



Emerging Food Trends in the Middle East

A REVIEW OF RAMADAN 2021



Sarah Al Shaalan
Research Analyst,
Consumer Lifestyles
Middle East & Africa

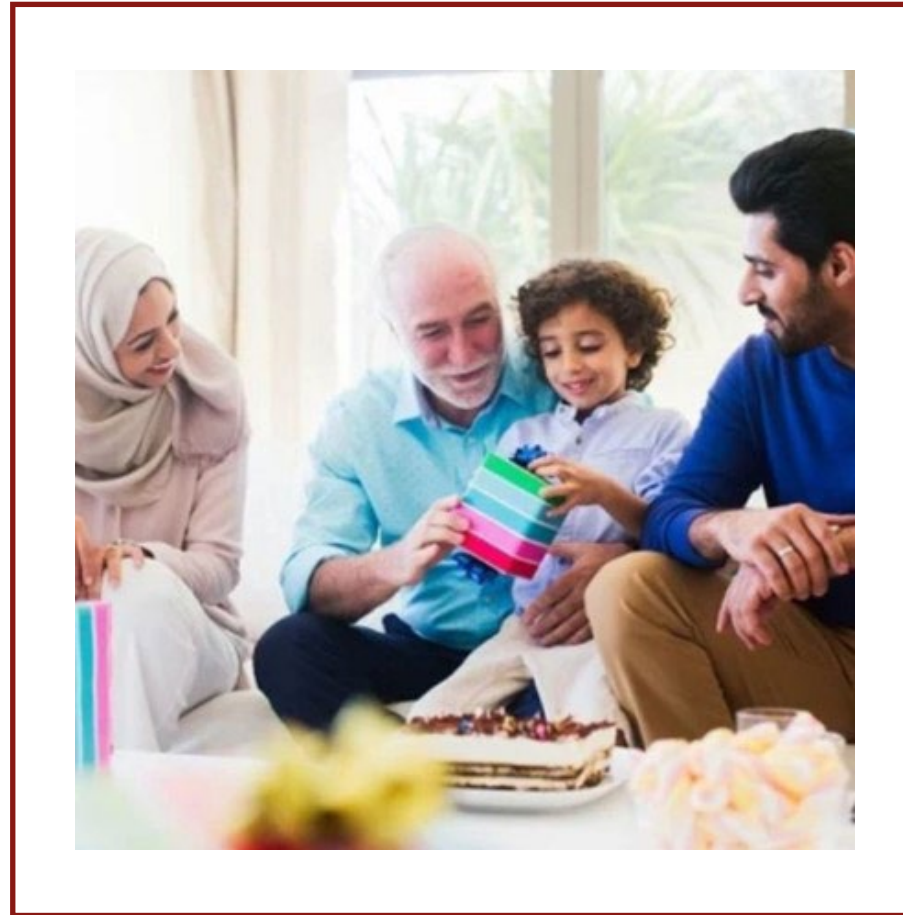


Middle Eastern consumers returned to “normal” Ramadan celebrations

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, many Muslims around the world have experienced their second socially distanced month of Ramadan.

However, in the Middle East, Ramadan felt somewhat more like normal this year, with a return of congregational prayers at mosques and less restricted movement, which means freer shopping opportunities. Consumers are no longer required to keep to their household units as social distancing begins to lift and vaccinations continue to be rolled out, making Ramadan feel all the more special this year.

While Ramadan is a time for prayer, fasting and reflection, it is also characterised as a month of joy, festivities and togetherness, where people reconnect with family and loved ones. With the festivities taking place from now on, consumers will be looking for safe ways to make up for lost time, creating opportunities for brands to engage with new and existing shoppers.



**Health-focused
products will appeal
to consumers**



A healthier Ramadan

While many people's understanding of Ramadan is focused on the fasting element, the month was also heavily centered around food and eating together. But as people were breaking their fast, it was easy to consume excessive calories as many traditional dishes are high in carbs and sugar.

The pandemic was a reminder of the importance of healthy living, urging many to focus anew on their health and wellbeing and prioritise exercise. For many with medical conditions, Ramadan acts as a reset button, presenting itself as a great opportunity to detox and bring back a balanced and healthy lifestyle: 41% of Saudis plan to eat more nutritious foods in 2021.

Brands could have played a role in driving motivation during this time by offering advice and activities that could help people maintain their health, especially since 33% of Saudis have used an app for diet or nutrition advice.



Immunity-supporting ingredients a key theme

The pandemic has made people even more interested in immunity-boosting ingredients.

Ramadan in particular paves the way for immunity product claims to grow further as diets are restricted, with many consumers opting to taking daily multivitamin tablets to maintain their vitamin intake. This has resulted in a number of VMS brands and retailers highlighting their relevance during the holiday period.

With 52% of Saudis currently including immune-boosting foods in their diet*, this creates huge scope for brands to expand pro-immunity functional claims. For instance, Organic Press in UAE launched an anti-inflammatory wellness package that is fortified with essential minerals to boost immunity and developed to assist in reducing inflammation



Healthier Ramadan

Use Coupon Code 'VSHOP20' for 20% OFF

Shop Now

NATURE'S BOUNTY
D3
1000 IU
Supports Strong Bones & Immune Health
IMMUNE HEALTH
120 Rapid Release Softgels

NATURE'S BOUNTY
C
500mg
Support for a Healthy Immune System
IMMUNE HEALTH
90 Chewable Tablets

Vitamin online shop

Detox from inside and out clean beauty

Part of Ramadan is about cleansing the body through fasting, meaning that beauty brands had the opportunity to take it a step further by urging consumers to complete an external detox with clean, organic products on the skin.

Given a growing awareness of the benefits of natural and organic, a surge in consumer interest regarding ingredient toxicity, sourcing and formulations have evolved over recent years in the Middle East, following the so-called “clean beauty” trend in the West. The pandemic has further accelerated this trend.

For consumers in the Arab world, the use of natural ingredients in skincare products will continue to spark an interest. But there is still a long way to go as the region’s beauty products continue to lag behind Europe in organic, preservative free and vegan claims.



Emerald Clarifying Face Oil



**An opportunity to
advance sustainability
progress in the region**



Extending Ramadan's spirit of giving

Increasingly environmentally conscious

83%

of Saudis* try to act in a way that is not harmful to the environment

Base: Saudi Arabia: 1,000 internet users aged 18+
Source: Lightspeed/Mintel

While most people associate Ramadan with fasting, it is equally about the importance of giving back in your community. A core principle of the holy month is helping others in need, self-improvement and embracing new habits.

An increased environmental awareness in the region paves the way for consumers and brands to extend Ramadan's spirit of giving to the region's sustainability cause. As such, trying out a green habit could be the first step some consumers take towards a more ethical and environmentally friendly lifestyle. For some, being conscious of the environment, means minimising food waste, while for others it is using more sustainable products and forms of travel.

While brands have always initiated CSR activities during Ramadan, this year it has become important to not just give back to the community, but to facilitate giving back sustainably in a more meaningful manner.



Retail platforms that offer sustainable choices

Mintel's data shows that 80% of Saudis prefer to be associated with companies/brands that align with their values. As sustainability interest rises in the region, this creates an opportunity for retail brands and platforms to capitalise through highlighting environmental initiatives and also add special offers on eco-friendly collections. This will likely resonate with consumers and add a feel-good factor around Eid celebrations.

The Middle East's largest fashion and beauty e-commerce retailer, announced in December 2020, new measures of sustainable and social responsibility initiatives.

The company is officially the first retailer in the region to partner with Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC). They also aim to switch their packaging to locally sourced and recycled materials, and have already started transitioning delivery fleets to hybrid vehicles to reduce emissions.



Namshi

**Convenience
is key around this
month and time**

Easy and quick-to-prepare products will appeal to consumers

Alongside the hours dedicated to fasting, eating and preparing food plays an important role during Ramadan. This can be challenging for many people, as many tend to cook for large numbers of family and guests.

With 56% of Saudis choosing easy, quick to prepare food all/most of the time, this highlights an opportunity for innovation and market launches of convenient food and drink products in Ramadan.

While consumers want to host a feast at home, many look to minimise the stress of cooking, opting for cooked, frozen or already prepared dishes. Currently there is room for more quick, easy convenient food prepared launches in the region, creating scope to increase new product development in this area.





About Mintel

Mintel is the **expert in what consumers want and why**. As the world's leading market intelligence agency, our analysis of consumers, markets, product innovation and competitive landscapes provides a unique perspective on global and local economies. Since 1972, our predictive analytics and expert recommendations have enabled our clients to make better business decisions faster. Our purpose is to help businesses and people grow. To find out how we do that, visit [mintel.com](https://www.mintel.com).

Follow us

 @MintelGroup

 @mintelnews

 @mintelnews

 Mintel

[mintel.com](https://www.mintel.com)

