

# Ramadan Mubarak

A quick guide to  
understanding  
Ramadan and  
Eid al-Fitr

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# What's Ramadan?

**Ramadan is a period of introspection, communal prayer (salat) in the mosque, and reading of the Qur'an (the Muslim holy book).**

For Muslims this month is an opportunity for self-reflection and a point in time to ask for their needs from God and to ask for forgiveness for any wrongs that may have been done.

Muslims believe Allah forgives the past sins of those who observe the holy month with fasting, prayer, and faithful intention. Muslims try to spend time with family and friends and help people in need during this time.

During Ramadan, Muslims all over the world refrain from eating and drinking for 29 to 30 days. This known as fasting and is observed from sunrise to sunset. Fasting (sawm) is one of the 5 pillars of

Islam, which form part of the basis of how Muslims live their lives.

For Muslims, Ramadan is the most significant time of the Islamic calendar. The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, which means that the beginning of each new month starts on the new moon.

Ramadan takes place in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar but because of the lunar cycle, the specific dates for Ramadan vary each year. As the Muslim calendar year is shorter than the Gregorian calendar year, Ramadan begins 10–12 days earlier each year, allowing it to fall in every season throughout a 33 year cycle.

Ramadan begins and ends with the appearance of the crescent moon.

# The spiritual significance of Ramadan

Ramadan remembers the month the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). The actual night that the Qur'an was revealed is known as the 'The night of Power' (Lailut ul-Qadr or Laylat al-Qadr).

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was especially chosen to tell others that there is only one God – Allah and how to worship him and how to treat all his creation. This was done by revealing the Qur'an to him.

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was in a cave high in the mountains in Mecca when he was visited by an Angel called Jibril.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) couldn't read (as was the case for most people at this time) so Muhammad (Peace be upon him) memorised the words.

These are the very first words that were given to Muhammad (Peace be upon him):

Read in the name of your Lord  
Who has created  
Created man from a tiny cell  
Read – for your Lord is the Most Generous  
One who has taught the use of the pen –  
Taught man what he did not know!

**96:1-5**

No one knows which particular night the Qur'an was first revealed, but it is said to be one of the last ten nights of Ramadan.



[Watch this short video to understand more about how the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad \(Peace be upon him\)](#)



# How is Ramadan celebrated?

Muslims carry out certain practices during Ramadan as a way of demonstrating self-control, gratitude and compassion for those less fortunate and to strengthen their bond with Allah. Ramadan is a period of introspection, communal prayer (salat) in the mosque, and reading of the Qur'an. In fact, many Muslims will attempt to read the whole of the Quran at least once during Ramadan.

This month is an opportunity for self-reflection and a point in time to ask for needs from God and to ask for forgiveness for any wrongs that may have been done.

There are a number of special practices during Ramadan.

## Fasting the whole month

Although Muslims fast during other times of the year, Ramadan is the only time when fasting (sawm), is obligatory during the entire month for every able Muslim. Fasting starts from dawn and ends at sunset. Muslims are not allowed to eat or drink (even water) during these daylight hours.

## If Someone Cannot Fast

Some people are unable to fast due to health reasons. In this case, they give

a charitable donation instead (known as Fidya), which is usually the cost of providing two meals per missed day of fasting to someone in need. If someone misses a fast due to pregnancy, illness, or menstruation, they are expected to make up those missed days later. They have until the start of the next Ramadan to do so.

## I'tikaf

I'tikaf refers to going into seclusion during the last ten nights of Ramadan, in order to seek Lailat ul Qadr. During this time, Muslims pray and read the Qur'an. Some people live in the mosque during this time for serious reflection and worship. Others spend a few hours at the mosque or home.

## Taraweeh (or tarawih) Prayers

These are long night prayers, which are not obligatory, but highly recommended. Mosques are filled with worshippers who go to attend these prayers, which usually last for one and a half to two hours. These prayers also give Muslims a chance to meet at the mosque every day, and so they also help to improve relationships in the Muslim community.

## **Zakat (Annual Charity – 2.5%)**

Zakat is a yearly charitable donation of 2.5% of a person's savings or assets. While it isn't only linked to Ramadan, many Muslims choose to give it during Ramadan because it's considered a particularly blessed and rewarding time for charity.

It can be given before or during Ramadan (not specifically at the end), and it helps those in need afford essentials during the month.

## **Fitran (Zakat al-Fitr)**

Fitran is a special charity given at the end of Ramadan, before the Eid prayer. It is obligatory for every Muslim who has enough resources to support themselves and their family.

This donation ensures that those in need can also celebrate Eid. It is specifically connected to Eid al-Fitr and marks the completion of fasting.

## **Laylatul Qadr (The Night of Power)**

Laylatul Qadr is one of the most important nights in Ramadan. It falls within the last ten nights of the month, on the odd-numbered nights — such as the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, or 29th night.

Many Muslims spend extra time in prayer and reflection on these nights, as it is believed that worship on this night carries special significance.



# What is Eid al-Fitr?

Eid – as it's commonly known – is one of the biggest celebrations in the Muslim calendar. It takes place at the end of Ramadan.

The name “Eid al-Fitr” translates as “the festival of the breaking of the fast”. Like the beginning of Ramadan, Eid begins with the first sighting of the new moon.

Many Muslims will attend Eid prayers at their mosque early in the morning and it's a tradition to wear new clothes and on the way to the mosque, to eat something sweet, such as a date, and recite a short prayer, called a takbeer. Before Eid prayers, every Muslim is obliged to make a donation to charity called Zakat al-Fitr to help feed the poor.

In many countries, Eid al-Fitr is a public holiday and many people enjoy large meals with friends and family. It's also common for elder believers to give money to children and younger members of the family.

If you want to wish someone well at Eid, the greeting is ‘Eid Mubarak’



You can watch this short video which shows how Eid al-Fitr is celebrated in the UK

# Eid al-Fitr food and recipes

The traditions of Eid al-Fitr can vary since Muslims come from many different countries and this is especially true when it comes to food.

However, some things are the same.

Whilst there is no set menu, dishes prepared are always rich and decadent. Savoury snacks will often include samosas, nunor bora (salty rice flour puffs), meat-filled pastries, kebabs and veggie pakoras or a chicken pakora or two.

And no Eid banquet is complete without a biryani or pilau of some sort. For many, akhni fulab (also known as akhni fulao) is a must and is a rice dish that is cooked with tender masala-cooked meat pieces. Something a little simpler like jeera rice, can be just as satisfying. Any rice dish can be served alongside a classic lamb and potato curry, beef bhuna or chicken korma.

If there's any space left, then you may consider some homemade gulab jamun, rasmalai, kheer or firni for afters. Sweet zarda and handmade biscuits like nankhatai are firm favourites, especially with a cup of tea. If however, you're not keen on Indian sweets then a fresh cream cake is perfectly acceptable too.

Who could say no to cake?



[Click here to watch this episode of BBC's Celebration Kitchen](#)

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