

# The adab of host and guest

Hospitality in the Qur'an begins with Ibrahim, who served his visitors himself. The sunnah then fixes the host's duty and, just as plainly, the guest's limit.



## ★ The honoured guests

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ

"Has there reached you the account of the honoured guests of Ibrahim?" The Qur'an calls them honoured before it says a word about the food.

**Qur'an 51:24**

## ★ He went himself

فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِينٍ

"Then he hurried to his household and came with a fat roasted calf." He brought it near and said: will you not eat? No servant, no delay, the best he had.

**Qur'an 51:26 • 51:27**

## ★ Guest before self

وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

"And they give them preference over themselves, even though they are in need." Said of the Ansar, who housed the Muhajirun.

**Qur'an 59:9**

## ★ Ask leave, then greet

لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بَيْتِكُمْ حَتَّىٰ تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتَسَلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا

"Do not enter houses other than your own until you have asked permission and greeted their people." The visit starts at the threshold, not inside.

**Qur'an 24:27**

## ★ One condition, three duties

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day: let him not harm his neighbour, let him honour his guest, and let him say what is good or keep silent."

**Sahih al-Bukhari 6136**

## ★ Three days

الضِّيَافَةُ ثَلَاثَةُ أَيَّامٍ جَائِزَتُهُ

"Hospitality is three days, and his ja'izah." Asked what the ja'izah was: "A day and a night" — the first day is the generous one.

**Sahih al-Bukhari 6476**

## ★ The guest's limit

وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُ أَنْ يَثْوِيَ عِنْدَهُ حَتَّىٰ يَخْرُجَهُ

"It is not lawful for him to stay on until he puts his host in difficulty." Whatever the host spends after the three days is counted as sadaqah.

**Sunan Abi Dawud 3748 • sahih**

## ★ Say yes

إِذَا دُعِيَ أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَى الْوَلِيمَةِ فَلْيَأْتِهَا

"When one of you is invited to a wedding feast, let him come." He ﷺ said he would answer an invitation to a shank or a trotter.

**Sahih al-Bukhari 5173 • 2568**

## ★ There is enough

طَعَامُ الْإِثْنَيْنِ كَافِي الثَّلَاثَةِ، وَطَعَامُ الثَّلَاثَةِ كَافِي الْأَرْبَعَةِ

"The food of two is enough for three, and the food of three is enough for four." Said about a table, not about a budget.

**Sahih al-Bukhari 5392**