

I Miss Vacation



The husband and I finally went on our honeymoon. We've been married almost a year and due to moving to Miami and spending all our savings in renting an apartment and financing a car, our plans for a honeymoon had to be put off for a bit. But, luckily for tax returns and very generous father-in-laws with plenty of frequent flyer miles, we were able to finally take a honeymoon to Costa Rica. It was heaven.

I've been known to have exceedingly high expectations that get my in trouble from time to time. Having incredibly high expectations on a regular basis can result in one being disappointed on a regular basis but can sometimes be good when those expectations are transferred to expectations of yourself. Anyway, the reason I am self-disclosing is because this time, the expectations were not only met they were exceeded. Let me just take a break for spouting the glory of kosher cooking to spout the glory of Costa Rica. If you are privileged enough to take vacations GO TO COSTA RICA. The people are friendly, the coffee is delicious (I'll get to that in a later post) and the beaches are beautiful. What is difficult about going on an amazing vacation is coming home from an amazing vacation. Sure, we live in Miami but man, my vacation glow lasted for a solid 24 hours before I got disgruntled. I missed vacation. I missed spending 24/7 with my bestest friend in the whole world and I certainly missed waking up, getting dressed, walking out to the nearest palapa

and having fresh fruit and coffee waiting for me. 'Twas amazing. Even more amazing? Not having to do the dishes for 10 days (it's the little things in life). I digress. We returned on Sunday and the next day was the start of the 9 days – a higher level of mourning for the destruction of the First and Second Temple and culminates in the Fast of Av (Av is the Hebrew month we are in now and the first of the month started the 9 days of increased mourning). To say that I didn't have to dig too deep to feel sadness is an understatement. We returned later Sunday afternoon and were at work on Monday morning. I'm starting a new job and granted, I started in in mid-June but I'm working at a Jewish day school so as we near the start of school it's really feeling like a new job and all the head-trips I play on myself (you know, 'Am I doing a good job? Do I have enough Jewish knowledge to be in charge of student life at a Jewish day school? Does it matter?). I mean, that much self-doubting is enough it cause even the most normally confident person to go into a tailspin of sadness.

So here's what's what--I decided to have my mourning period. As a Jew, I feel the sadness of not having a great Temple. As a Jew in a larger community, I feel the sadness of a disjointed community who always finds ways to alienated each other and whose constant inability to accept the differences of one another results in a community that isn't ready for a Temple. I also feel the sadness of being in Miami, which I don't really love--being so far away from family and close friends. BUT, I'm thinking that after the fast on Tuesday, I will refocus on the good stuff--the blessings. I gotta not be so lazy. I mean when school starts it's on. It'll be a 180 day marathon so I gotta make sure I carve out time for spiritual growth and ways to keep connected as well as ways to try to like South Florida (at least enough to get us through the next 5 years).

Oy, this is a super long post. Getting to the point, part of

the mourning during the 9 days is to not eat meat of any kind (meat being a symbol of celebration and joy). BUT, because shabbat trumps all mourning (except for Yom Kippur), we had Meat Fest 2011. And because I love a good shabbarbecue and a theme, the lunch I made for shabbat had a barbecue theme to it. I kinda made up a potato salad recipe sans mayonnaise (I know, as a Southern that's a bit of a shunda) and it was delicious. Meat Fest 2011 also included Miami Friend Fest 2011. All in all, I'm hoping the fast coupled with this past shabbat could be a beginning . . . of what, I'm not sure. But a beginning nonetheless.

Shabbarbecue Menu:

Sweet & Spicy Chicken (from my new obsession, The Pioneer Woman)

Avocado & Jalapeno Potato Salad (adapted from Emeril Lagasse's Cilantro-Avocado Potato Salad)

Corn on the Cobb

Black Bean Salad (adapted from Simply Recipes)

Sweet & Spicy Chicken

What?!

- 1 cup Apricot Preserves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups Ketchup
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cups Soy Sauce
- 2 teaspoons Minced Garlic

- 2 teaspoons Hot Pepper Sauce – naturally, I used Frank's Red Hot
- 3 pounds Drumsticks (about 12)

How ?!

Preheat oven to 350F. In a small saucepan, combine preserves, ketchup, soy sauce, garlic and hot pepper sauce. Cook and stir over medium-low heat until preserves are melted.

Arrange drumsticks in a single layer on a 13 x 9" baking pan. Pour sauce over drumsticks, turning to coat. Bake, uncovered, for 40-45 minutes or until chicken is done, spooning sauce over drumsticks while baking. Serves 6.



Chicken Kitchen



Mmm . . . garlic



Avocado & Jalapeno Potato Salad

What!?

- 2 pounds potatoes, peeled, small diced, and cooked in boiling salted water until tender, drained
- 1/3 cup finely minced red onions
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 firm-ripe avocados, peeled, pitted, and diced
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon minced jalapeno
- 1 (1-ounce) package cilantro, leaves picked and finely chopped

Whit's Guacamole

- 1 Avocado
- 1/2 Lime juice
- 1/2 of a small onion, minced red onion
- Garlic Powder
- Kosher Salt
- LOTS of cilantro

Mash avocado in a small bowl. Add lime juice to avocado and keep mashing/mixing until creamy. Add onion, a dash of garlic power and kosher salt. Add until to suit to your tastes. Add

cilantro at the end.



How? !

Combine potatoes, onions, and garlic in a large bowl and sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 3 turns pepper. Add olive oil, tossing to coat. Add guacamole and mix. Add the avocados, lime juice, jalapeno, and cilantro, and toss well to combine. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour before serving.

Black Bean Salad

What!?

- 1 15-oz can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-oz can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 green pepper, chopped fine
- 1/2 red onion, chopped fine
- 1 cup fresh, finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 Tbsp fresh finely chopped rosemary

- 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

How!?

1 In a large bowl, mix the beans, green pepper, onion, parsley and rosemary.

2 In a separate small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, sugar, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Add the dressing to the beans. Toss to coat.

3 Chill beans in the refrigerator for several hours, to allow the beans to soak up the flavor of the dressing.