



Muslim women breaking the fast at Hotel Africana in Kampala recently. Photos by Hajara Nalwadda

BREAKING FAST: BALANCING YOUR MEALS

Peterson Kato Kikomoko, an assistant lecturer in the department of human nutrition and dietetics at Kyambogo University, Kampala notes that when preparing to break the fast, many people tend to eat foods they like and do not pay much attention to ensuring a balanced diet.

"For instance, you may find one eating only rice, *chapati* or chicken. Not maintaining a balanced diet means one will not adequately meet their nutrient requirements," he says.

"Even during fasting, the body needs an adequate supply of the different nutrients for one to maintain good health. This can only be achieved by ensuring a balanced diet," Kikomoko adds.

Pre-fast meal
Hajji Nsereko Mutumba, the Uganda Muslim Supreme

Muslims are currently observing the Holy Month of Ramadhan, where they are required to fast. According to the teachings of Islam, fasting is meant to be undertaken by Muslims of 15 years and above who are mentally stable and healthy. Agnes Kyotalengerire and Lillian N. Magezi explore why the meals before dawn and those to break the fast should be balanced.

Council public relations officer, explains that before fasting, Muslims are required to eat *suhoor* (pre-dawn meal) before fasting. The meal may include soft foods such as Irish potatoes, rice and *katogo* (mixture of matooke, beef or groundnuts).

Alternatively, one may choose a cup of milk with bread, *chapati* and fruits. The essence of a light meal is for one not to get too satisfied, which might make them uncomfortable

throughout the day.

Shafique Mayanja, a nutritionist with NUTRI CORP Uganda, an agency that promotes nutrition says *suhoor* is an important meal because it provides one with the energy to kick-start and go throughout the day without food.

Breaking the fast
When breaking a fast, one should introduce foods gradually, advises Lillian

that one can also break the fast by drinking a glass of water at room temperature and eating *entende* (dates), which help to raise one's blood sugar levels.

After the soft foods, Nyanzi advises that one can then eat a full meal, which should consist of protein. It can be served as beef, chicken or fish stew.

The meal should also have an energy-giving food which is usually a carbohydrate source. These include steamed matooke, yams, sweet potatoes, rice or cassava, depending on one's preference.

One also needs to add vegetables, which can be steamed or fried. For dessert, one can add a fruit, fresh fruit juice, cake or icecream.

Nyanzi notes that the healthier option for dessert is to have either a fresh fruit drink or eat a mixed fruit salad.

Nyanzi adds that for the main meal, Muslims are

still advised to ensure the "my plate technique. Here, for women half of the plate should be green leafy vegetables, while for the men vegetables should make up a third of the plate.

Nyanzi adds that the remaining portions of the plate should be covered with a protein and carbohydrate source.

Fluid intake

The long hours of fasting mean that one's intake of fluids such as water is reduced and one may be predisposed to dehydration, Kikomoko notes. Kikomoko and Mayanja advise those fasting to ensure that they drink as much water and fluids as possible.

The fluids should be taken at intervals after they have broken the fast during the time one is awake.

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