

## Eid Al-Fitr Rituals

Written by Semir Seid

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If you are looking for the announcement of Eid AlFitr, I tell you this is not it. This article is about how Eid is celebrated and pre Eid day's look like. Today might be the last day of Ramadan and festivities such as Eids are the most cherished days by Muslims. Annually, Muslims honor two festivals: Eid AlFitr and Eid AlAdha, and every Muslim celebrates these days in a spectacular way. Eid Alfitr in particular is eagerly awaited since it covers a collection so many of activities to enjoy.

Arrangements for the Eid are vast and depend on every household, since everyone wants to celebrate the day uniquely. However, what most people do commonly is out to buy clothes, sweets, biscuits and Abaeke, the most preferred drink on such occasions. Abaeke is a drink many people adore. Despite its health benefits, if preserved well, its taste lasts for weeks. For those who don't like this drink other soft drinks or juice are served.

On the last few days of fasting men get to wear their new hair-cuts. Back in my childhood I remember one day refusing to go to the mosque because I did not get my new haircut. For a child, Eid means a lot, you need all part of you to be new, so you can tell friends dad got that expensive looking staff just for you.

Some women make delicious cookies at home and others knead their flour and take it to the bakeries. Baking the cookies takes almost a whole day; kneading the flour, cutting piece by piece and making designs. But the scrumptious taste is worth spending the day.

Cleaning the house is the duty of every member in our family. All the utensils and clothes are washed and bleached. Every room is cleaned, walls cleared from spider nets, the carpets are brushed and the floor is washed on which petrol is applied to make it shiny. New or clean curtains are hang over the walls and the rooms get fresh smell of myrrh and various pleasing perfumes.

People always forget which Eid is about breaking the fast and which about charity. I always find them asking, 'Is this Eid of cloth or meat?'.

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Slaughtering a sheep, a goat or even a hen is one way to make a family feel like at home and celebrate. This way, stew is made for lunch and everybody makes it formally in one table on this day. On Eid AlFitr Muslims are allowed to slaughter an animal before the Eid day, unlike the other Eid. The skin of the slaughtered animals is usually sold to traders but in Eids it is given to the Mosques, so that the money from the skin can be used to help the poor or the mosque.

Announcing the Eid day depends on the sighting of the moon. Anyone located anywhere who happens to see the moon first is encouraged to immediately inform the authorities, who let people know it is the end of the fasting season and the beginning of the feast.

On Eid days the faithful perform a morning congregation prayer in an open field that can accommodate the people of the town. In the old days, Muslims in Asmara performed their Eid Salat or prayers in the Jamie mosque but through time as the number of prayers started to increase prayer place is preferred to be in the Bahti Meskerem square. Men wear the traditional white Jelebyas, or Thawb as the Arabs call it, and women wear their Luwyets when leaving for the prayer. Taking photographs and Selfies has become part of the culture for a while. Unfortunately, there is less work for photographers in these days as many people use their smart phones instead.

After finishing their prayers the faithful express their best wishes to one another saying Eid Mubarek or Eid Saeid (Happy Eid) and also saying Kulu Amin Waantum Biker, wishing one another to make it well to the coming Eid. Going on foot collectively is ordinary by those who initiate their journey to praying field from different mosques. Muslims consider both Eids occasions to show gratitude to Allah and remember Him, as well as give alms to the poor. That is why in Eid AlFitr the faithful are seen giving alms to the poor in the streets.

Later in the day you go around the town to visit extended family members. To visit every house without forgetting requires a mind road map just like UBER does to know from which house to start first, or else you find yourself lost the whole day. You can find some families have moved house and some have made it to your Eid to do list when they moved in to town. When I was young I was on duty to take my little sisters by hand and make sure every house is visited a year before is visited the following year. I knew since then that it is hard to lead people but I somehow managed for some years until I gladly left the chair to join my elder brothers. As children our pockets used to fill with sweets and cookies after visiting every house, and when kids on the streets asked us for Meeyedi (sweets and biscuits) we offered one or two. The three of us used to save and hide the special sweets gathered on the day and sort them one by one

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in the evening. Chocolats brought by aunty or uncle from abroad were never served to guests even though they insisted they should be. "No way!" we used to say, because enjoying such sweet candies rarely happened.

Nevertheless, if there was one thing I missed after I parted company with my sisters, it was the Hag'al Eid (of Eid). This is some amount of money relatives kindly offer children on this day. Collecting ten to twenty bucks at the end of the day when you got back home made you the Dangote at that time. It meant a lot.

Eid AlFitr, as its name indicates (breaking) is the festival of breaking the fast. Eid AlFitr is the first and only day in Shawal (a month after Ramadan) during which Muslims are not permitted to fast but they can observe six volunteer days of fasting after this day. To break the fast by porridge or qcha fit fit in the morning and before leaving for the mosque is taken as ordinary.

Eid AlFitr is celebrated for two days in a row in our country and the celebration extends up to three days in some Arab countries. The joy of this day is remarkable for everyone and particularly in cultures like ours since even walking with kids on the streets and visiting families and friends makes it unique and most cherished memory. I wish the day to be an occasion of creating new memories and a Mubarek one.