

Religious Observances Toolkit 2024

This collection of celebratory dates and resources represents five globally practiced religions: Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. *Note:* Celebratory dates can vary within a given country or culture. Similarly, food and culinary traditions vary among countries, cultures and even individuals. While this list is neither exhaustive nor definitive, it is meant to be a starting point for understanding and celebrating the experiences that shape an individual — including their eating styles and traditions! This toolkit has been edited in part by members of several Academy member interest groups, including the following:

[Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders \(AAPI\) MIG](#) empowers members to be the leaders in cultural evidence-based practices in nutrition and dietetics for people of Asian or Pacific Islander origin or those interested in learning more about these cultures.

[Indians in Nutrition and Dietetics \(IND\) MIG](#) brings together practitioners of Asian Indian origin or those interested in learning more about this culture.

[Religion \(RMIG\) MIG](#) offers a community for Academy members from various practice areas with an interest in cross-cultural awareness and reducing health disparities, specifically as they relate to the Jewish, Muslim and Christian populations.

Hinduism

An individual's country, state and culture influence holidays observed, celebratory dates and even the spelling of a given holiday.

Celebratory Dates

January 15	Makar Sankranti/Poush Parban/Pongal <i>Celebrates Harvest season</i>
February 14	Vasant Panchami <i>Celebrates Goddess Saraswati</i>
March 8	Maha Shivratri <i>Celebrates Shiva</i>
March 25	Holi <i>Arrival of spring; celebrations begin at sundown</i>
April 9-17	Chaitra or Vasanta Navratri <i>Worship of Goddess Durga</i>
April 17	Raam Navami <i>Birthday of Lord Sri Raam</i>
May 10	Akshaya Tritiya <i>Worshipping Lord Vishnu Birthday of Lord Parashuram Ganga Jayanti</i>

July 7	Rathayatra <i>Chariot Procession of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Goddess Shubhadra</i>
August 19	Raksha Bandhan <i>Celebrates the relationship between brothers and sisters</i>
August 26	Krishna Janmashtami <i>Birth of Lord Sri Krishna</i>
September 6-7	Ganesh Chaturthi <i>Birthday of Lord Ganesh</i>
October 9-13	Durga Puja <i>Celebrates Goddess Durga and the victory of good over evil</i>
October 12	Dussehra <i>Commemorates Rama's triumph over Ravana</i>
November 1	Diwali <i>Festival of lights</i>
November 7	Chaat Puja <i>Worship of Sun God and Goddess Sashthi</i>
December 11	Geeta Jayanti <i>Advent of the Great Scripture Srimad Bhagawad Geeta</i>

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Judaism

The [Religion MIG](#) hosts a guide to [traditional and Kosher rules](#), as well as other resources. For patients and clients interested in learning more, share the article, "[6 Healthful Eating Tips to Consider During Passover](#)," on [eatright.org](#).

The most important day, Shabbat, or the Sabbath, begins every Friday at sundown and ends Saturday at sundown. This is a day of reflection and rest. The concluding days of Passover and the eighth day of Sukkot are especially important. For a more comprehensive list and explanation of Jewish holidays, check out this [guide](#).

All celebratory dates begin at sundown on the foremost date listed.

Celebratory Dates

March 23-24	Purim <i>Reading of the book of Esther</i>
April 22-30	Passover <i>Commemorates the Exodus from Egypt and escape from slavery</i>
May 5-6	Yom HaShoah <i>Holocaust remembrance</i>
June 11-13	Shavuot <i>Commemorates the receiving of the Torah from Mt. Sinai</i>
October 2-4	Rosh Hashanah <i>Jewish New Year; beginning of 10 days of atonement</i>
October 11-12	Yom Kippur <i>Day of Atonement and repentance</i>
October 16-23	Sukkot <i>Feast of the Tabernacles</i>
October 24-25	Simchat Torah <i>Rejoicing of the Law</i>
December 25 - January 2, 2025	Chanukah <i>Festival of Lights; also known as Hanukkah</i>

Christianity

The [Religion MIG](#) hosts information related to [Lenten fasting](#) as well as other resources.

Celebratory Dates

January 7	Orthodox Christmas Day <i>Birth of Jesus</i>
February 14	Ash Wednesday <i>Start of Lent</i>
March 24-30	Holy Week <i>Commemorates the Passion of Jesus</i>
March 29	Good Friday <i>Commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus</i>
March 31	Easter Sunday <i>Commemorates Jesus' resurrection</i>
May 5	Orthodox Easter <i>Commemorates Jesus' resurrection</i>
May 9	Ascension Day <i>Commemorates Jesus' ascension to heaven</i>
May 19	Pentecost <i>Commemorates the Holy Spirit</i>
December 25	Christmas <i>Birth of Jesus</i>

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Islam

The [Religion MIG](#) hosts a number of resources about fasting, eating a Halal diet and more. They also provide a Ramadan presentation and toolkit. For patients and clients interested in learning more, share the article, "[Ramadan: The Practice of Fasting](#)," on [eatright.org](#).

There are two main holidays common to Muslims all over the world: [Eid al-Fitr](#) and [Eid al-Adha](#). Additional holidays below have spiritual meaning for all Muslims; however, they may vary in importance based on one's country and culture. All celebratory dates follow the Islamic lunar calendar and begin at sundown the day prior.

Celebratory Dates

February 24	Laylatul-bara'ah <i>The night of freedom from fire; occurs between 14 and 15 day of Sha'ban</i>
March 10 - April 9	Ramadan <i>Month of obligatory fasting</i>
April 10	Eid al-Fitr <i>Festival of Breaking Fasts; First day of Shawwal; the first of the three months named as "Ashhur al-Hajj," or the months of Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca</i>
June 15	Day of Arafah <i>Obligatory act of pilgrimage to Mecca; Ninth of Dh'ul-Hijjah</i>
June 16-18	Eid al-Adha <i>Festival of sacrifice; tenth, eleventh and twelfth of Dh'ul-Hijjah</i>
July 7	First of Muharram <i>Beginning of the Islamic New Year</i>
July 17	Ashura <i>Tenth of Muharram</i>
September 4	Rabi'ul-Awwal <i>Birth Month of the Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him!</i>

Buddhism

The Buddhist New Year is celebrated on different days depending on the Buddhist tradition one follows.

Celebratory Dates

January 18	Bodhi Day <i>Commemorates the day Buddha experienced enlightenment; this celebratory date of Bodhi Day follows a secular, Western tradition that falls on a fixed calendar date.</i>
January 25	New Year <i>Mahayana tradition</i>
February 10	Chinese New Year <i>First day of the Lunar New Year</i>
April 24-26	New Year <i>Theravada tradition</i>
May 23	Vesak Day <i>Birth of Buddha; also known as "Wesak Day" or "Buddha Day"</i>

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"Peace be upon him" should follow the name of any prophet as a sign of respect, as dictated by the Qur'an.