

Rizwan Mosque invites community to share the feast at open house

By Polina Olsen
The Southwest Portland Post

Light shone through the windows and into the simple downstairs room at the Portland Rizwan Mosque on Southwest 35th Drive. September 5 was open house, and members invited the community to share their feast as they broke the daily fast this holy month demands.

"During Ramadan we fast from dawn to dusk every day for 30 days," Yasemin Zafar explained as she straightened the skull cap on her two year old son. Although her family came from Turkey, Zafar grew up in Germany and came to Portland with her husband about three years ago. "It's a time of reflection," she said. "During the month, Muslims concentrate on spirituality and becoming a better person. It's also a fast of the tongue. We try not to say hurtful things."

Zafar and the other women chatted and prepared food behind the room divider.

Men gathered on the other side as one man chanted from the Qu'ran, the holy Muslim book. A sermon in English followed: "The strength and training we get during Ramadan serves us all year," the speaker said. He delivered

a message of patience, friendship and forgiveness.

Built in 1987, the Rizwan Mosque serves Portland's Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. According to the website www.alislam.org, AMC is a "dynamic, fast growing international revival within Islam" that was founded in 1889. They believe "jihad by the sword has no place in Islam, endorse a separation of mosque and state, advocate for universal human rights, and categorically reject terrorism in any form." In Portland, many of the 80 members are from Pakistan. Others are Indian, Gambian, Nigerian, Vietnamese, Turkish, and American. They live throughout the Portland metropolitan area.

Tonight some women dressed like any American while others wore elegant clothes from their original country. All draped delicate scarves over their hair. Chicken korma, butter chicken, shrimp fried with noodles, and elegant cakes graced the tables. A centerpiece of dates would break the fast, according to Muslim custom.

"Our aim is to educate people on Islamic teaching and get to know the community," Rizwan President Richard Reno said about the decision to hold an open house. "We encourage openness between everyone. Islam is probably the most misunderstood religion in



Men listen to a talk before the evening feast during the celebration of Ramadan at the Rizwan mosque. (Post photo by Polina Olsen)

America."

Regarding Ramadan, Reno said Muslims seek spiritual advancement through fasting, similar to other religions. He talked about other holy

days and celebrations. "The day after Ramadan ends, we have Eid ul-Fitr," he said. The day starts with services at the mosque, followed by a feast with special desserts. "My favorite is kheer."

Kheer (Rice Pudding)

Ingredients

2 cups coconut milk	½ teaspoon ground cardamom
2 cups milk	¼ cup raisins
3 tablespoons white sugar	½ teaspoon rose water (optional)
½ cup Basmati rice	¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted
¼ cup chopped pistachio nuts	

Directions

1. Bring the coconut milk, milk and sugar to a boil in a large saucepan. Add basmati rice, and simmer over low heat until the mixture thickens and the rice is tender, about 20 minutes.
2. Stir in the raisins, cardamom and rose water, and cook for a few more minutes. Ladle into serving bowls, and garnish with almonds and pistachios.

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