**Ideas for Contextualise**

Re-enact ceremony or parts of ritual. Take photos, place them in order and display with captions.

Make food (eg Hindu sweets) and share ritualistically.

Write instructions to guide a newcomer through the ritual.

Write a recount as if you had attended (eg) a Hindu wedding, how it made you feel, etc.

Find video clips of the ceremonies.

Artefacts really bring the learning to life so invest in a Buddhist bowl, a Seder meal kit, etc.

**FOOD RITUALS IN BUDDHISM**

Food rituals transmit collective and individual messages about religious principles. Religion influences dietary intake by prescribing or forbidding certain foods, providing ritual foods or meals, and reinforcing key cultural and social values. Unlike Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, Buddhism has less rigid dietary laws defining what people can eat and with whom they can dine. However, fasting and feasting are integral parts of most religious traditions, and Buddhism is no exception.

Food rituals mark changes in personal status as well, serving as boundary markers through the life cycle. Special foods may be prepared for birthdays, weddings, funerals, tonsures, and ordinations, for example, particularly if monks officiate. In Theravada traditions, some of these rituals are Brahmanic in origin and feature rice and milk-based dishes. Harvest celebrations also make confections from foods such as rice, peanuts, sugar, sesame seeds, and coconut, possibly related to the sweet offerings of South India, called *panchakadjaya* (five foods). Puffed rice is used at funerals to symbolize rice that cannot be grown again.

The central daily rite of lay Buddhism is the offering of food. Theravada laity make this offering to the monks. Mahayana laity make it to the Buddha as part of the morning or evening worship. In both settings merit is shared.

**Why do Buddhist monks not eat after noon?**

Buddhist monks observe a strict code of conduct (*vinaya*) in order to discipline the body and mind. Food is regarded simply as a means of keeping the body alive so that the spiritual path may be followed. Food is not taken in order to beautify the body or because it has a pleasant taste.
According to the *vinaya* rules, a meal should be taken before noon.
A meal in the evening may cause drowsiness and make the practice of meditation difficult. Monks discipline themselves to be satisfied with very few material things, including food. Also by eating only one meal a day, they reduce the burden on the lay community which supports them. An exception to the rule of not eating after noon is made during an illness.

**What food is suitable for people to give as an offering (*dana*)?** The *vinaya* rules state that a monk should only eat what is offered to him and he should accept any item without showing pleasure or displeasure. The offering (*dana*) of food to the monks has been the tradition from the days of the Buddha.

Any type of food (not containing alcohol), which is normally taken by lay people, is suitable for offering to monks, bearing in mind that many monks prefer to be vegetarian. The monks are prohibited to eat meat of animals specially killed for the offering, if they are aware of it.

There is a mistaken belief that the greater the variety and tastier the food offered, the greater is the merit acquired. In fact, an act that leads to gluttony cannot be regarded as a skilful action.

A[*dana*](http://www.londonbuddhistvihara.org/qa/qa_practices.htm#dana)(an act of generosity) should be conducted with wholesome thoughts, without the aim of selfish gain, expecting some benefit in return.

**Zen monks have rituals for many things they do**, from eating to cleaning to meditation. Ritual gives something a sense of importance — if it’s important enough to have a ritual, it’s important enough to be given your entire attention, and to be done slowly and correctly. You don’t have to learn the Zen monk rituals — you can create your own, for the preparation of food, for eating, for cleaning, for what you do before you start your work, for what you do when you wake up and before you go to bed, for what you do just before exercise. Anything you want, really.

**FOOD RITUALS IN JUDAISM: The Seder and the Haggadah**

**http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/holydays/passover** 

**The Fast of the Firstborn**

The day before Passover begins the Fast of the Firstborn is observed. All first born males fast on this day to celebrate their escape from the Plague of the First Born.

**Seder meals**

The highlight of Passover observance takes place on the first two nights, when friends and family gather together for ritual seder meals.

Seder means 'order' and the ceremonies are arranged in a specific order. Special plates and cutlery are used which are kept exclusively for Passover.

The Haggadah is a book which tells in fourteen steps the story of the Jewish experience in Egypt and of the Exodus and revelation of God.

As the story of each of the ten plagues is read out a drop of wine is spilt to remind Jews that their liberation was tinged with sadness at the suffering of the Egyptians.

**The Four Questions**

The haggadah also contains songs, blessings, psalms and Four Questions. These four questions are:

**Why do we eat unleavened bread?**

Unleavened bread or matzo is eaten to remember the Exodus when the Israelites fled Egypt with their dough to which they had not yet added yeast.

Three types of herbs: horseradish and beetroot paste, lettuce and a whole horseradish root

**Why do we eat bitter herbs?**

Bitter herbs, usually horseradish, are included in the meal to represent the bitterness of slavery.

**Why do we dip our food in liquid?**

At the beginning of the meal a piece of potato is dipped in salt water to recall the tears the Jews shed as slaves.

**Why do we eat in a reclining position?**

In ancient times, people who were free reclined on sofas while they ate. Today cushions are placed on chairs to symbolise freedom and relaxation, in contrast to slavery.

Usually the youngest person present will ask the questions and the father will respond. The paradox of this is that these four questions should be asked spontaneously, but celebrations cannot happen unless they are asked!

**Children**

Children are central to Passover proceedings and symbolise the continuity of the Jewish people. Customs are designed to hold their attention. There's the hunt for the afikomen, where a piece of matzoh is hidden which children have to find and hold 'ransom' until a reward is given.

**FOOD RITUALS IN SIKHISM: Langar**

**Langar** ([Punjabi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjabi_language): ਲੰਗਰ, [Hindi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindi_language): लंगर) is the term used in the [Sikh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism) religion for free food, served in a [Gurdwara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gurdwara). At the Langar, only vegetarian food is served to ensure that all people, regardless of their dietary restrictions, can eat as equals. Langar is open to Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike.

The institution of the Sikh Langar or free kitchen was started by the first Sikh Guru, [Guru Nanak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Nanak). It was designed to uphold the principle of equality between all people regardless of religion, caste, colour, creed, age, gender or social status, a revolutionary concept in the caste-ordered society of 16th century [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) where Sikhism began. In addition to the ideals of equality, the tradition of Langar expresses the ethics of sharing, community, inclusiveness and oneness of all humankind. "..the Light of God is in all hearts."

## FOOD RITUALS IN ISLAM: Dietary Laws and Ramadam

Muslims have strict rules on the food that they eat, especially thinking about meat. They do not eat anything that is from a pig. Pork, bacon and sausages are out as is anything made from lard like ice-cream or biscuits. Any meat that they do eat has to be prepared in a special way. This is called halal. Very often favourite Muslim meals are curries, kebabs and rice.

Muslims wash and pray before meals. The eldest person present always eats first.

Drinking alcohol is strictly forbidden. They do not provide it for non-muslim guests and they are not allowed to sell it for a profit.

**SAUM** (Fifth Pillar of Islam)
This is all about Ramadan. The ninth month of the Islam calendar. It is special because it is when Muhammad (Pbuh) began receiving the messages from God. For thirty days Muslims fast, they do not eat or drink during daylight hours. It start when the new moon is seen at the start of the month and ends when the new moon is seen again at the end of the month. The fast is to remind them how difficult it is to be poor, hungry and thirsty in a hot place. It reminds them to thank God for his gift of the Qur'an. It also serves to make them think about the essentials and luxuries of life and so not be greedy.

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| FOOD RITUALS IN HINDUISMHow to eat is as important as what we eat according to Hinduism. Table manners in Indian philosophy is guided more by balance and to ensure great digestion for the creation of Ojas.  '**Ojas'**, is the outcome from food once it had been perfectly digested. Ojas is positive, nurturing energy that boosts the immune, nervous, endocrine and psychological systems in the individual.  The opposite of **Ojas** is called **Ama.** Indigestion creates Ama (toxins formed in the body due to improper digestion and imbalance).. |

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| *-* Steady the mind and the body before you begin to eat.-   Wash hands and feet before the meal.-   Begin your meal with a blessing.-   Do not eat when you are upset.-   Avoid serving ice-cold water with the meal.  Sip warm or room temperature water.  Cold water makes the stomach work harder to digest the meal as heat is required for digestion.-   Serve freshly cooked food whenever possible-   Serve mostly cooked foods with small portions of raw salads of easily digestible carrots, cucumber, light colour greens.  **Slow Cooked foods** are easier to digest and they retain the nutrients besides tasting heavenly.-   Avoid serving milk with the meal.  Milk is a hard food to digest and is best served by itself after it is warmed to help the milk to be more digestible.    Milk is best served warm at night before bed, as calcium is more easily absorbed when a person is lying down.-   Chew your food well.  Delight in the flavour, texture, aromas and colours of the food.  Celebrate your meal-   Eat silently or have a good conversation.-   Eat a modest portion. Leave about 1/4 of the stomach empty to aid in digestion.-   Rest a bit after the meal, enjoy good light conversation or relaxing music after the meal.  In the afternoon if one is relaxing by lying down, lie or curl up on the left side of the body in order to properly digest the meal.  Do not rest after an evening meal but rather go for a short walk. |

### Food rituals in the Hindu Naming Ceremony

There are several ceremonies to do with the birth of a child in Hinduism. Before the birth, prayers are said at the temple for the child’s future health and happiness.  Throughout the pregnancy the mother reads and recites from the Hindu scriptures so that they have a positive influence on the unborn baby. Soon after birth, the auspicious word ‘Aum’ is written in honey on the baby’s tongue. The exact time of birth is noted and a pundit calculates the lucky initials for the baby according to the corresponding astrological constellation. The family then has to decide on a name beginning with one of those initials. After 40 days, the baby is taken to a Hindu temple for the ‘namakarama’ or naming ceremony.  The priest announces the name and says prayers for the long life, health and well-being of the baby. Blessed water is sprinkled on the baby and a few drops of ‘amrit’ (sweetened water) are put on the tongue.  When the baby is about 6 months old, there is another ceremony ‘annaprasana’, when he or she is given a first taste of cooked rice.  At the first birthday, the baby’s head is completely shaved for the first time, as a symbol of leaving any bad deeds from a past life behind and making a fresh start in the new life.

**Annaprashana**, **a** [**Hindu**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism) **rite-of-passage ritual that marks an infant's first intake of food other than milk.**

The term *annaprashan* literally means "food feeding" or "eating of food". The ceremony is usually arranged in consultation with a priest, who arranges an auspicious date on which to conduct the ceremony. Commonly referred to in English as ***First Rice***, the ceremony is usually carried out when the child is about 6 months of age. (some Hindu communities do it later). It is an occasion for celebration, and extended family, friends and neighbours will be invited to attend.
The mother or grandmother will prepare a small bowl of payesh (boiled rice, milk & sugar) which is blessed in a brief [puja](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puja_%28Hinduism%29). The child will generally be held in the mother's lap, and a senior male family member (grandfather or uncle) will feed it a small spoonful of the payesh, to general celebration. Other members of the family then take turns to give the child a taste.
The feeding ceremony is often followed with a game, in which the child is presented with a tray containing a number of objects. These will include a bangle or jewel (symbolising wealth), a book (symbolising learning), a pen (symbolising career) and a clay pot or container of earth/soil (symbolising property). The child's future direction and prospects in life are indicated by the object which it prefers to hold and play with.