



Catering for Halal Guests

As a host with Australian Homestay Network (AHN), you will receive requests to host students with varying dietary requirements, including guests who are halal. Below are some misconceptions about providing these meals, as well as a few tips on how to best cater for guests who follow a halal diet.

COMMON MYTHS

Hosting a guest with special dietary requirements is challenging:

While hosting a guest with specific dietary requirements does require some consideration, it doesn't have to be hard. By communicating with your guest and their family, even before arrival, you can understand their needs and find suitable food options for them. You can cook meals that suit both of your diets with a little planning. Or, you may wish to switch to the same diet while the guest is staying with you; an adventure in your own home!

All halal food is spicy:

Halal food refers to food that is permissible according to Islamic law, and it does not necessarily mean that the food is spicy. The spiciness of a dish depends on the specific cuisine and personal preferences rather than whether it's halal or not.

Halal food is very limited:

Once you understand the concept, you will see that people following a halal diet can still enjoy a variety of foods. Halal refers to what is permissible or lawful in Islamic law, see this [Halal Fact File](#) for more info. It applies to food and drinks but also to the entire lifestyle of a Muslim. The opposite of halal is haram, which means 'forbidden'. Make sure you avoid ingredients that are prohibited in Islamic dietary laws, such as pork and pork by-products, alcohol, and any food or drinks that contain intoxicating substances. It's important to prevent cross-contamination by keeping halal and non-halal food separate. This includes separating all utensils, cooking equipment, and areas you prep food in.

Halal food is difficult to find:

Halal food is becoming more accessible. Supermarkets carry halal-certified products and there are also halal butchers, restaurants and online retailers that cater to the halal market. Look for halal certification labels on food products. These labels indicate that the food has been prepared and processed according to halal standards. Halal certification is typically provided by recognised halal certification authorities or Islamic organisations.

Note: There are a few variations of this label depending on the standard of the venue the food was prepared. For more information, visit halalfood.com.au. The website has a handy [product directory](#) where you can search for products and availability at Australian supermarkets.



Halal meals are expensive to prepare:

While there may be certain specialised halal products that can be more expensive, providing halal meals does not necessarily have to be costly. Many basic food items are readily available in most grocery stores.

Halal food is not as tasty as non-halal food:

This is a subjective opinion. Ultimately, it depends on the skill of the cook and the quality of ingredients used in the preparation of the meal.

It is essential to approach hosting guests with special dietary requirements with an open mind and a willingness to learn and accommodate their needs. Clear communication and understanding can help ease these misconceptions and create a welcoming environment for all.



Vegetarian or vegan options are always halal:

While vegetarian or vegan options may seem like a safe choice, they may not always be halal. Some vegetarian or vegan products may contain ingredients or additives that are not permissible in Islam, such as alcohol or gelatine derived from non-halal sources. It is important to check the ingredients or look for halal certifications on packaged products.

If you do want to incorporate some vegetarian meals, take a look at [these recipes from My Halal Kitchen](#).

BONUS TIPS

Be cautious when dining out with your guest:

When eating at restaurants or ordering takeout, most places offer vegetarian or vegan options now. We recommend choosing halal-certified or Muslim-owned establishments on the nights you treat yourselves when you have a guest with a halal dietary request. If you're unsure about the halal status of a particular dish, it's best to ask the waiter on duty about the ingredients and preparation methods.



Check food additives and ingredients at home:

Some food additives, such as gelatine, enzymes, and emulsifiers, may be derived from animal products or non-halal sources. Always check the ingredient lists on your products.



Be mindful of where you buy halal meat:

Meat should come from animals slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines. The animal must be alive at the time of slaughter, and a Muslim person must perform the ritual slaughter while invoking the name of Allah (God). It's recommended to look for halal certification on meat products or purchase from trusted halal butchers. Halal butchers are becoming more common, you'll be surprised how easy it is to find one near you!

Offer vegetarian and seafood options:

To accommodate a wider range of dietary preferences, consider including vegetarian and seafood dishes in your menu. However, ensure that the seafood is prepared according to halal standards, as some Muslims may follow additional dietary restrictions.



Educate your whole household:

If you're providing a halal diet as part of your homestay packages, make sure your family members are aware of the dietary requirements too and understand the importance of avoiding cross-contamination.

Communicate with your guests prior to their arrival:

We touched on this earlier but it's so easy and important. Ask your guests in advance about their dietary needs and preferences, what they like to eat, and their recommendations on how best to cater for them. This will help you plan and prepare accordingly.



Contact AHN

For General Support / Feedback
Contact your local AHN office
homestaynetwork.org/contact-us

 24/7 After Hours Emergencies
Within Australia: 1300 69 7829
International: (+61) 02 8905 0321

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