IRAQI CULTURAL FOODS FACT SHEET

Arabic Individuals
Arabic people come from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Kuwait, Syria, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. (See map.)
93% of Arabic people are Islamic.

Popular Foods
• Rice
• Flat breads (pita, naan)
• Wheat
• Bulgar
• Cous cous
• Chicken
• Beef
• Lamb
• Eggplant, Zucchini
• Yoghurt
• Olive oil
• Dates, Figs, Plums, Apricots
• Tea

Food Choices & Religion
Due to many Iraqi people being Islamic, pork is typically not eaten. Alcohol is also not allowed. Animal items must be Halal.

Halal: Food that is humanely killed in accordance to Islamic law.

Food Choices & Holidays
Holidays in Iraq can affect eating patterns and choices. There are no specific foods for these holidays but the amounts change.

Al-Hijra: Arabic New Year; A big feast happens to celebrate

Eid Al-Adha: “Festival of Sacrifice”; A four-day festival with large quantities of food prepared

Ramadan: Ninth month of the Islamic year; 30 days of fasting from sunrise to sunset

Eid Al-Fitr: “Festival of Breaking of the Fast”; End of Ramadan; celebrated with a large feast
Iraqi Eating Patterns

Many Iraqi people consume protein at least once per day (94%), consume plant-based protein only sometimes daily (7.6%), and fruits and vegetables less than once per day (55–81%) in studies. Most meals contain rice or bread served with it. Tea is consumed with meals and up to 5 times per day.

Typically, Iraqi people skip breakfast, especially school-aged kids and teenagers. If they do eat it, it is light, like flatbread and cheese. Late dinner is the main meal and typically large with multiple servings encouraged.

Some Iraqi people eat with their hands out of a common bowl, while others eat with utensils off of plates. Meals are typically eaten at a table and they sit for a long time, eating slowly, with multiple courses. Typically they eat with their right hand.

Iraqi Health Beliefs

Some Iraqi people believe that alcohol makes people “haram” and not worthy of marriage and not to be trusted. Iraqi traditionally consume black seed to help with respiratory ailments, scammony root for constipation, cardamom in coffee for digestion, cumin for stomach cramps and gas, and fennel to prevent obesity.

Current Food Practices

The Iraqi diet has a lot of foods that are high in fat and added sugars, more animal fat, and lower fiber. More chicken and eggs are eaten than red meat and fish. Fruit and vegetable intake has lowered recently in Iraq. Food quality has been replaced in most cases by quantity and ease of access. Carbonated beverages, such as soda and fruit drinks, have grown to making up 25% of teenagers’ daily fluid intake.

There is a higher obesity and diabetes rate in Arab countries due to higher sugary beverage and simple starch consumption.

In America, there are an estimated 1.2–3.5 million Arab immigrants. Higher rates of diabetes, obesity, and heart disease are seen in this group also due to traditional foods and poor quality American foods, such as soda and fast foods.