

LS EDITOR'S NOTE

Cool *meals* for summer fasts

Similarly, watermelon with mildly salty feta cheese sprinkled with Vietnamese basil is a match made in heaven. Caesar salad, coleslaw, shrimp cocktail, crunchy vegetables wraps in rice paper rolls are all dainty comforting snacks for summer iftars.

As iftar times are awfully close to dinner, opting for a Buddha bowls or hippie bowls meal is a great choice. It is made of several



kinds of food served cold. Essentially, you just throw in a hodgepodge of vegetables, healthy grains, and protein that is just plain good for you. If possible, get creative with your ingredients by adding crunchy vegetables, sautéed leafy ones, nuts, and seeds. While these are a great option for vegetarians, adding a few slices of poached chicken, steamed fish, beef cold cuts, complemented with either roasted potatoes or potato salads are as filling as any fried traditional iftar items for meat lovers.



Buddha bowl can have different recipes or ingredients depending upon one's choice, but mainly, it is a vegetarian meal, served on a single bowl or high-rimmed plate, consisting of small portions of several foods, served cold. These may include whole grains such as quinoa or brown rice, plant proteins such as chickpeas, lentils or tofu, and vegetables,

but meat is a welcome addition for those who are not vegetarians. Named for its big, round Buddha belly shape, a "Buddha bowl" is a one-dish cold meal, loaded with a tonne of different kinds of food that can be filling, right up till sehri.

Our 3 AM meal should also be light, like oats, rice porridge with chicken, flat rice with yoghurt, or cereals. A long glass of banana shake laced with vanilla ice cream is also fun, and while that is my second favourite sehri item, my personal favourite is chicken pâté, spread generously on light crackers and a cup of strong orange pekoe. Pâté, which is a mixture of ground meat and fat, minced into a spreadable paste, is most commonly made out of liver.

There are literally endless combinations of other base ingredients — vegetables, herbs, spices, other meats can all be candidates for this mixture. It is also easy to make; I make mine with poached chicken breast, flavoured with a slight hint of ginger and garlic paste, a dash of olive oil and seasoned with salt and pepper.

After cutting the poached chicken in



chunks, I put them in the blender with a clove of fresh garlic, few sprigs of mint or coriander or sweet basil or whatever herb is handy, sliced green chilli for a little heat and blend them all. It is a great spread on crackers or bruschetta.

While these are definitely unconventional iftar and sehri items, amping up your everyday menu and recipes with a little innovative touch is no doubt exciting. Cooking is an art, and no art can survive without creative twists. So, try sauces, spreads and salads, the wide array of cold foods, and go easy on fried heavy stuff. And while you are doing that, read about our in-depth story on the food industry.

— RBR

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Food and styling: RBR

A tropical summer iftar necessitates cold food; food that would go easy on your stomach and refresh your palate. After all, the long hours of fasting leaves us exhausted and dehydrated, and anything invigorating and energising as a bowl of thinly sliced cucumber with freshly made mozzarella or feta cheese is welcome. This light salad, if you add a dash of lime juice with a hint of green chilli and toss in some fresh mint leaves, becomes an uber chic iftar item, replacing your regular cucumber cuts.

