late time of sunset and people will want to get home for other prayers and to prepare for the long fast the following day.

Don't be afraid to ask any questions in preparation for the day or at the meal itself. Muslim guests will feel honoured that their Jewish sisters have invited them and hosted them for Ramadan and would be happy to help the evening run as smoothly as possible for everyone.