

UNITED STATES OF
LOVE
O V E R
HATE

A Ramadan Supper Series



Shoulder to Shoulder

Standing with American Muslims; Upholding American Values

WELCOME

We all know that relationships with others can be transformational.

In a world that seems to be dividing at alarming rates we need to sit down with real, living, breathing human beings more often. Thankfully, many of our religious traditions have spaces built into the regular rhythms of life to make this even more possible.

This year during the month of Ramadan (May 16 - June 15, 2018), Shoulder to Shoulder has teamed up with **Se7enFast**, the **Islamic Society of North America**, and **The People's Supper** for *The United States of Love Over Hate: A Ramadan Supper Series*. The primary goal of this effort is to identify, support, and connect people to host Iftars open to interfaith guests across the United States, in order to help facilitate local relationship building among Muslim and non-Muslim communities. To make room for storytelling and building bridges between guests, we're borrowing a "recipe" for conversation from our friends at [The People's Supper](#), with whom we collaborated on creating this guidebook.

For interfaith iftars, Muslims and non-Muslims are invited to sit down for a chance to go beneath the headlines to understand what brings us strength and courage, and the stories of real struggles, fears, hopes and dreams that have shaped who we are.

We've pulled together everything you need to know to host a supper — from pointers on how to create an inviting and intimate space to how to break the ice. This guidebook is a resource for those already planning Iftars, and for those looking to put together Iftars (including both larger community dinners, as well as home based dinners).



Let's get cooking.

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HOW IT WORKS

An evening with The People's Supper is unstructured by design: There is no formula or script, and just as no two stories are exactly alike, no two suppers will ever be quite the same. Feel free to make it your own, and share your wisdom with the rest of us.

WE AGREE



There's a lot we may not agree on. In sitting down, we choose to agree on this:

I will grant you welcome, and I thank you for the welcome you grant me.

I will show up, be present, and be open to creating this experience together.

I will speak & listen with truth & love, agreeing or disagreeing with respect & kindness.

www.thepeoplesupper.org

AN INVITATION TO BRAVE SPACE



Together we will create *brave space*
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we
know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be *our brave space together,*
and
We will work on it side by side.

by Micky ScottBey Jones

A FAVORITE SUPPER RECIPE

We humbly share our recipe for an evening that fills both stomach and soul.

INGREDIENTS

Good people
Good food (potluck-style)
The People's Supper conversation-starters
Curious minds + willing hearts
Optional: Mixtape playlist, candles, flowers, ornamental gourds, [ace] soundtrack, and/or whatever you do to #makeitnice .

HOW TO HOST

TO PREP

1. Sign up to host a home-based supper (or register a community iftar) [here](#).
2. Send out an invite.
3. *Send a confirmation email to all guests.* Check to see if anyone has any food allergies, and have folks sign up to bring a dish (ideally one with a story behind it).
4. *Place the communal agreements where everyone will see them.* (Tip: Try placing them on every plate before guests arrive. (Printer-friendly version that you can download and print at home [here](#).)
5. *Cook up the main dish and set the table.*
As neighbors & friends arrive, welcome everyone by pouring drinks. Spend a few minutes in casual conversation as folks filter in, and keep folks busy with last-minute prep tasks.

TO SERVE

6. *As people are coming in, leave time for people to say personal duas (prayers).* See page 10.
7. *Maghrib prayer and break fast.* Break fast with dates, water or something simple that you love!
8. Welcome everyone + share the context for the evening.
9. *Introduce the guidelines for the evening.*
Before you dive into conversation, briefly explain our guidelines.
10. *Read An Invitation to Brave Space (P5).*
We recommend reading it popcorn-style: As host, introduce the piece and read the first line, inviting people to reach each line separately as they are moved to, and reminding people that here, too, silence is a gift.

11. Plate up!

12. *Do introductions and toasts.* Invite everyone to introduce themselves by sharing why they chose to show up tonight, and the name of a person who inspires courage in them, living or dead, famous or familial. Toast those just named, and those who inspire us to be our best selves, and ourselves and each other for having the guts to step into a space of vulnerability right now.

13. *Introduce Question 1:* Tell a story about a time that fasting, or another spiritual practice that is important to you, has brought you strength.

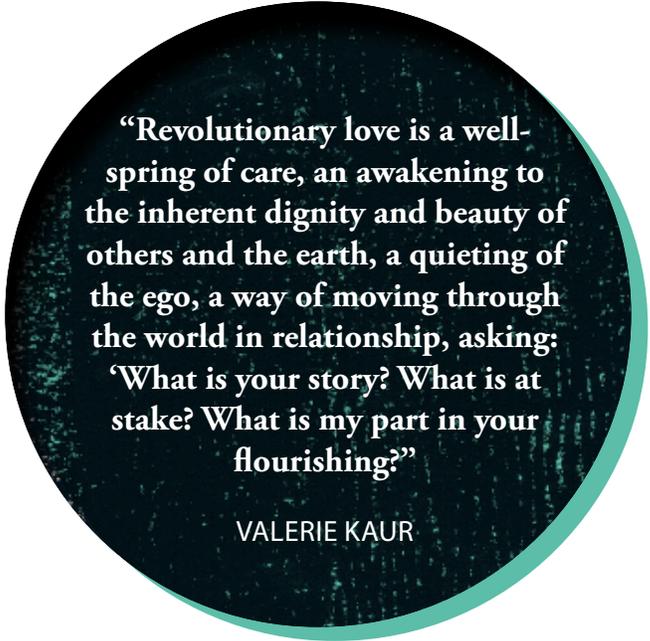
14. *Introduce Question 2:* Describe a moment, recent or long passed, in which you've been made to feel unwelcome, unsafe, unworthy, and threatened.

15. *Introduce Question 3:* Describe a moment, recent or long passed, in which you were made to feel the opposite: in which you felt fully seen and heard and at ease.

16. *If time permits, introduce Question 4:* What can we do to create more of the latter?

17. Fifteen minutes before the scheduled end (or thereabouts), serve dessert.

18. *End the night by asking people how it went for them.* What is one thing you're grateful for at the end of our meal together?



“Revolutionary love is a well-spring of care, an awakening to the inherent dignity and beauty of others and the earth, a quieting of the ego, a way of moving through the world in relationship, asking: ‘What is your story? What is at stake? What is my part in your flourishing?’”

VALERIE KAUR

GROUND RULES

We're not interested in talking politics, or debating issues, or attempting to change each other's minds. We're interested in going beneath the headlines and understanding the stories of real struggles and real fears and real hopes and real dreams that have shaped who we are.

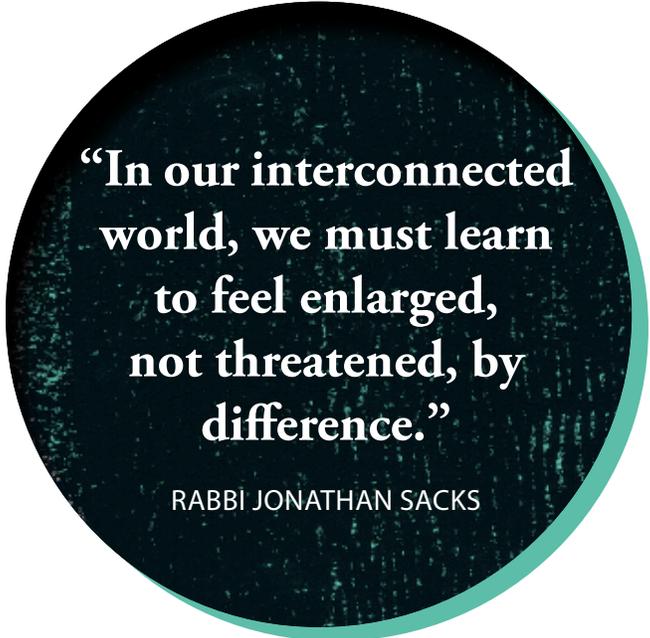
The ground rules aren't meant to box you in, they are meant to provide a sense of shared way of being during our time together. The Center for Courage & Renewal calls their guiding principles touchstones, other groups call them agreements. After reading through them, we think you'll get the drift that they are more concerned with underlying principles of love, respect and creating what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called the Beloved Community and less about policing each other's behavior. So take a deep breath and dive into some ingredients for brave and engaging conversation.

Once you sit down, introduce the following ground rules:

1. **Stick with "I" statements and avoid advice-giving.** Your experience is yours and please honor and respect that others' experiences are theirs. Putting this to practice is hard work: It means, in the words of our friends at The Center for Courage & Renewal, "[no fixing, saving, advising, or correcting each other.](#)" Your job is to silence the noise and tune into your inner voice, trusting that everyone else at the table has the power to do the same. Simply speak your truth.
2. **Pass the mic, and allow for silence.** Notice that you're talking more than others at the table? Step back and give other voices a chance to be heard. Know that we welcome silence just as much as we welcome speech, and ask only that when you speak, you do so intentionally.
3. **Vegas rule:** Just as what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, what happens at the table stays at the table. No quotes or identifying details will be shared without permission.
4. **Check yourself on whether you are advocating or attempting to influence others.** If you find yourself doing so, stop, breathe, and open up to what is happening around you. Ask questions instead of telling someone what to think.*
 - (*From our friends at [Speaking Down Barriers](#). Based out of Spartanburg, SC, their network of facilitators and educators create transformative and healing dialogue around the barriers that separate us, including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and class.

5. **Be aware of the privilege you hold in a conversation.** The folks at Daring Discussions ([daringdiscussions.com](#)) put this one beautifully, and it's particularly essential when you're bringing together a group of folks who share a mix of identities:

"Being or becoming aware of privilege is important for respectful dialogue. 'Privilege' doesn't necessarily mean wealth and it certainly doesn't mean a person has never struggled—it means the relative power you hold in society that is structurally unequal due to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, religious discrimination and so on. An individual may hold some kinds of privilege while also experiencing some form of oppression. Holding privilege is what allows us to avoid and ignore issues that do not directly affect us, and understanding your own privilege is an important part of giving others space to share difficult and vulnerable truths about their experience. During this discussion, being aware of the privilege you hold is an important part of creating space for your and vulnerable truths about their experience."



“In our interconnected world, we must learn to feel enlarged, not threatened, by difference.”

RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

ADDITIONAL IDEAS: ACTIVITIES WE LOVE

BRING A READING

Invite guests to bring a reading (a poem, a quote, a song lyric) that's fortified them over the last few months. Read it together, popcorn-style, and allow the words to wash over you. Share whatever is stirred.

SHOW 'N TELL

Have everyone bring a photo or an object that's meaningful to them: the kind that activates your senses, something that immediately conjures a place or a person, the touch of a hand, the sound of a voice, a moment in which you felt fully alive. Invite everyone to share the story.

LET FOOD TELL THE STORY

Food often plays a central role in spiritual traditions - and can be a powerful prompt for storytelling. Invite people to share a story about a certain food they love (or hate!) from a certain holiday, or bring a dish with a story behind it from their family or community.

MORE CONVERSATION STARTERS

- *What's one thing about your faith practice that you wish others knew?
- *Describe a time you experienced solidarity from someone who was different from you.
- *In your daily life, how do you activate love to build the community that you dream of?
- *Who is someone you know, or a figure from your faith tradition/sacred texts, who models love through their actions?



“We decided to cook together to prepare the meal as a community, and I so enjoyed the rich, organic conversations that flowed from us as we chopped vegetables and whipped up some guacamole side by side.”

Kiki, Minneapolis



“We started off by dedicating our participation to something or someone. I thought that was really special.”

Mandalay, NYC

IS HOSTING FOR ME?

A supper host commits to one thing and one thing only: to host a meaningful conversation over a shared meal, for folks who could use a little respite right now. We've found that great hosts have similar qualities to any great host: warmth, openness, ease starting and coaxing along conversations. Our tables are peer-to-peer, so our hosts are participants, too, rather than outside facilitators.

YOU'LL MAKE A GREAT INTERFAITH IFTAR HOST IF...

- *You are willing to model #bravespace.* Creating brave space is about being courageous enough to model vulnerability. It's about co-creating a space of radical hospitality and nurturing where we seek to truly see each other and respect the other's humanity. See our Invitation to Brave Space on P5.
- *You want to #realtalk.* Sharing your own story gives others permission to share theirs. This isn't about giving advice, or waxing poetic from your soapbox. You want to steer clear of intellectual banter and philosophizing of any kind, and talk openly about your lived experience. To become a successful host, you have to be willing to be vulnerable, and to reflect deeply on your own story.

Q: CAN I HOST IN A RESTAURANT?



A: We find private homes or religious spaces work best, in part because it's more intimate, and in part because it's easier to avoid interruptions and distractions. A waiter arriving right as someone is halfway through a powerful story can break the mood, and no one likes the feeling that the next table over is listening in, just as you prepare to share something vulnerable. If you do decide to meet at a restaurant, pick one with a private room, or where there's plenty of space between tables, so that people aren't roaring over one another to be heard.

“When I ask, “How are you?” that is really what I want to know. I am not asking how many items are on your to-do list, nor asking how many items are in your inbox. I want to know how your heart is doing, at this very moment.”

OMID SAFI

- *You can open your doors.* You have space in your home to host a supper or the creativity to find another cozy spot (e.g. a gallery, a park, or a friend's backyard).
- *You find it easy to make conversation.* These conversations are all about connecting through conversation and storytelling, so you'll need to be comfortable chatting, prodding, questioning and laughing with other people while discussing sensitive stuff.
- *You listen. Deeply.* You recognize that what you don't know about someone far exceeds what you do, and you prefer asking questions to giving answers. A big part of being a host is simply listening, asking follow-up questions and resisting the urge to “fix” something for someone else. The most important thing hosts do is create space at the table for every person to be heard.

GOT ANY TIPS FOR PLANNING?

Like the food we place upon our tables, the way we choose to share a meal represents one of the most enduring human rituals. Gathering for supper is something to look forward to at the end of a long day or week: a chance to break bread, toast the future, and enjoy the company of others.

SUPPER PREP

- **Spread the word:** Start with people you know and branch out from there. We find tables of 5-8 people are ideal for a home-based supper, though you can do it with as few as four people or as many as 12.
- **Send an invite:** Once the date is finalized, send an email inviting guests that includes a link to a digital sign-up sheet for food and drinks. Free trick: Try [Fotor](#) for creating more visual invites and Google Docs for the [potluck sign-up sheet](#).
- **Prepare your guests:** We recommend sharing our [communal agreements](#) before you sit down, so that they know what to expect.

TIPS FOR HOSTING AN INTERFAITH IFTAR

- **Leave time for personal prayers.** As the host, it is important to allow for your guests to make personal duas (prayers) while waiting to break their fast. It is believed that the minutes leading to Iftar is a special time in which duas will be accepted. Some guests may also need to perform their wudu (ablution) before the Maghrib prayer. So, do facilitate their need to perform this purification ritual by providing a clean space and clean water.

Inside Tip: It would also be helpful to lay down a bathroom rug or mat by the sink to absorb water from those performing wudu. A clean bathroom works for this!

- It may be useful to have this dua available for distribution. Non-Muslims will likely notice their Muslim counterparts murmuring it right before breaking their fast: *Allahumma laka sumtu wa `alaa rizqika aftartu* – O, God. I fasted for your sake and now I am breaking my fast with the food provided by you.
- During the prayer, make sure the prayer area is clean, and that there are clean prayer rugs. Be sure to lay them facing in the direction of the “qibla”- there are phone apps that can help to guide you in determining the exact angle.

Inside Tip: Clean, simple blankets also work. Crowdfund these if needed!

- Break fast before or during the welcome. It is recommended to hasten to break one’s fast, preferably with dates (or other dried fruit) and before the Maghrib prayer (after the adhan). Guests can also be presented with milk or water (at room-temperature but this depends on your guest) in place of, or in addition to, dates.

Inside Tip: Keep large food platters away from eyesight at this time as it may understandably distract those who fasted (they’ll be hungry!). Other small finger-foods or appetizers may also be served with the initial iftar to supplement the dates.

- Present your guests with a full meal after the Maghrib prayer. There is no one way of breaking one’s fast after the Maghrib prayer. In many cultures, Iftar consists of hot soup, sweet treats, and savory meals. You can ask people to bring food, potluck style, but make sure any meat/meat products are halal (and NO Pork products or alcohol!)

TIPS FOR HOSTING AN INTERFAITH IFTAR (CONT.)

- **Inside Tip:** The idea is to start with some hot/warm food. Cold foods or drinks have to be heated by the body, requiring more energy from the body, when ingested and consequently exhausting the fasting body.

So, say you're hosting an Iftar on June 7, 2018. Here's what the timeline might look like:

8:00 - Guests begin to arrive- try to create a setting for people to spend this time in reflection and prayer if desired.

8:25 - Call to prayer, duas (can be led by a Muslim participant), and Breaking Fast (dates & milk and or water)

8:35 - Maghrib prayer

8:55 - Eat, share stories, and have a great time together! Maybe some artistic or creative presentations or small group dialogues.

- **Ensure there is food that everyone can enjoy.** Keep in mind that kosher is different from halal, so if you have participants who eat kosher make sure to have kosher food available as well. You can ask in your email invitation if anyone has additional dietary restrictions, or food allergies. And remember, dining together across religious difference is not just about figuring out what each other doesn't eat - it's about learning what foods we do eat and love. Consider encouraging your guests to bring a dish that is meaningful in their faith, such as a special food that they ate at a holiday growing up. To keep track of who's bringing what, use our [Google sheets template!](#)

DON'T FORGET

- **Make your guests feel comfortable:** Our tendency is to have a million things to do at the last minute, so a word of hard-earned advice: Don't. Be sure that you're able to invest real attention in every person as they walk in the door.
- **Instructions for first time guests:** It may be some of your guests' first Iftar Dinner so do not forget to ask individuals to dress modestly but comfortably.
- **Enlist help:** While folks are filtering in, intentionally leave a few things unfinished: save lighting the candles, for instance, or setting the table. It helps to give people something to do as they're waiting for everyone else to arrive.
- **Document the supper:** Capture photos of the food and table, and powerful themes from the supper. Use #LoveOverHate #MyRamadanDate on social media to share about your suppers with us, and the world! *NOTE: Snapping selfies or people pics? Want to share a quote that came up around the table? Just be sure to ask permission first.
- **Close the dinner with a brief reflection:** Ever wondered why your favorite teacher was so big on journaling, or why every workshop leader always closes with a reflection session? Science has shown that taking a few minutes to reflect at the end of an experience can help us internalize it. A few minutes before your stated end-time, ask everyone what was most memorable about the night, and what they plan to take back to their own communities.

More resources

- How to Organize a Productive Iftar Party: <http://productivemuslim.com/ramadan-series-how-to-organise-a-productive-iftar-party/>
- Iftar Party Planning: <http://hotsweetspicypiceres.com/iftar-party-planning/>



I'M NOT MUSLIM... BUT I WANT TO HELP

If you're not Muslim, we ask that you work in close collaboration with a Muslim individual and/or community on planning an interfaith Iftar. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions from non-Muslims to get you started.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **What is Ramadan?** During Ramadan, also the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, Muslims believe the first verses of the Qur'an (Sacred book of Islam) were revealed to Prophet Muhammad - Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH). In essence, from sunrise until sundown, Muslims around the world focus on practicing abstinence in its entirety, particularly by refraining from eating and drinking. Read more [here](#).
- **What is an iftar?** Iftar is the meal eaten to break one's fast during the holy month of Ramadan.
- **How can I find a supper near me to attend, even if I don't want to host?** You can sign up to attend an iftar during this year's month of Ramadan [here](#).
- **Why do Muslims fast during Ramadan?** The act of fasting during Ramadan is one of the [five pillars of Islam](#). Starting with the sighting of the new moon, Ramadan lasts for 30 days or until the next sighting of the new moon. During the hours of fast, Muslims are encouraged to read the Quran, refrain from smoking, sex, ill-thinking and ill-doing. Want to know more? Read up [here](#) and [here](#).
- **What is Maghrib prayer?** The Maghrib prayer is prayed just after sunset, the fourth of five obligatory daily prayers performed by practicing Muslims.
- **How does iftar dinner work?** Iftar (literally, "break-fast") starts after the evening Maghrib prayer adhan, or call for prayer. The prayer time for Maghrib differs based on geographical location and particular school of thought (Sunni or Shia). Individuals can find prayer times based on their location on [Muslim Pro](#) or [Islamic Finder](#). You'll want to arrange for someone to lead the call to prayer and to lead prayer (talk to your Muslim friends or contacts about who can do this!).
- **What does halal mean?** Halal means lawful or permitted in Arabic. When describing food, it is the dietary standard as prescribed in the Qur'an. Learn more [here](#).
- **Does fasting mean that you're also not drinking water?** Yes. Fasting during the daylight hours during Ramadan includes not drinking water.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We hope you feel ready to host an interfaith iftar, People's Supper style! Here's a checklist to help you prep.

PLANNING A SUPPER

- Recruit a co-host (optional)
- Recruit guests
- Set the date and location
- Sign up to host here with your date, so we can add it to the calendar.
- Create potluck sign-up sheet and choose a dish
- Prepare your guests for what to expect

DAY-OF PREP

- Pick up ingredients
- Set-up the space, including prayer rugs and printed duas (be sure to place the communal agreements where guests will see them)
- Cook the main dish (Alternatively: Feel free to invite guests over early to cook together)
- Kick off with a toast
- Introduce the ground rules (see P7)
- Do introductions
- Go around in a circle, answering Questions 1-3 (see P6)
- Talk, listen, eat, & drink
- Reflect and share resources
- Document supper with photos of table and food

POST-SUPPER

- Send thank you notes or emails, resource information, photos.
- Consider what comes next for you (another supper, plugging into community resources)

If you have any other questions, reach out to us at info@s2scampaign.org

This guide is intended to be neither static nor complete: figure out what works for you, flag what doesn't, and record tips of your own. And don't forget to share your wisdom with the rest of us!



**“You are imperfect,
you are wired for
struggle, but you are
worthy of love and
belonging.”**

BRENÉ BROWN

About Shoulder-to-Shoulder: Shoulder-to-Shoulder is a multi-faith organization dedicated to ending anti-Muslim bigotry in the United States. Comprised of 35 national member denominations and faith-based organizations, Shoulder to Shoulder works not only on a national level, but offers strategies and support to local and regional efforts to address anti-Muslim sentiment and seeks to spread the word abroad.

Thanks to our partners:

About The People's Supper: At The People's Supper, we believe that to be welcome – to feel wholly at ease in our own skin, to be fully seen and heard and witnessed – is a basic right. Suppers are a place where we can come together over one of humanity's most ancient and simple rituals. A place where we can share meaningful stories, good food, and a sense of community. A place where we can build understanding and trust.

About Se7enFast: SE7EN FAST started as a one-day event on 7/7/15, inviting Christians and non-Muslims everywhere to fast in solidarity with Muslims, to give money to the World Food Programme, and to break fast with Muslims in their communities. So, essentially, since it was on 7/7, we decided to call it SE7EN FAST. We realized in 2016 that it didn't matter whether people were doing this all on the same day, but that people were aware of all of the opportunities to connect with Muslims throughout Ramadan. The first year we had five events. The second year we promoted over 25, and in 2017 we expanded that number to over 160 events in over 30 states. We hope to keep expanding this reach so we can continue to do our part in helping people break down walls of division in their communities.

About the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA): ISNA's mission is to be an exemplary and unifying Islamic organization in North America that contributes to the betterment of the Muslim community and society at large.