

A helpful guide to basic Muslim etiquette

This serves as a guide only so do check with your Muslim families if you are not sure as there may still be some cultural differences.

Greetings and handshakes

The greeting for Muslims is in Arabic - As-salamu alaikum which means Peace be upon you. Most Muslim women will not shake hands or hug men. When approaching a Muslim woman (whether she wears the hijab, or not)—it's respectful to wait for her to offer her hand and give her the opportunity to show you if she doesn't mind shaking hands, or you can place your hand on your chest as a gesture of polite greeting. Muslim men will shake hands with Muslim men when greeted.

Food

Muslims will only eat halal food. Halal is an Arabic word meaning lawful or permitted according to Muslim dietary standard, as prescribed in the Qur'an. The opposite of halal is haram, which means unlawful or prohibited. These terms are commonly used in relation to food products, meat products, cosmetics, personal care products, pharmaceuticals, food ingredients, and food contact materials.

What to check for in foods you are serving to Muslim families:

- Any animal derived products such as Gelatine, emulsifiers or other food additives
- Animal shortening
- Alcohol usage

Scarves/Hijabs

While it is compulsory for women to wear hijab in Islamic culture, there are a lot of Muslim women who do not wear it out of personal choice. There is no one way of doing this as each culture will do it differently.

Prayers

There are 5 prayers which are compulsory for Muslims:

- Dawn, before sunrise: **Fajr**
- Midday, after the sun passes its highest point: **Dhuhr**
- The late part of the afternoon: **Asr**
- Just after sunset: **Maghrib**
- Late evening: **Isha**

What can you put in gift baskets for Muslim families?

Some of these can be bought from Muslim shops in New Zealand cities.

- Dates
- Nuts
- Flowers
- Halal chocolates/confectionery
- Calligraphy cards/messages of support

- Prayer mats (this is of cultural significance)
- Tasbih – prayer beads (this is of cultural significance)
- Itar (Muslim perfumes)

Festivals and culturally significant days

Most Muslim significant days are based around the lunar calendar and will change dates each year.

Ramadhan (month of fasting)

This is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar during which Quran was revealed. Fasting is one the five pillars of Islam. In 2019 Ramadhan falls around the first week of May (date depends on the sighting of the new moon) and ends on the first week of June (date depends on the sighting of the new moon).

What happens during Ramadhan?

Muslims will fast from sunset to sunrise, they will not eat or drink anything. Breaking fast is usually done with friends and families gathering to pray and share food. Fasting teaches self-restraint and develops empathy for the hungry and needy. During fasting, Muslims are encouraged to be kind, honest and patient. They perform special prayers at night called Tarawih.

Eid-ul-Fitr

On the first day of the following month after Ramadhan is the festival of breaking fast. On the morning of Eid, Muslims put on their best clothes and perform Eid prayers at mosque or homes. The rest of the day is spent visiting friends and families to celebrate the day.

Eid-al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice)

This event commemorates Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) willingness to sacrifice his son for Allah. Muslims around the world will slaughter animals and share the meat with the family, friends and those in need. This takes place at the end of Hajj (the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia), one of the five pillars of Islam.

Hajj

Every year Muslims travel to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj. This happens two months and 10 days after Ramadhan.