

speaking of strawberries...

I went to a pretty fantastic brunch a week or two ago. The food was beyond amazing. One of my favorite bites was something that I've been dying to share with you. Have you ever wanted to have a quick and easy trick (dish) up your sleeve? Not literally, silly. Of course you don't want to walk around with a plate tucked into that summer tank top. You'd look stupid. That wouldn't even make sense on Gaga. Seriously. Haven't you wanted to have something that you could throw together at the last-minute. Haven't you wanted to be a magician with food? Of course you have. What's more? Of course I'm here to tell you a life changing little something that will transform your personal curb appeal.

In a word? Fruit Dip.

Fine. So that's two words. Whatever. It's life changing.

Seriously.

I have a hard time with fruit because my inner 5-year-old says things like oranges look like baby fingers when they're in pieces and when I chew them it feels like I have a mouth full of skin. Alright. So I'm sharing too much about my possibly eccentric personality. I've got issues. What I'm trying to tell you is that fruit dip tastes good. You might eat a baby finger just to get some. I'm not kidding. My favorite thing to eat it with is strawberries, but you can use it on just about anything. Trust me when I say you're going to want to eat it on everything.

WHAT?

1 package cream cheese (8oz)

1 small jar of marshmallow fluff (7.5 oz)

HOW?

Throw your room temperature package of cream cheese into a stand mixer, add the jar of marshmallow fluff. Mix until it's creamy, beautiful and smooth.

Easy, right? Crazy easy. Fine. So I said that I was hell-bent on getting corn syrup out of our lives. I'm making an exception. Besides, if this will get you to eat more fruit, it's worth it. Slice up some strawberries, melon, grapes, whatever fruit you have around and watch your fruit and this dip disappear. You'll be the most popular person on your block. I promise.

Summer Salad



I have always wanted to be one of those people that makes his own salad dressing (and bread and soup and ketchup and everything else). Admitting that probably reveals that I'm also one of those people who searches out corn syrup free dressings and condiments. What that means is I spend a lot of time in the store reading with a furrowed brow and cranky eyes. I don't care what those commercials say. Corn should not be in

my bread, my ketchup AND my turkey slices. It's gross and I've got a beach body to maintain, y'all. It's summer. Not

that corn isn't delicious. I just prefer it slightly grilled and nowhere near my french fries. It's hard to have the time or patience to make everything yourself and try to have some semblance of grace on your face. OR...is it?

I'm giving myself a salad goal this summer. I'm going to make a few summer salads. I'm also going to make the dressing that I have with those salads. How does that sound? I hope it sounds easy because you know I have the tiniest slip of patience. If it ain't easy...I'm not going near it. Well, I certainly won't write about it here. Let's make salad dressing together this summer!!!

I've been dreaming lately of a salad with strawberries, blue cheese and pecans. Can I call that a Summer Waldorf Salad? Probably not...and you know that means that's exactly what I'm going to call it. It's a super easy salad. I've already told you everything you need to know about it. OH! Except! Did you know that strawberries are one of the fruits that you should always try to buy organic? Dr. Oz tells me that in order to get strawberries out to us on time many (almost all) strawberry farmers spray their crops heavily with chemicals to speed up the growth process? Look for organic versions to avoid such nonsense. The strawberry is also one of the fruits that are overloaded with antioxidants. So we should be eating more of them...just not the ones that are covered in cancer. Mokay?

WHAT?

1 box mixed greens

1 box ORGANIC strawberries

1 small bag of pecans

1 tub of blue cheese (maybe goat cheese or gorgonzola if you hate the blue)

HOW?

Throw your mixed greens in a big bowl, toss in your bag of blue cheese and pecans. Wash your strawberries, slice and toss them in as well. You're basically done. Now all you need is salad dressing.

Strawberry Vinaigrette

WHAT?

1 cup olive oil

1/2 pint strawberries

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1/4 teaspoon white sugar

HOW?

I hope you've got a pareve blender or food processor. Throw the strawberries in and pulse while adding the vinegar and olive oil. Once that's blended well you'll add your salt pepper and sugar. You're done. You've also got a little fresh strawberry vinaigrette for your Summer Waldorf Salad!

Enjoy!!

To Cover or Not to Cover?

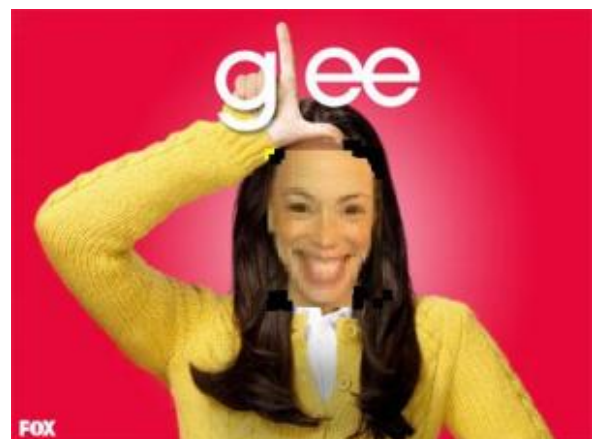
I'm having an identity crisis. After sweet husband and I got married, I started covering my hair in some way on a daily basis. Whether it was a head band or a hat, my head had something on it and I really liked what it brought to myself, my growing spiritual-self and my relationship with said sweet husband.

Wait, let me back up a bit so we're all on the same page.

Jewish law (halacha) stipulates that when a woman becomes married, she must cover her hair (the amount of hair that should be covered is under some debate). In my research on why and how a woman should cover her hair I stumbled across a variety of both Rabbinic and Torah-based sources. One such source from the Torah states that the *Sotah* (woman suspected of committing adultery) is forced to uncover her hair (Bemidbar 5:18), from which we may deduce that married Jewish women kept their hair covered. The act of covering one's hair is also deeply rooted in the laws of *tzniut* (modesty). One big misconception of hair covering and the laws of modesty in general is that we cover it up to keep those lusty man eyes from checking out our womanly form. Now, to deny that that is a part of *tzniut* would be lying. However, if you're only paying attention to that reasoning then you're missing the deeper meaning. *Tzniut* is the de-emphasis of the outer self that enables the essential self to emerge. Practically speaking, this means that our behavior in speech, dress, and in the way we carry ourselves should convey the message to ourselves first and foremost and to others secondarily that I need to look a certain way—an anomaly in South Florida. Additionally, so much of *tzniut* (and truly, all mitzvot like keeping kosher or observing shabbat) is based in making way

for one to have a deeper awareness or intention in the every day while also being an attempt to maintain the spiritual in a world which is constantly doing it's darndest to push the spiritual out (Jersey Shore anyone?). When I put that headband on in the morning I am not accessorizing (though, come on, bonus) I'm remembering my place and role in the world as a Jewish woman with the most amazing partner I could ever have been blessed with.

So, why all this philosophizing on hair coverings? Well, upon moving from Ann Arbor (where wearing a hat all day, every day during winter is just practical) and moving to Miami (where the type of hair covering, or any hair covering for that matter, so readily aligns you to a sect or specific Jewish community you may or may not actually identify directly with) has been challenging. Up until this Friday, I have worked in a professional environment where I did not feel comfortable covering my head (though the occasional headband was worn. However, upon wearing it I felt a little too much like Rachel Berry—her headband song did rock though). However, beginning Monday, I will be starting a new job at an



been feeling Rachel Berry-tastic

Orthodox Jewish day school with a skirt requirement and the flexibility to cover or not to cover and I'm feeling like this change in career is giving way to an even bigger personal

change. I'd be kidding myself if I didn't admit to the occasional worry of alienating my friends who have strictly known me as less observant but then I get pissed at myself for not giving them the benefit of the doubt for being quite amazing and accepting. As I start this job that puts me at the forefront of mentoring Jewish youth, I want to set a good example but most importantly, I want to be true to myself and my relationship with Gd and my hubby (good LORD, how coincidental is it that while writing this last sentence, Sublime's "Rivers of Babylon" just came on my Pandora station.

Dude, that's just crazy). So much of my growing and deepening spirituality/observance has been anonymous. You can't tell that I keep kosher or observe shabbat just by looking at me. However, once that hat or head scarf goes on, my anonymity as an observant Jew is lost, at least in more heavily Jewish populated areas. Otherwise, I'm just a tall girl in a skirt and a hat. It's a huge step and I'm just a little nervous.

So what the heck does this have to do with food and kashrut!?!? Well, nothing except that I hosted a book club meeting on Monday night and made some killer artichoke dip and fried pickles (we read *The Help*, I wanted to put something on the menu that was classically Southern) and I want to post the recipe and also wanted to get the above conversation off my chest. I appreciate you listening and if you made it to the end of this post let me be the first to wish you a *mazal tov* to hanging on this long!

(recipe courtesy of Heidi Swanson at 101 Cookbooks)

Baked Artichoke Dip Recipe

Sometimes silken tofu can be hard to find. No worries, I've had success using medium firm regular tofu as well – just stay

clear of the firm and extra-firm varieties. For some added nutritional punch and color quickly saute a couple handfuls of spinach in a bit of olive oil – toss it in the food processor with the artichokes, tofu, and garlic.

2 (14-ounce) cans water-packed artichokes, well drained

4 ounces organic silken tofu

3 large cloves garlic

1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

2/3 cup plain (or Greek) yogurt

1/4 teaspoon fine grain sea salt, or more to taste

pinch of cayenne pepper

more Parmesan to sprinkle on top

Preheat oven to 350F degrees. In a blender or food processor puree the artichokes, tofu, and garlic. In a separate medium bowl whisk together the parmesan cheese, yogurt, salt, and cayenne. Stir in the artichoke puree and pour mixture into a medium-sized baking dish (or multiple smaller dishes). Sprinkle the top with more Parmesan. Bake uncovered until heated through and the cheese on the top starts to brown, about 45 minutes.

Makes 2-3 cups of artichoke dip.