



Guide to a
Healthy
Ramadan

By: Nazima Qureshi, RD, MPH





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The purpose of this guide is to help you have a healthier and more energized Ramadan this year. Fasting during Ramadan is similar to intermittent fasting and actually has many health benefits such as:

- Weight loss
- Improved cardiovascular health, such as cholesterol levels
- Improved blood glucose levels
- Improved memory

However, in the past, after a month of fasting you may have not physically felt any benefits but rather felt tired and low in energy.

These negative effects aren't as much due to fasting but rather what you were eating during non-fasting hours.

Remember, what you eat during non-fasting hours plays a significant role in maximizing these health benefits and having a more energized and productive fast.

Use this guide to transform the way you fast!

A Healthier SUHOOR

As challenging as it can be to wake up in the middle of the night for suhoor, it is important to use this opportunity to nourish your body before starting your fast. Here are three tips to maximize the nutrient power for your suhoor:

1. Have protein to help you feel fuller throughout the day. Examples of protein sources include eggs, Greek yogurt, chicken, fish, or falafel (see recipe below)
2. Add colourful veggies so that you are getting a variety of micronutrients
3. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated throughout your fast

Veggie Loaded Falafel Wrap

(Makes: 1 wrap)

Ingredients:

- 1 whole grain tortilla
- 4 Mina Halal falafels, cooked according to instructions
- ½ tomato, sliced
- ½ cup salad greens of choice
- ¼ red onion
- ¼ cup cucumber, sliced

Homemade raita

- ¼ cup yogurt
- ¼ cup mint leaves, chopped
- ¼ onion, chopped
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- ¼ tsp salt

Directions:

1. Make Mina Halal falafel according to package instructions.
2. Make raita by mixing all ingredients together. (Can make a bigger batch and store in the refrigerator).
3. Assemble wrap by filling whole grain tortilla with falafel, veggies, and top with raita. Enjoy!

Meal Prep Tip:

Make Mina Halal falafel for iftar the night before and set aside enough for suhoor the next morning. While you are in the kitchen preparing for iftar, make your falafel wraps too. This will minimize kitchen time at suhoor!



A Healthier IFTAR

There is no denying that iftar is a very social time, often signified by a spread of fried items. While occasional indulgence is okay, daily overconsumption of fried items is what leads to discomfort and low energy levels. Try these three tips to prevent overeating at iftar:

1. Have only one fried item per day after breaking your fast.
2. Fill your plate with lean proteins, such as chicken.
3. Be mindful of your portions. Don't over-fill your plate and eat slowly.

Tandoori Chicken Skewers

(Makes: 8 skewers)

Ingredients:

- 4 Mina Halal chicken breast, cut into 1 inch cubes
- ¼ cup plain yogurt
- ¼ cup tandoori masala
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 1 tsp red chili powder

Directions:

1. In a bowl, mix together yogurt, tandoori masala, lemon juice, and red chili powder.
2. In a large bowl, add Mina Halal chicken breast cubes and marinade. Mix well with a large spoon or hands.
3. Place 5-6 chicken pieces on a skewer and place on parchment paper. Repeat until all skewers have chicken on them. Place the chicken skewers in the refrigerator for atleast 30 minutes to marinate.
4. Bake in a preheated oven at 350oF for 30 minutes, until chicken has fully cooked through and chicken is browned.

Meal Prep Tip:

Marinate skewers ahead of time and freeze. On the day you want to eat, place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake directly from frozen! Add 10 more minutes to baking time.



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Chicken Kababs

(Makes: 16 kababs)

Ingredients:

- 1 onion
- 1/2 cup parsley or cilantro
- 1 Tbsp ginger and garlic paste
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1lb Mina Halal ground chicken

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375oF. In a food processor, blend onion, parsley, ginger and garlic paste, spices, and oil until finely chopped. Alternatively, you can chop by hand.
2. In a large bowl, combine ground chicken with mixture using a large spoon or your hands.
3. Shape kabab mixture into 16 kababs and place on baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
4. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until kababs are browned.

Meal Prep Tip:

*Make kabab mixture, shape into kababs and freeze! No defrosting required -- go from freezer to oven on a baking sheet!
This is a great way to keep high protein options ready-to-go.*



Simple Swaps to Try this Ramadan

On days you are breaking your fast at an iftar party, it can be difficult to make healthy choices and maintain your energy levels. Here are a few swaps to try:

Instead of juices and soda



have water

Instead of eating a plate full of samosas, spring rolls, and fried items



limit to one each of your favourite items only

Instead of eating a plate full of rice and roti/naan



portion your carbs to ¼ plate

Instead of filling up on carbs



fill up on lean protein options like chicken

Instead of indulging in sweets



satisfy your sweet tooth with fruit



Sample 1 Day Ramadan Meal Plan

Suhoor

Veggie Loaded Falafel Wrap

1 cup of berries

3 cups of water

Iftar

Date + 2 cups of water

1 Tandoori Chicken

2 Chicken Kababs

1 Multigrain Naan

1 cup of salad

Post-Iftar Snack

4 cups of water
(spread out until bedtime)

20 nuts + 1 cup of fruit



Nazima Qureshi, RD, MPH

Nazima Qureshi is a Registered Dietitian and Nutritionist dedicated to helping Muslim women live healthier and happier lives. She helps transform lifestyles into healthier ones without restrictive diets. Nazima loves creating new recipes with her own South Asian flair and healthy twist as well as spending time outdoors with her husband and two daughters.