

Ramadan is here and we find ourselves planning sehri and iftar much more elaborate than our usual meals. For us, iftar is often a lavish spread, rich in flavours and tradition.

However, after a long day of fasting, it is essential to ensure that the body gets the right balance of nutrients without overwhelming your digestive system.



A healthier take on the Bangladeshi IFTAR SPREAD

As tempting as it may be to dive into a spread of rich and flavourful dishes after a long day of fasting, it is important to ease into iftar gradually. Eating too much too quickly can lead to a sudden spike in blood sugar, heart rate, and blood pressure, making one feel sluggish or even dizzy. A slow and mindful approach, starting with light foods before moving on to heavier dishes, helps the body adjust smoothly.

Breaking the fast with a natural drink is always a good idea, as it helps rehydrate and replenish lost electrolytes. Instead of store-bought juices filled with added

sugar, fresh fruit-based options work best. A glass of chilled watermelon juice, naturally sweet and hydrating, is an instant refresher. Aam panna, made with raw mango, offers a tangy kick while providing essential vitamins. Lemon sherbet with a hint of honey or dates blended into milk creates a smooth and nourishing drink. These alternatives provide natural sweetness, keeping the blood sugar stable without the crash that often follows processed sugars.

A simple date and nut mix offers a boost of energy, while a bowl of chilled fruit, perhaps with a drizzle of honey or a sprinkle of chaat masala, adds a refreshing touch.

Yoghurt-based desserts, such as a light mango lassi or a spoonful of homemade mishti doi, strike the perfect balance between taste and health.

No iftar table in Bangladesh feels complete without chhola or chickpeas, and fortunately, this staple is also an excellent source of protein and complex carbohydrates. Mixed with cucumbers, tomatoes, green chillies and a squeeze of lemon, it turns into a flavourful salad that is refreshing, filling, and relatively low-fat. Other light salads can include sprouted moong dal tossed with coriander and a touch of mustard oil, or a combination of seasonal vegetables with curd dressing. These not only aid digestion but also offer fibre, which keeps the stomach full for longer.

Carbohydrates are crucial after fasting. Rice, being a staple in Bangladeshi households, can be included in various ways. A small serving of lightly spiced khichuri offers both protein and warmth. A bowl of pulao with vegetables or even plain rice paired with a light curry works well for those who prefer traditional flavours.

Paratha served with a side of meat curry, egg curry or even simple curd raita, makes for an immensely satisfying yet balanced meal. Stuff with egg fry and salad, parathas make the best of refreshing rolls.

Snacks are an inevitable part of iftar, but make sure the oil is safe and the food is without excessive grease. A wholesome iftar does not mean giving up on tradition — it simply means making small changes that allow the body to recover and stay energised throughout Ramadan.

By Nusrath Jahan
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