

Desperately Seeking Self

I used to care waaaaaay too much about what people thought of me. I went through so many identities as a high schooler you'd think Madonna got her whole "reinventing of self" thing from me. Now this was 1994-1998 so I hit all the happening 90s genres. I was alterna-Whitney (dressed in my dad's sweaters from when he was a TODDLER, oy), faux hippie-Whitney (wore tie-dyed Dead shirts but wasn't really clear on who exactly Jerry Garcia was), grunge-Whitney (complete with over-sized plaid flannels and Doc Martens), and my all time favorite, random shiny mini-skirts with knee-highs a la early 90s Kate Moss-Whitney. There was also a very brief stint with Goth but I didn't really have the skin tone for all that dark lipstick. But you know, that kind of experimenting is pretty par for the course for an awkward, not-so-confident teenage girl. It's also not atypical for an adolescent to have so many feelings of judgement and neediness. I was so confused about who I wanted to be I forgot to focus on who I was right then and there. I'm sure if Facebook were around when I was a teenager I would have taken an exorbitant amount of self-portraits in a desperate attempt for someone to tell me I'm pretty or validate whatever image I had carved out for myself that month. Thank Gd Facebook didn't exist then. Yikes.



Ah yes, Goth Whit. Nice 90s choker and ill-cut bangs.

But something happened right around Junior or Senior year of college. I'm not sure exactly what 'it' was. I had traveled a bit, gotten out and seen some of the world and slowly I got to know myself and the next thing I knew, I wasn't so concerned about what others thought about me but instead, about what I thought about me (and the occasional cute boy, but come on, nobody's perfect). It's funny. My mom used to try so hard to knock some confidence in me as a kid. She used to tell me that I had to "walk around like your sh*t don't stink" and as a 10 year-old, I had no idea what that meant. As an adult, I do and I'm hoping that's not the message folks read when they tell me I appear to be very confident. Regardless, it's been a loooooooooooooooooong time since I spent so much time wondering what others think about me but then I took this job at as a school counselor and then I had a daughter and bam! I'm all up in my own business again.

I recently had two conversations in one week with co-workers

who told me that they assume I've always got my stuff together. Not only that, but that they are one of several who feel I give off a very 'mother of the Earth' vibe. This was SHOCKING news to me. SHOCKING. First off, though the following recipe is very vegan and might be filed under "Stuff hippies might eat", I still have boxed mac n' cheese in my house because you just never know when it's going to be one of those nights. Also? There's a skirt policy at school and I happen to like my skirts long and Anthropologie-like so don't let the long, ethereal skirt fool you. I'd be here in jeans if they let me. And finally, and most shocking of all, is the assumption that I have my stuff together. No comment needed. If you've read this blog before you know that not to be true. I try. It doesn't always work. But I try.

But these conversations led me to one I've been having with myself lately and that's this over-arching question of, "I wonder what my daughter will think of me?" Seriously, what's that like? To see yourself through your child's eyes? And as a mom, through your daughter's eyes? Will she not only think I don't have my sh*t together but wonder how in the world we managed to keep her alive and healthy all this time? Will she think me a confusing mess of Southern Jewishness? Ultimately, I think (hope) you become so busy being a mom, wife, sister, friend, employee, daughter, you forget to think about it and you just 'be' but at this stage of the game, when I'm rocking her to sleep, it's on my mind.



Yep. She'll eventually think I'm
a crazy person

OK, so this week's recipe was made an hour ago and it was delicious! I'd been reading a lot about the use of cashews instead of creamer and was first introduced to the idea by my fellow Kosher Connection blogger, Hindy, over at Confident Cook. I was hesitant but then a dear friend at work, Ilana, said she tried the recipe and loved it so with cash in hand (seriously, cashews are not called 'cashews' for nothing. Those nuts are expensive, y'all), I purchased some in bulk and saddled up to make 'cream' of tomato and basil soup. The result was surprising. Even the hubby is a believer now and you should have seen his face when I told him what I was making. "You're making what now?"



The Final Product

“Cream” of Tomato and Basil Soup

What!?

2 Cups of cashews
2 Cups of water
2 Cups of vegetable broth
3 Tbsp Coconut oil
1 Onion, diced
7 Plum tomatoes, chopped roughly OR 2 cans of diced tomatoes
2 Cloves of garlic, minced
1/2 Cup of carrots, cut into thin rounds
Sea salt
Black pepper
Smoked Spanish paprika
Fresh basil



Floating Cashews

How's That Now!?

In a blender (I used the Vitamix) blend the cashews and water until smooth. Your mixture will appear to be 'milky'. Set aside.

In a large sauce pan, heat the coconut oil, and add the onion, carrots and sea salt. Cook slowly, partially covered. Stir occasionally. When onions are soft and translucent, add the garlic and cook until fragrant. Add remaining spices and continue to cook another few minutes. Add tomatoes and basil sautee 3 – 5 minutes.

Once tomatoes have boiled down, add the cashew milk, and stir. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook until soup begins to thicken slightly, about 10 minutes. At this point, if you feel like your soup is getting too thick or it's starting to burn on the bottom, add your vegetable broth, about 1/4 cup at a time. I found mine to be a bit thick for my taste so I added broth little by little until desired consistency. Blend using an immersion blender, or in batches in a blender until soup is smooth. Return to pot, taste for seasoning. Reheat gently, watching carefully as it's easy to scorch the bottom. Top with fresh basil.



Before the Blend



After the Blend