

Refresh and rejuvenate with iftar drink recipes

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One thing which remains constant on the iftar table during Ramadan is refreshing drinks, usually served cold, and preferably not Rooh Afza.

I tried my hand at making a few beverages and worked on the recipes, and here are three that you can try.



GUR ER SHORBOT

This is a common drink my grandmother, or "Bubu" as I call her, used to have during iftar in her childhood. My grandparents' side of the family always used to have gur in their food instead of white sugar.

For *gur er shorbot*, take a block of *akh er gur* (sugar-cane jaggery) and chop finely. In a blender, add the chopped gur and half a teaspoon each of rock salt, black salt, and table salt. Add one teaspoon of tamarind chutney (measure depending on how acidulated you want your drink to be), and 5 cups of water

with ice cubes. Add in 2 or 3 slices of ginger (a must) and the juice of one lemon. Blend it all.

Note that these are measurements for one glass, multiply your measurements according to the needed portion.

HWACHAE

In South Korea, *hwachae*, pronounced hwa-chey, is a simple fruit punch enjoyed during the summer. I made *subak hwachae*, or watermelon fruit punch, but you can add just about any fruit in your drink.

Scoop out watermelon or cut them into bite-size pieces. Into a bowl, add a colourless soda. To it, mix in milk. Ensure the milk and drink are in appropriate ratio, roughly 4 parts milk to 3 parts soda. Now, add 4 tablespoons of brown sugar. Add in your watermelon and fruits such as thinly sliced apples, and serve chilled.

Hwachae is super refreshing and similar to the flavour and concept of *falooda* –between a drink and *dessert* and meant to be devoured with a spoon.

DATE MILKSHAKE WITH CHOCOLATE

This is a three-ingredient drink,

emblematic of Ramadan. You need approximately 20 pitted dates, 7 cardamom pods, and 3/4 cup of milk.

Peel the cardamom pods and finely grind the seeds into a powder, using mortar and pestle. Blend the pitted dates, powdered cardamom, milk, with a few ice cubes. Add in the milk part by part to get the right consistency. As the dates are already sweet, adding sugar is optional.

You can roughly decorate the walls of the glass you will serve in with chocolate syrup or sauce before pouring your drink. You can also decorate with shaved milk or semi dark chocolate on top. Date milkshake is a hearty, healthy drink which will definitely make you happy.

Whether it's good old *lebur shorbot*, *kacha aam er shorbot* or any other mouth-watering drink, it is important to stay hydrated this month, especially considering the weather and how we are always on the run.

Ayra Areeba Abid's favourite word is serendipity and she's a Sociology geek. Connect with her at areeba.ayra@gmail.com

THE DARK SIDE OF RAMADAN BUFFETS

SHANUM SARKAR

Ramadan is a time of abstinence, reflection and self-control. It is a time to be empathetic and understand the hardships of the disadvantaged. Yet, this month has become a time for overindulgence in food, thanks partly to numerous iftar offers and deals.

Yet do you, like many people, believe that feasting in these buffets never actually feel satisfying? Here are a few possible reasons why.

QUALITY CONTROL

Food served at buffets during Ramadan is usually cooked beforehand to accommodate swarms of people coming in. Expecting the food to be perfectly clean and fresh at a place where hundreds break their fast together is quite optimistic. Due to the heavy workload on restaurant staff during iftar, who need to break their fast as well, the food may sometimes be late, cold, or under or overcooked.

FOOD WASTE

These buffets are particularly irresponsible because of the large amounts of food that is wasted. People usually pile different items until every inch of their plate is cov-

ered, if not toppling over with food, but they are unlikely to finish much of it.

Feasting on these absurd amounts to the very last bite is in no way physically or spiritually healthy. If you are attending one of these buffets, make sure you have just the right amount on your plate. A solid tip? Do not overestimate your hunger on an empty stomach.

You may argue that you've eaten all 24 slices of pizza, but did you eat the crust? What about half the slice you left along with the crust just to go up the ridiculous ladder, mmhmm?

VALUE FOR MONEY

Ramadan buffets aren't exactly the most reasonably priced at most places. Spending a fortune on food when you can hardly finish everything they are offering (you've probably tried and failed) is usually a waste of your money. Some people force more food down than they can, or should, in order to make it worth the price they paid.

Perhaps an alternative are the buy one get one offers. Then again, while you think you might be getting a good deal on the 100+ dishes on offer, remember that the food waste and lack of quality control are still on the menu.

OVEREATING

Fasting comes with a great deal of health benefits. However, not breaking your fast modestly can backfire, resulting in weight gain and more serious medical conditions.

From a health point

of view, feasting defeats the purpose of fasting altogether, and goes against the spirit of Ramadan. Stuffing your mouth until you're riding on a food coma is not something to be proud of.

Given the consequences of stuffing yourselves in such buffets, you're better off cooking at home, ordering in iftar or even going out to eat and doing so in a rational and sensible manner with your loved ones. Sounds radical? I know.

Yet another friend has invited Shanum to an iftar buffet despite having passed out two days ago.

Send peer pressure survival tips at shanumsarkar18@gmail.com

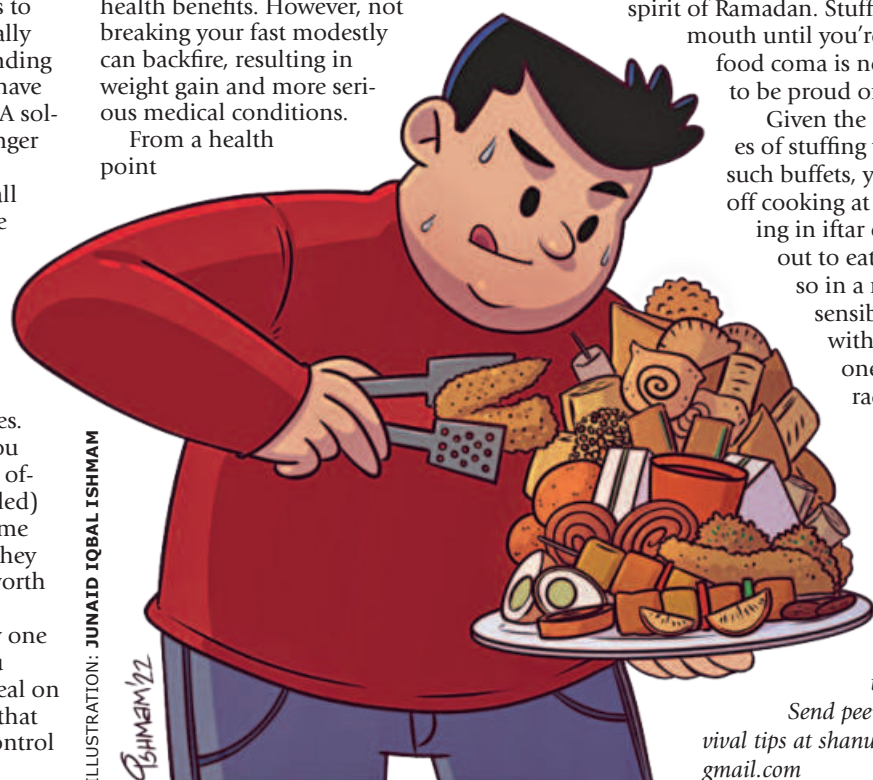


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