

Understanding Singaporeans

WHY DO MALAYS AVOID PORK?

and Other Questions



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Why Do Malays Avoid Pork?

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WHY DO MALAYS AVOID PORK?

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INTRODUCTION

The Malays are one of the four main races in Singapore. The others are the Chinese, Indians and Eurasians.

The Malays were the first people in Singapore, but there are some who have come here from Malaysia, Java, Sulawesi and other places. The Malays are quite diverse, but they do have some common practices.

This book answers twenty questions a young Singaporean might ask about Malay traditions, beliefs and festivals.



THE 20 QUESTIONS



| | | | |
|--|----|--|----|
| What language do Malays speak? | 4 | Who fasts during Ramadan? | 24 |
| Why do Malay names contain “binte” and “bin”? | 6 | Why are there two Hari Rayas? | 26 |
| What does gotong royong mean? | 8 | What are those money packets given during Hari Raya Puasa? | 28 |
| Why do Malays use HDB void decks for their weddings? | 10 | Are green and yellow important colours to Malays? | 30 |
| Why do Malays give eggs at weddings? | 12 | Why do Muslims pray five times a day? | 32 |
| What are those tall sticks that look like fireworks? | 14 | What is a madrasah? | 34 |
| What do Malays wear as traditional clothes? | 16 | Why do Malays eat with their right hand? | 36 |
| When do Malay men wear hats? | 18 | Why do Malays avoid eating pork? | 38 |
| Why do Malay women cover their heads? | 20 | What is ketupat? | 40 |
| Are all Malays Muslims? | 22 | Can Muslims pet dogs? | 42 |

WHAT LANGUAGE DO MALAYS SPEAK?



Practically all Malays in Singapore speak Bahasa Melayu, which is also called Malay. “Selamat pagi!” That means “good morning!” in Malay.

The Malay language, with some variations, is also used in Malaysia and Indonesia.

DID YOU KNOW?

Singapore’s national anthem, “Majulah Singapura”, is in Malay. The title means “Onward Singapore”.

WHY DO MALAY NAMES CONTAIN "BINTE" AND "BIN"?



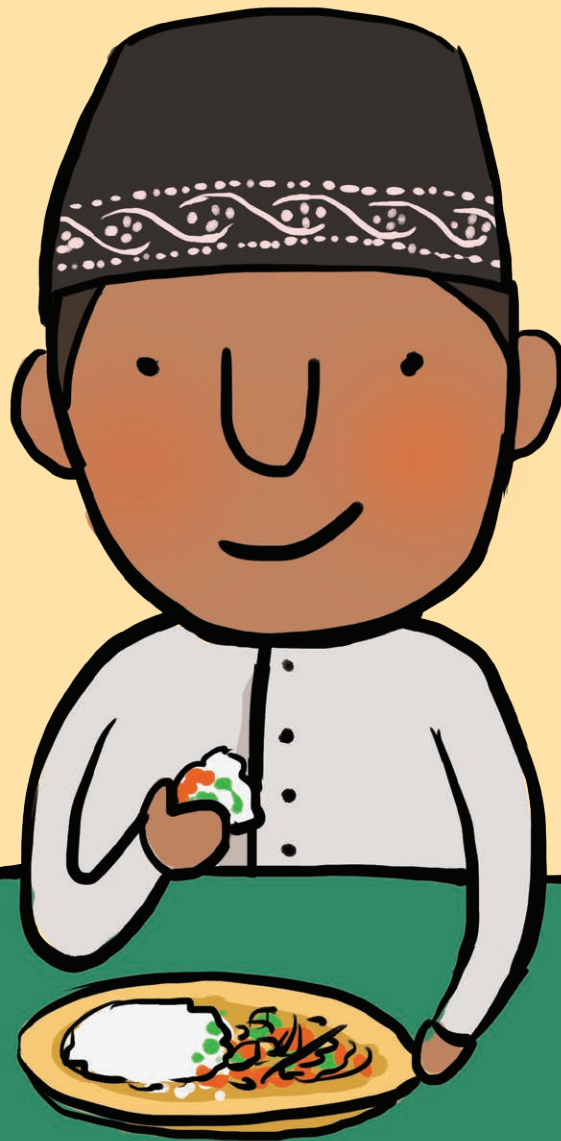
“Binte” means “daughter of”, and “bin” means “son of”. So the name that comes after “binte” or “bin” is the father’s name. Malays do not have family names, as the Chinese and Europeans do.

If you have a friend named Amina binte Rahim, her first name is Amina and her father’s name is Rahim. Boys use “bin”.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can use Mr, Mrs, Ms or Miss with the first name. So you might call Amina binte Rahim, “Miss Amina” and not “Miss binte Rahim”.

WHY DO MALAYS EAT WITH THEIR RIGHT HAND?



Malays use their left hand to clean and wash themselves after using the toilet. So they keep the clean right hand for eating.

Even those who are left-handed learn to eat with their right.

DID YOU KNOW?

It is polite to use your right hand when passing an object or a gift to a Malay.

WHY DO MALAYS AVOID EATING PORK?

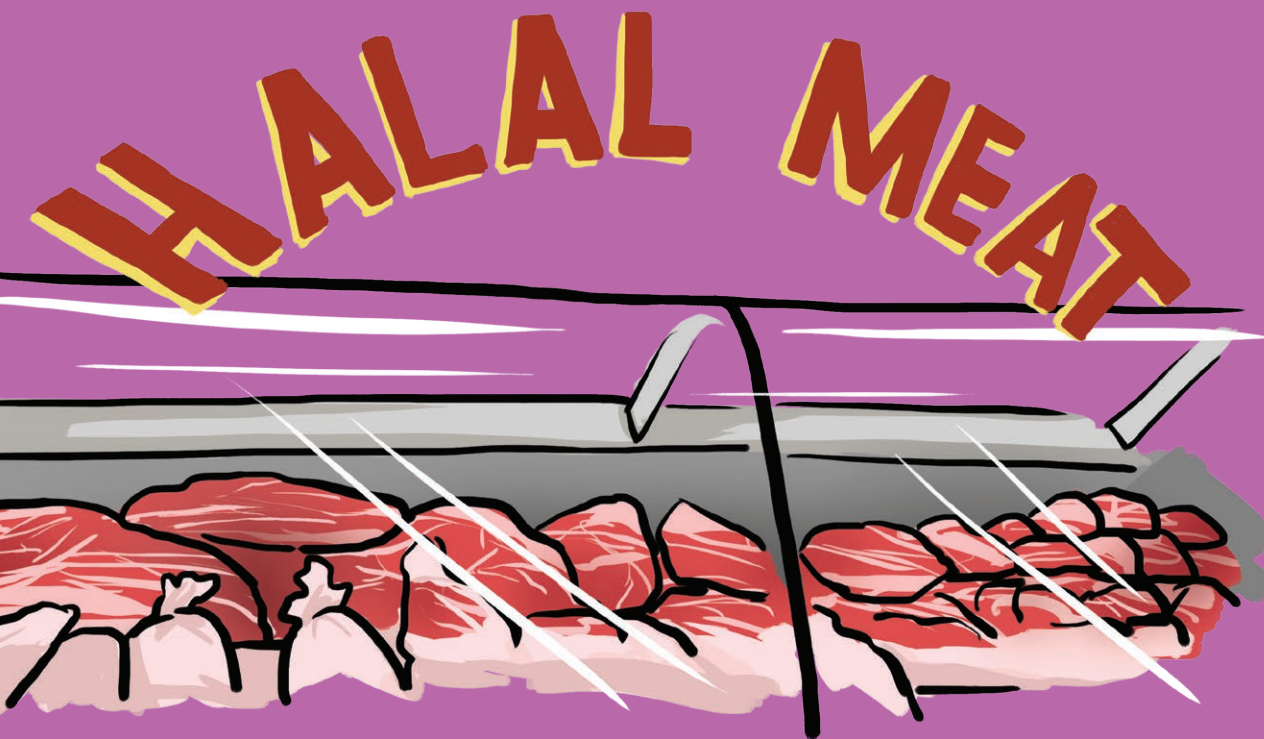
Muslims can eat only food that has been prepared under Islamic rules. For example, prayers must be said before killing an animal in a humane way. Food that is allowed is considered halal.

The opposite of halal is haram, which means not allowed.

The Quran and other Islamic texts tell Muslims which foods are halal or haram. For example, fish and vegetables are halal, and pork and frogs are haram.

DID YOU KNOW?

When Muslims eat at restaurants, they choose places with the halal logo, which looks like this:



WHAT IS KETUPAT?



Ketupat is rice cooked in woven coconut leaves. You may find this rice cake with Malay dishes, such as satay, rendang and longtong. Ketupat is usually served at weddings and during Hari Raya Puasa.

Making ketupat is a tradition passed down in some Malay families. Weaving the leaves is an art!



CAN MUSLIMS PET DOGS?



Muslims can touch puppies and dogs, but they must wash off any dog saliva if they get licked.

The cleansing is called *sertu* and involves seven washes. The first wash must be with water mixed with earth. The next six washes are with clean water.



HOW DO YOU SAY...?

(In Malay)

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Good morning | Selamat pagi |
| Have you eaten? | Sudah makan? |
| How are you? | Apa khabar? |
| Friend | Rakan |
| Thank you | Terima kasih |
| Goodbye | Selamat tinggal |

WHAT DOES ... MEAN?

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Allah | God |
| Bahasa Melayu | the Malay language |
| Baju kurung | cover dress for men and women |
| Bin | son of |
| Binte | daughter of |
| Bunga manggar | bamboo sticks with shiny tinsel seen at weddings |
| Bunga telur | flower egg for weddings |
| Duit raya | money packets for Hari Raya Puasa |
| Gotong royong | spirit of working together and helping others |
| Haj | holy journey to Mecca in Saudi Arabia |
| Halal | allowed in Islam |
| Haram | not allowed in Islam |
| Hari Raya Haji | festival of sacrifice and marks the end of the haj |
| Hari Raya Puasa | festival at the end of Ramadan |
| Kampung | village |
| Ketupat | rice cooked in woven coconut leaves |
| Madrasah | school to learn regular and Islamic subjects |
| Prophet Muhammad | founder of Islam |
| Quran | holy book in Islam |
| Ramadan | month of fasting |
| Sertu | a cleansing ritual |
| Solat | daily prayers |
| Songkok | brimless hat for a man |
| Tudung | scarf used as a head cover for a woman |

Why do Malays use “binte” and “bin” in their names?

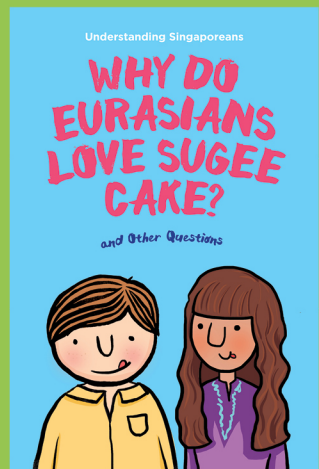
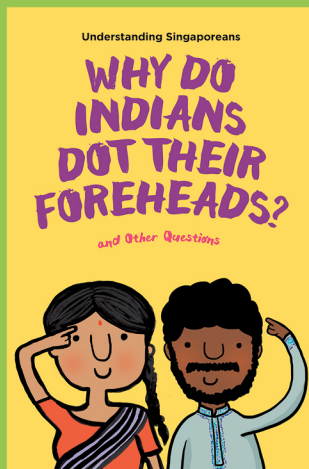
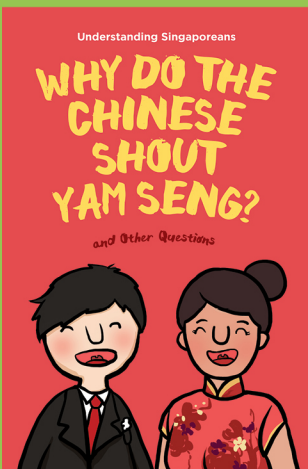
Why are there two Hari Rayas?

Why do Malay women cover their heads?

We provide the answers—and useful tips—to some of the most-asked questions young Singaporeans might have about the Malays.

This book is part of a fun series about the Chinese, Malays, Indians and Eurasians. Each handbook uses twenty questions to highlight diversity and promote understanding of the different races in Singapore.

Understanding Singaporeans Series



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