The etiquette of eating, with detailed evidence

What is the etiquette of eating?

Praise be to Allaah.

In Islam
there is an etiquette for eating, which is divided into categories:
1 –
Etiquette before eating:
1 – Washing
the hands before eating. The hands should be washed before eating, so that

they may be clean when a person eats with them, and so that he will not be harmed by any dirt that may be on them.
2 – Part of
the etiquette of eating is to ask about the food if you are a guest and you do not know what it is (i.e., what type of food it is), and you are not sure about what has been offered to you. The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used not to eat food until he had been told about it or told what is was called, so that he would know what it was. Al-Bukhaari narrated from Khaalid ibn al-Waleed that he and the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) entered upon Maymoonah, who was
his [Khaalid ' s] maternal aunt and the maternal aunt of Ibn ' Abbaas, and found that she had some roasted lizard that her sister Hafeedah bint al-Haarith
had brought from Najd. She offered the lizard to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), but he would rarely stretch forth his hand to food until he had been told what it was. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) stretched forth his hand, then one of the women who were present said, " Tell
the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that what has been offered to him is lizard. " The Messenger of Allaah

(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) withdrew his hand from the lizard, and Khaalid ibn al-Waleed asked, " Is lizard haraam, O Messenger of Allaah? " He said, " No, but it is not found in the land of my people and I feel that I would have no liking for it. Khaalid said, Then I chewed it and ate it, and the Messenger of Allaah was looking at me.
(Narrated by
al-Bukhaari, 5391; Muslim, 1946)
Ibn al-Teen said: He used
to ask, because the Arabs would eat anything because food was hard to come
by amongst them. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) may not have liked some things, so that was why he asked. It may be understood as meaning that he used to ask because some animals were forbidden in sharee ' ah and some were allowed, but they (the Arabs) did not regard anything as forbidden, and they may have brought him some grilled or
cooked meat that could not have been distinguished from another type except
by asking.
Fath al-Baari,
9/534
3 –
Hastening to eat when food is brought by the host. Part of honouring one's guest is to hasten to offer him something, and part of the guest ' s honouring the host is to hasten to accept his food and eat from it. If the host sees the guest not eating, he may think badly of him. So the guest has to reassure his hosts by hastening to eat his food, because that will reassure him.
4 –
Mentioning the name of Allaah before eating. It is obligatory to mention the name of Allaah before eating. What is meant by that is saying " Bismillaah (in the name of Allaah) " when starting to eat. It was narrated from Umm Kalthoom from ' Aa ' ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that the Messenger
of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: " When any one of you eats, let him mention the name of Allaah. If he forgets to mention the name of Allaah at the beginning, then let him say ' Bismillaahi

awwalahu wa aakhirahu (In the name of Allaah at the beginning and at the end). ’ ”
(Narrated by
al-Tirmidhi, 1858; Abu Dawood, 3767; Ibn Maajah, 3264. Classed as saheeh by
al-Albaani in Saheeh Sunan Abi Dawood, 3202).
And ‘ Umar ibn Abi Salamah
said: I was a young boy in the care of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and my hand used to wander all over the platter (of food). The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to me, “ O young boy, say Bismillaah, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is directly in front of you. ”
(Narrated by
al-Bukhaari, 3576; Muslim, 2022).
2 –
Etiquette whilst eating
1 – Eating
with the right hand. It is obligatory for the Muslim to eat with his right hand; he should not eat with his left hand. It was narrated from Ibn ‘ Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “ No one among you should eat with his left hand, or drink with it, for the Shaytaan eats with his left hand and drinks with it. ”
(Narrated by
Muslim, 2020).
This applies
so long as there is no excuse; if a person has an excuse for not eating and drinking with his right hand, such as sickness or injury etc., then there is nothing wrong with his eating with his left hand.
The hadeeth
indicates that a person should avoid doing actions that resemble the actions

of the Shaytaan.
2 – Eating
from what is directly in front of one. It is Sunnah for a person to eat from the food that is directly in front of him, and not reach out to take food that is directly in front of others, or from the middle of the platter,

because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to ‘ Umar ibn Abi Salamah, “ O young boy, say Bismillaah, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is directly in front of you. ”
(Narrated by
al-Bukhaari, 3576; Muslim, 2022).
For a person
to eat from his companion ’ s place is bad manners and impolite. His companion
may find this off-putting, especially if the food is soupy etc. That is
because Ibn ‘ Abbaas narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “ The blessing descends in the middle of the food, so eat from the edges and do not eat from the middle. ”
(Narrated by
al-Tirmidhi, 1805; Ibn Maajah, 3277. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami ’ , 829).
But if the food is dates
or something of that type, (the scholars) narrated that it is permissible to eat from all parts of the plate.
3 – Washing the hands
after eating. The Sunnah may be done by washing with water only. Ibn Raslaan
said: But it is better to wash the hands with potash or soap or something similar.
See
Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi, 5/485.
So washing
the hands is mustahabb both before and after eating, even if a person has wudoo ’ .
4 – Rinsing
the mouth after eating. It is mustahabb to rinse the mouth after eating, because Basheer ibn Yassaar narrated that Suwayd ibn al-Nu ’ maan told him
that they were with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in al-Sahba ’ – which is some distance from Khaybar – and the time for prayer came. He called for food, but he did not find anything but some saweeq (barley mush). So he ate some and we all ate with him. Then he called

for water and rinsed out his mouth, and then he prayed, and we prayed, and

he did not do wudoo ’ .
(Narrated by
al-Bukhaari, 5390).
5 – Praying
for one's host. Anas narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Sa ’ d ibn ‘ Ubaadah who brought him some bread and
oil, and he ate. Then the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “ May fasting people break their fast with you, may the righteous eat your food, and may the angels send blessings upon you. ”
(Narrated by
Abu Dawood, 3854; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Sunan Abi Dawood, 3263).
6 – Eating with three
fingers. The Sunnah is to eat with three fingers; eating with more than three fingers is a sign of greed and is bad manners, because there is no need for more than three in order to gather up a morsel. If it is necessary to use more than three, because the food is light and cannot be gathered in three fingers, then he may use the fourth or fifth.
See Fath
al-Baari, 9/578
This applies if a person
is eating with his hand. But there is nothing wrong with using a spoon etc, as we shall see below.
7 – Eating a
piece of food that falls on the floor. If a piece of food falls on the
floor, then the person eating should remove any dirt that gets onto it and eat it; he should not leave it for the Shaytaan, because he does not know where the blessing is in his food; it may be in the piece that fell, and leaving it makes a person miss out on the blessing of the food. Anas ibn Maalik narrated that when the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) ate, he would lick his three fingers. Anas said: “ And he said, ‘ If any one of you drops a piece of food, let him remove any dirt from it and eat it, and not leave it for the Shaytaan. ’ And he commanded us to clean the plate, and said, ‘ For you do not know where in your food the

blessing is. ’ ” (Narrated by Muslim, 2034).
8 – Not reclining whilst
eating. That is because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “ I do not eat whilst I am reclining. ” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5399). The scholars differed as to what reclining meant. Ibn Hajar said: The scholars differed as to what reclining meant. It was said that it means being too comfortable in sitting to eat in whatever manner; or that it meant leaning on one side; or that it meant resting with one ’ s left arm on the ground… Ibn ‘ Adiyy narrated with a da ’ eef (weak) isnaad that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) rebuked a man for resting on his left arm when eating. Maalik said, this is a kind of reclining. I say, this indicates that Maalik regarded as makrooh everything that may be counted as reclining whilst eating, and he did not mention any one specific type thereof.
Fath al-Baari,
9/541
9 – Not
spitting or blowing one's nose whilst eating, unless that is necessary.
10 – The
etiquette of eating also includes: eating with a group; not speaking about haraam things whilst eating; eating with one's wives and children; not keeping a particular food to oneself unless there is a reason for that, such as it being for medicinal purposes – rather one should offer the best food to others first, such as pieces of meat and soft or good bread. If the guest has had enough and stops eating, his host should say, “ Eat! ” and repeat it, so long as he does not think that his guest has had enough, but he should not repeat it more than three times. He should clean between his teeth and not swallow any bits of food that come out from between his teeth.
3 –
Etiquette after finishing eating.
It is Sunnah
to say the words of praise to Allaah and du ’ aa ’ after one has finished eating. When he had finished eating, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to say, “ Al-hamdu Lillaahi hamdan katheeran tayyiban mubaarakan fihi ghayra makfiyyin wa laa muwadda ’ in wa laa mustaghnan ‘ anhu rabbana (Praise be to Allaah, much good and blessed praise. O our Lord, You are not in need of anyone, and we cannot do

without
Your favour nor dispense with it). ” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5458).
And whenever
he ate food other than milk, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) would say, “ Allaahumma baarik lana fihi, wa at ’ imna khayran minhu (O Allaah, bless it for us and feed us with better than it). ” And when he drank milk he would say, “ Allaahumma baarik lana fihi wa zidna minhu (O Allaah, bless it for us and give us more.). ” (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi,
3377; classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami ’ , 381).
Ibn ‘ Abbaas
(may Allaah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “ Whoever is fed by Allaah,
let him say, ‘ Allaahumma baarik lana fihi, wa at ’ imna khayran minhu (O Allaah, bless it for us and feed us with better than it). ’ And whoever is given milk to drink by Allaah, let him say, ‘ Allaahumma baarik lana fihi wa zidna minhu (O Allaah, bless it for us and give us more) ’ . ” (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 3455; classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh Sunan al-Tirmidhi,
2749).
4 –
General etiquette regarding food
1 – Not criticizing the
food. Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) never criticized any food. If he liked it he would eat it and if he did not like it he would leave it. (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 3370; Muslim, 2046)
What is
referred to here is permissible food; as for haraam food he would criticize it and forbid it.
Al-Nawawi
said: Part of the confirmed etiquette of food is not to criticize it such as saying it is too salty, or too sour, or not salty enough, or thick, or thin, or not well-cooked, etc. Ibn Battaal said: This is part of good manners, because a person may not like food that others like, but there is nothing wrong with eating anything that is permitted in sharee ’ ah.

Sharh
Muslim, 14/26.
2 – Part of the etiquette
of eating is moderation in eating and not filling the stomach. The most that a Muslim is permitted to do in this regard is to divide his stomach into three thirds: one-third for food, one-third for drink and one-third for air.
" A man does not fill any vessel worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Adam to eat enough to keep him alive. But if he must do that, then one-third for his food, one-third for his drink and one-third for his air. " (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 2380; Ibn Maajah, 3349; classed as saheeh by

al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi, 1939).
This keeps the body
healthy and light, because eating one ' s fill makes the body heavy, which leads to laziness in worship and work. One-third is defined as being one-third of that which would make you feel full.
Al-Mawsoo ' ah,
25/332
3 – Avoiding
eating and drinking from vessels of gold and silver, because that is haraam. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: " Do not wear silk or brocade, and do not drink from vessels of gold and silver, or eat from plates thereof. They are for them in this world and for us in the Hereafter. "
(Narrated by
al-Bukhaari, 5426; Muslim, 2067)
And Allaah
knows best.
4 – Praising
Allaah after finishing eating. There is a great deal of virtue in this. It was narrated from Anas ibn Maalik that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: " Allaah is pleased with His slave when he eats something and praises Him for it, or drinks something and praises Him for it. " (narrated by Muslim, 2734).
Several ways
of praising Allaah have been narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him):

1 – Al-Bukhaari
narrated that Abu Umaamah said: When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) finished eating, he would say, " Al-hamdu Lillaah hamdan katheeran mubaarakan fihi ghayra makfiyyin wa laa muwadda ' in wa laa
mustaghnan ' anhu rabbana (Praise be to Allaah, much good and blessed praise. O our Lord, You are not in need of anyone, and we cannot do without
Your favour nor dispense with it). " (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5458).
Ibn Hajar
said: " ' ghayra makfiyyin (You are not in need of anyone) ' means that He has no need of any of His slaves but He is the One Who feeds His slaves
and suffices them. "
2 – It was
narrated from Mu ' aadh ibn Anas that his father said: The Messenger of Allaah
(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: " Whoever eats some food then says, ' Al-hamdu Lillaahi allahi at ' amani haadha wa razaqnihi min ghayri hawlin minni wa laa quwwata (Praise be to Allaah Who has fed me this
and provided me with it with no power or strength on my part), ' his previous sins will be forgiven. " (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 3458; Ibn Maajah, 3285; classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi, 3348).
3 – It was
narrated that Abu Ayyoob al-Ansaari (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: " When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) ate or drank anything, he would say, ' Al-hamdu Lillaah alladhi
at ' ama wa saqaa wa sawwaghahu wa ja ' ala lahu makhrajan (Praise be to Allaah Who has given food and drink,made it easy to swallow and provided an
exit for it). ' " (Narrated by Abu Dawood, 3851 and classed as saheeh by al-Albaani).
4 – It was
narrated from ' Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Jubayr that a man who served the Prophet
(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) for eight years told him

that he used to hear the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) saying, when food was brought near him, " Bismillaah. " And when he had
finished eating he would say, " Allaahumma at ' amta wa asqayta wa hadayta wa ahyayta, fa laka ' l-hamd ' ala ma a ' tayta (O Allaah, You have fed, given to drink, guided and brought to life, so praise be to You for what You have given). " (Narrated by Ahmad, 16159; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in
al-Silsilah al-Saheehah, 1/111)
Note: it is mustahabb to
use all the words of praise that have been narrated to be said after
finishing eating. So you can say one du ' aa ' on one occasion, another du ' aa ' on another occasion, and so on, so that you will have followed the Sunnah in
all ways and attain the blessing of these du ' aa ' s, as well as feeling the meanings of these words in your heart when you say them on various occasions, because if you get used to saying a particular du ' aa ' all the time, you think less about its meaning, because you have said it so often.
From al-Adaab
by al-Shalhoob, p. 155.