

Steps to hosting an Iftar

Ramadan is the holiest month in the Muslim calendar. It is the month of fasting and the breaking of the fast, Iftar dinner, is an important ritual for Muslims at this time. As Muslims follow the lunar calendar, the month of Ramadan is sometimes 29 days, sometimes 30 days. At the end of this month, Muslims celebrate with a two-day festival, called Eid Al-Fitr the festival of breaking fast.

Partner with a Muslim organisation

You may like to partner with a Muslim community or organisation to host an Iftar Dinner during Ramadan. You can begin by contacting your local mosque or Islamic organisation. The significance of the Iftar meal for your Muslim partners should be honoured and understood.

Find a venue to host the meal

The Iftar dinner could take place inside a Uniting Church Hall or venue. It is a gesture of hospitality and welcome to invite people of Muslim faith into your 'home' or 'space'. It is also a significant gesture by our Muslim partners to partake in this important event with another faith community. Hospitality and inclusiveness are important themes of Ramadan and are essential to building interfaith friendship. The purpose is to experience a practice of one faith in another faith's space, which takes interfaith dialogue to the next level.

Invite guests

Try to have an equal number of guests invited from Muslim and Uniting Church communities. You may consider inviting people from other faith backgrounds or from the wider community who are interested in building bridges across faiths and cultures. This is an opportunity for conversation and social interaction and building bridges of friendship.

The Iftar dinner is also an opportunity to build genuine relationships at the grassroots level.

Organise catering

Organise this in liaison with a Muslim partner or contact to ensure the food is halal and meets dietary requirements. Also take note of any other food requirements of guests from other faiths, for example for Jewish guests, the food must be kosher. You may want to find a specialist caterer.

Event outline

The program for each event can be tailored to the local context and should be devised in consultation with Muslim partners. Key elements include:

Call to Prayer

Organised by Muslim partners, the call to prayer marks the “breaking of the fast”. Be aware the Call to Prayer must take place at a specific time, marking sunset. Clarify this with your Muslim guests well in advance and develop the program accordingly.

Allow time and space for Muslim guests to pray

Men and women pray in separate rooms. Allocate a room away from the main dining space, and speak with Muslim partners about their requirements, such as prayer mats. Make time for guests to pray before the program continues.

Welcome to Guests

Offered in turn by the Muslim partner and Uniting Church representative.

Meal

This is an important time to encourage conversation and sharing.

You might also consider:

- **Sharing on Ramadan** by Muslim partners, outlining the significance of Ramadan in the Islamic faith and how Muslims in Australia observe the holy month.
- **A recitation from the Qur'an.** One of your Muslim guests may be willing.
- **Have a guest speaker** invited to share on a particular theme or subject, or to tell some of their story.
- **Conversation.** Ensure there is enough time for people at the dinner to mix and meet and share stories.
- **Seating.** Table arrangements should be made so that there is a mixture of Muslim and Uniting Church guests seated together.
- **Exchange of gifts.** Small gifts might be given to people who have offered leadership in the evening and special guests of the program.

