



Tips for a Successful Ramadan Interfaith Iftar Program

I. Logistics

1. Hospitality and Guest Experience

- Reserve prime parking near the building for visitors.
- Establish a welcome desk with greeters to direct guests upon arrival.
- Designate community members and leaders to intentionally engage visitors in conversation.
- Ensure visitors are served first if food is offered buffet-style.

2. Invitations and Community Representation

- Invite local elected officials, including the mayor, city council members, county commissioners, state representatives, and state senators.

- Invite local emergency responders, including the county sheriff, police chief, and fire chief.
- Invite leaders from nearby houses of worship, including churches, synagogues, and temples.

3. Dress Code and Accessibility

- Decide on a reasonable dress code and share it publicly in advance.
- Do not deny entry based on attire.
- If hijab is required in prayer spaces, have extra scarves available in case anyone arrives without one.

4. Security

- Arrange for a visible local police presence, with one officer outside as a deterrent and one inside to assist if needed.
- If available, use armed internal mosque security, lay out clear guidelines for how to address disruptions or emergencies, and ensure coordination with law enforcement.

5. Speakers and Programming

- Select speakers who are articulate, disciplined, and experienced with interfaith audiences.

- Avoid assigning speaking roles to individuals who lack fluency in English or public-speaking experience.
- Youth speakers are often especially effective.
- Consider contacting local Islamic Speakers Bureaus or organizations (e.g., ING, CAIR, ICNA, MAS) for speakers or speaker recommendations.
- Set up a table or stand with free Qurans and brochures about Islam from WhyIslam for anyone who wants to take them.

II. Programming

Things to Do

1. **Do center hospitality and shared humanity**
An interfaith iftar should feel like a dinner you would host for neighbors you care about. Warm welcomes, name tags, shared tables, and attentive hosts help break down “us vs. them” thinking.
2. **Do explain the *why*, not just the *what***
Briefly explain why Muslims fast, what Ramadan cultivates (self-restraint, generosity, empathy), and how these values overlap with other faith traditions. Context is more impactful than trivia.
3. **Do uplift diverse Muslim voices**
Avoid presenting Muslims as a monolith. Include women, converts, Black and immigrant Muslims, youth, and elders—especially as greeters, speakers, and table leaders.

4. **Do create space for genuine questions**
Make it explicit that respectful curiosity is welcome. Anonymous question cards can help guests ask questions they may feel uncomfortable voicing publicly.
5. **Do connect Islamic teachings to universal values**
Justice, mercy, care for neighbors, and service to the vulnerable resonate across traditions and help counter portrayals of Islam as “foreign” or incompatible with American life.
6. **Do acknowledge Islamophobia without centering grievance**
It is appropriate to note that Muslims face misrepresentation and discrimination, but frame this as an invitation to solidarity rather than a guilt-driven appeal.
7. **Do follow up after the event**
Invite guests to future programs, or partner with local churches, synagogues, and community groups so the iftar is not a one-time interaction.

Things to Avoid

1. **Don't focus on “dispelling misconceptions. Show the truth in your actions.**
Avoid repeating Islamophobic narratives, even to refute them. Present your own vision by explaining—and demonstrating—who Muslims are, rather than listing what they are not.
2. **Don't turn the iftar into a political rally**
Even when referencing harmful rhetoric, avoid naming or attacking specific politicians or media outlets. This can shut down dialogue and distract from relationship-building.

3. **Don't assume hostility or bad faith**
Many guests are misinformed rather than malicious. Respond to confusion with patience, not suspicion.
4. **Don't overload guests with theology or statistics**
An interfaith iftar is not a debate or crash course. A few thoughtful points are more effective than an information dump.
5. **Don't speak for other communities**
Avoid explaining what Jews, Christians, atheists, or others "believe" for comparison. Allow common ground to emerge naturally.
6. **Don't put guests on the spot**
Never ask someone to "represent" their faith, profession, or background (e.g., journalists or public officials).
7. **Don't sanitize real differences**
Building understanding does not require pretending all faiths are the same. Respectful honesty builds trust.
8. **Don't frame Muslims only as victims**
Balance discussions of discrimination with stories of joy, leadership, contribution, and everyday life. Dignity matters.