

FOOD & FASTING

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◆ During Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims fast from sunup to sundown. The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar calendar and thus the dates of Ramadan move backward by about 11 days each year. This greatly affects how people experience Ramadan from year to year and from place to place, because sunrise and sundown times are different based on the season and where you are on earth. For example, if Ramadan falls during the months of July and August, when it is summer for Muslims in New York, their fast will be longer than Muslims in the southern hemisphere, for whom it is winter.

Ramadan is a time of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. Muslims who fast don't eat or drink from sunrise to sunset. To break the fast each day, people eat different foods based on their cultures, traditions, and appetites. Muslims in Brooklyn reflect the diversity of Muslims around the world. Food at an **iftar** dinner, the sunset meal that follows a day of fasting, ranges from mac and cheese to rice and beans to fava beans and harira soup to pakoras and fruit chaat. Most Muslims will break their fast with dates and water, as was done 1,300 years ago in the Arabian Desert.

At the end of the 30 days, Muslims all over the world celebrate the holiday **Eid al-Fitr**. This celebration is marked by families getting together, wearing new clothes, and eating their favorite foods.

Muslims do not eat pork and many seek out halal meat. You may have heard of a halal cart or seen a halal butcher shop. Halal means permissible in Arabic. Halal meat is beef, chicken, lamb, or goat that has been slaughtered according to Islamic dietary laws. The prescribed methods of slaughter for halal meat are similar to those for kosher meat per the Jewish dietary laws. Many Muslims will not eat meat if it hasn't been labeled as halal, but others are not as strict. For this reason, some may not eat a hamburger from McDonald's or a burrito from Chipotle, while others won't object and will find meat acceptable as long as it's not pork.

IFTAR

The sunset meal on a day of fasting.

EID

A Muslim holiday. There are two eids in the Muslim calendar, Eid-ul-Fitr marks the end of the month of fasting in Ramadan. Eid-ul-Adha commemorates the sacrifice of Abraham.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Habiba Noor is a curriculum writer and part-time faculty at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. Her research and teaching interests are centered around public understanding of Islam in America. Habiba taught middle school at the New York City Museum School where she developed museum learning experiences at the American Museum of Natural History and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. She left New York to pursue a PhD in Media and Cultural Studies at the Institute of Education in London.