

# Eating & cooking

Offer small comforts from people's home countries and consider religious requirements.

Norms around what, when and how to eat differ greatly among cultures.

Travelling can be stressful. For many, eating and drinking in a familiar way can offer simple but appreciated comfort.



## In this guide

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### 1. General etiquette and social customs

#### **Don't pass judgement**

Food choices are influenced by customs, ethnic background, financial means, and preference.

#### **Hot water**

In most North and South East Asia cultures, water is consumed hot or warm. Guests from Asia, or older members of groups, may appreciate cups of warm or hot water, rather than chilled water.

#### **Table and seating configuration**

Dining at round tables is common in Asian cultures and encourages inclusivity as everyone can see each other. If you own a restaurant serving tourist groups, consider investing in round tables to make these guests feel comfortable.

### **Respect for elders**

In many cultures, the eldest or most senior person usually takes the seat facing the entrance, which signifies hierarchical respect. Water and meals are usually offered to this person first.

### **Eating with gusto**

In Japan, slurping as loudly as you can signals enjoyment as well as possibly enhancing the flavours of the food. Many westerners find this disconcerting. Try to keep an open mind.

## **2. Offering a range of meal options**

If you have guests from North Asia, South East Asia or Latin America, it may be timely to revise your breakfast menu:

### **Typical Chinese breakfast**

Includes steamed buns, fried rice, boiled eggs, fried noodles, ham, pork, tofu pudding, rice dumplings, pancakes, rice porridge (congee), dough sticks and vegetables. Drinks include hot water (free), an assortment of tea, corn juice, milk tea, fruit juice, almond milk and soda.

### **Typical Japanese breakfast**

Usually a bowl of rice, with an accompaniment for flavor, such as natto (fermented soybeans), jako (fish similar to whitebait), nori tsukudani (paste of seaweed and soy sauce) and raw or cooked eggs. Japanese guests also enjoy a variety of miso soup and Japanese green tea.

### **Typical South East Asia breakfast**

Breakfast menus in South East Asia are strikingly different for each country. They may include rice congee, raw/cooked egg with minced pork, coconut rice, grilled fish, tofu and miso soup.

### **Typical Latin American breakfast**

There's no such thing as a typical Latin American breakfast. Countries have their own unique offerings. Guests from Brazil might enjoy bread, cheese and ham together with black bean and meat soup. Those from Argentina will often eat traditional breakfast pastries such as medialunas and bizcochos. Other breakfast foods include sweet corn cake, rice and beans mixed together, fried or scrambled eggs, fried plantains and tortillas.

### **Dietary considerations for halal food**

It's important to respect the dietary rules of Muslims who eat halal food. Production of food, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics according to halal is an assurance of quality, safety, cleanliness and ethical consideration for the environment. Halal means permissible or lawful, and haram means forbidden.

- Muslims who eat halal are permitted to eat cereals, rice, pasta, all fruit, vegetables, milk, cheese and yoghurt (that do not contain alcohol, animal fats, gelatin, bacon or pork or animal rennet). They can eat halal certified meat and poultry.
- Most practicing Muslims don't drink alcohol, but this varies.
- To find out where halal-certified products are sold or served, see the [Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand](#).

### 3. Eating utensils and services

#### Chopsticks

If you're dining with or hosting North Asian guests, provide chopsticks as well as knives, forks and spoons. When eating with chopsticks, make sure not to point, tap or chew the ends as this is considered impolite. Do not stick your chopsticks vertically in the rice bowl, as this mimics the use of traditional incense used to honour the dead.

#### Eating with hands

Some cultures such as Malaysians and Indonesians maintain the practice of eating with their hands. For instance, Muslims eat with their right hand.

#### Warm water for handwashing

In many Asian cultures, particularly Japan, it is customary to provide guests with warm water and towels for washing hands before and after dinner.

### 4. Cooking facilities

#### Rice cookers

Guests from North and South East Asia enjoy eating rice as a main component of many of their meals. Consider supplying a rice cooker and make it available for guests in shared cooking spaces or at the reception.

#### Cooking prohibited

If guests aren't permitted to cook in your rooms, place clear prohibition notices. Particularly discourage guests from using the kettle as a rice cooker, and from using their own cookers as these can leave undesirable odours.

1. Watch Cultural Insights video about China where Faye explains how to make guests feel welcome.



2. Is your tourism business ready to cater for a diverse range of guests?
3. Do you plan to provide any additional items such as chopsticks, rice cookers or services such as warm water?

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