



Ramadan and The Great Get Together

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is a month in the Islamic calendar, when Muslims fast from dawn to sunset for thirty days. It is a month of spiritual reflection and personal development – donating time and money to charity is very much part of the month too.

Ramadan gives Muslims the perfect opportunity to reach out to neighbours and strengthen relationships. Eating together is one of the most natural and well established ways of developing deeper friendships and, in our experience, there is no better way of breaking barriers than by inviting people to share a meal.

Ramadan 2017 runs from May 27th – June 25th
(Days can vary by one day either side depending on sighting of the moon)

What is an Iftar?

Iftar is the special daily meal at the end of each day when fasting finishes. Each country and culture has its own special traditions during Ramadan and different foods are eaten around the world. Britain's varied and diverse Muslim communities very much reflect that.

What is The Big Iftar?

Baroness Warsi helped initiate and start 'The Big Iftar' with community groups during 2012 especially inspired by the Olympics because it was falling during the month of Ramadan. It was a way of encouraging Muslims to open up and introduce Ramadan and Iftar to people of all faiths and backgrounds and also a way to look after Muslim Olympians who were in Britain from all over the world.

Can anyone be involved?

Yes! Whether you are a Muslim, someone from another faith or of no faith you are welcome to participate. Whether you are an individual, an organisation, a youth group, a teacher or someone representing a place of worship – you can join in by either organising your own Big Iftar event or attending something organised by others.

Big Iftar events are community-led and enable people from diverse backgrounds to meet and enjoy traditional and delicious food in an atmosphere of friendship and hospitality.

Things to think about for an Iftar event

Food! Sometimes this will be donated by local businesses, sometimes people will be tasked with bringing it, sometimes people are asked to contribute a dish. Each venue will be different. Dates, fruit and water are standard at the breaking of the fast and a light meal after prayers. Although the fasts are long, people can't usually eat a lot straight away. Keep it light and healthy.

Timings

Sunset is the time Muslims will break their fast. In London, for example, that is around 21.20 on 17th/18th June. An arrival time of 20.30 onwards would work best to get people there on time and mingling before eating. "Speeches" are probably best avoided but a few notes of reflection usually go down well. Due to the late times people will usually want to eat and then leave quite quickly and many Muslims will want to leave straight after their meal for the Mosque for night prayers.

Venue

Can basically be anywhere! If in a Mosque people will be told beforehand about any things they need to be aware of such as, for example, shoes will need to be removed and some places may have a preference for head covering to be worn by women but that is discretionary. Open air Iftars and feeding the homeless have become more popular over the last few years. Iftars hosted in Synagogues and other places of worship and different community settings have been developing over the last couple of years and they can be considered and encouraged this year too.

Prayers

Most Muslims will want to pray as soon as they have eaten something. Please be aware that for people from the Shia community the timings are slightly later than for people from Sunni background. There will be a group prayer, which will take 5-10 minutes and just needs to be in a clean place with a person leading, the Muslims present will work this out amongst themselves. A sheet or clean mat on the floor works well. 'Prayer mats' are not necessary but attendees may bring their own which can be accommodated. Be aware that for various reasons some Muslims, especially women, may not pray in congregation at that time and that should be respected. Some older or people with mobility issues may need to sit on a chair at prayer time. Other attendees will always be welcome to watch. It can be outdoors or indoors and will be inclusive of men, women, and children, anyone who wants to pray. Most people eat something small to break their fast so they can make sure they pray and then eat the meal properly after prayers.

Invitees

A Big Iftar event is an ideal way to establish new relationships and to develop existing ones. Police and other service personnel like fire, ambulance and armed forces, local councillors, teachers, scouts and guides, members of faith communities, business people, sports and community groups, schools, further education establishments – people from all of these places would always be grateful for an invite. Local neighbours should always be a high priority at any Iftar event and we would encourage you to invite those who are vulnerable, homeless or lonely in your local area. They may not usually get invited to such events and it will be a great way to help them feel included and valued.

The Big Iftar and The Great Get Together

The Great Get Together Weekend is 16th-18th June in memory of the murder of Jo Cox MP on 16th June 2016. Her husband Brendan and friends want to remember Jo by communities coming together. It is appreciated and acknowledged that as TGGT falls during Ramadan, effort should be made to ensure Muslims feel part of the Weekend and we need to think of that in the broadest ways possible to ensure buy-in and participation. Muslims should be encouraged to attend daytime events in local areas but we are also encouraging Big Iftar events to be organised that weekend.

Publicity

You are welcome to use The Big Iftar logo and if your event is taking place on or around The Great Get Together weekend then we would encourage you to link to that as well. Make sure you tell the world about what you are doing. Local media love these kinds of stories and will jump at the chance to cover it with a write-up and photos. Organise your own publicity and materials and use the logo. Do share it with us so we can include it in the overall publicity of all the events happening around the UK. Remember to share the love on social media too; with so much negativity around, we all need to hear about positive stories that are working to bring communities together.

For help and advice please do get in touch: thebigiftar@gmail.com