

Ramadan favourite foods, eating trends research report

Philips conducted research across four countries, polling over 4000 Muslims to determine current eating habits, trends and the top foods and drinks consumed at Iftar. Alongside the hours dedicated to fasting, eating and preparing food plays an important role during Ramadan. However, many observers admit to finding it difficult to eat healthily with a quarter of respondents (27%) agreeing that many foods considered to be traditional or associated with Ramadan are not that healthy. 84% also believe that Ramadan eating habits have changed over time.



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The report highlights that a quarter of Muslims find cooking healthy foods one of their biggest challenges when preparing their Iftar meal, while almost one in five confirm they put on more weight by the end of the month. Fried foods such as samosas and oil-heavy rice dishes were among the top five most popular dishes enjoyed at Iftar.

A tendency to eat what others are eating is a key barrier to eating healthily for one in four (25%) during Ramadan, while one in five (21%) find that length of cooking time plays a role.

Over 40% of respondents expressed an interest in cooking healthier meals with a third admitting that they even find it difficult to maintain a healthy diet year-round.

Sara Elnakib, RD MPH, a health and nutrition expert and contributor to the Philips report, said, "Fasting has many proven health benefits if conducted correctly and with a greater awareness of what is consumed before and after the fast begins. However, many tend to overeat particularly at Iftar and often the meal involves heavy, fatty foods that are high in calories. Awareness of what we eat, coupled with alternative recipe inspiration to help people enjoy their favourite traditional foods in a healthier way could help a lot of people - not just during Ramadan but throughout the year."

Larger cooking requirements



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One-third (34%) identified that cooking for large numbers and unexpected visitors is common and challenging when it comes to preparing the Iftar meal. One in four (27%) cite cooking culturally important food as one of the strongest influences on the meals they prepare, yet the same number confirm that traditional foods can be one of the biggest challenges to balancing a healthy diet.

Consequently, eagerness to find ways to cook healthier meals, cater for large numbers more easily and enhance the experience during this special time is high amongst Muslims during Ramadan. Over 90% have tried new recipes and more than half turn to the internet as well as family members (44%) for recipe inspiration when cooking for loved ones.

Changing eating habits mean though that home-cooked meals are increasingly being replaced thanks to the influx of restaurants, convenience shops and 'fast food'. 61% of people ate food that was not homemade at least once a week during last year's Ramadan, and one in ten (12%) ate convenience food every day.

With families purchasing and eating out more, Ramadan can prove an expensive time of year with 44% spending more on food during the month than the rest of the year.

Improving choices

"As a brand dedicated to improving people's lives through meaningful innovation, we recognise the importance of this research to further understand how we can support families to enjoy a healthier lifestyle as well as savour their favourite dishes," explains Lucy Jones, marketing head for Philips Consumer Lifestyle, Africa.

"The research shows that eating habits and attitudes are changing during Ramadan. By understanding these trends, we can help heighten awareness around the ways in which healthier, tastier food can be prepared more quickly and enjoyably - from traditional favourites to inspiring new recipes. We have a dedicated community environment on Facebook and Twitter which provides a platform to share Ramadan eating tips, recipes easily and get advice from others including nutritional experts and professional chefs. We also have a range of products designed to support families in enjoying healthier, homemade food together."

Elnakib adds, "Ramadan can be used as an opportune time to start life style changes that can help keep us to be healthier and happier throughout the year. Learning to eat healthily during Ramadan can help Muslims around the world adopt healthy eating all year round."

Food choices

Favourite foods during Ramadan:

1. Soup
2. Samosa
3. Rice dishes (Biryani, Mansaf, Kabsas)
4. Yaprak Sarma
5. Pide
6. Fried rolls

Favourite drinks during Ramadan:

1. Fruit juice
2. Water
3. Tea
4. Soft drink
5. Gahwa