

Leftover Latkes



Fourth Night Chanukah

I need creativity in my life. When I was growing up I was exposed to various forms of the arts—from art camp in downtown Atlanta to spending 8 years playing the viola and longer than that in musical theater. I was that right-brained child who couldn't take an open-note Pre-Algebra test and pass but could memorize all my lines as the lead in a show. If it wasn't obviously creative, then I wasn't interested in it. This kind of creative world hit a peak in college when all of a sudden I was exposed to music of all sorts (shalom Ani DiFranco! What can I say, it was the late 90s and I was in a liberal arts college), plays, writers, musicians, and goth kids who turned the word 'gargoyle' into a verb. It was so exciting. However, as time has gone on and I've gotten older, I've had to work

extra hard to be that immersed in creativity. In my 20s I was too busy moving around from city to city and from job to job in an attempt to 'find' myself to have that kind of all-consuming creativeness in my life. I had long put the viola down once I got a theater scholarship to college and was told I had to be in a show a quarter so there was no time to rehearse for a show and orchestra. When it came time to move to Israel in 2008, I made the devastating decision to actually sell that beautiful instrument (I die a little inside every time I think about it). And though that Israel trip led me to my incredible husband and subsequent child, I still have regrets. I'm haunted by dreams that I'm still in my beloved high school orchestra even to this day. I think it's my subconscious trying to make me feel guilty for selling my viola and can I just say, it's working.



By the time I started preparing for my Israel trip, so we're talking around 2007, I was working at a non-profit in Chicago by day and working at a bar by night and with the ever busy social life of a 20-something in Chicago, there wasn't any

time for a true creative outlet. Aside from a few open-mic nights here and there, I was creatively starved. By the time I made it to Israel and found myself 5 minutes from the shuk, I had decided cooking would be my creative outlet and my new boyfriend (now husband) was my unwitting guinea pig. Now please keep in mind, my diet as a single, broke, lifetime Jewish communal non-profit employee ranged from veggie hot dogs, spaghetti, and salad to anything Trader Joe's had in their ready-made freezer section. If that doesn't help paint the picture of my cooking ineptitude then can I just tell you that the first time I attempted to make potato salad I didn't realize you had to boil the potatoes first so I just cut up raw potatoes, added mayonnaise and wondered to myself, "Hmm, these potatoes seem kind of difficult to chew." Now I actually consider myself a smart woman, but clearly, when it came to food, I was an absolute moron.

So, there I was living in Jerusalem, a stone's throw from the largest selection of the freshest food I've ever been around, I got this cute new boyfriend and a new found thing called Shabbat in my life and all were begging for me to pick up the saucepan and start cooking. The first thing I cooked for new boyfriend/now husband was an omelette. He likes to tell how it was so incredibly doused in oil it could have greased an entire car engine so that was it for eggs. I tried making quiche in ready-made crusts but didn't realize that maybe I shouldn't use the ready-made graham cracker crusts and I DEFINITELY shouldn't put them in the oven. You get the picture. Inept.



Grapes in the Shuk in Jerusalem



Olives in the Shuk

I tell you all this because where I've come in the kitchen makes me proud of me. I went in stubborn and terrified thinking soup is nearly impossible to make from scratch and now I'm in there with no recipes; only a hand mixer, some veggie broth and anything I can find in my fridge. I've truly come a long way and today's Chanukah recipe is an example of my kitchen growth. It's what happened when I discovered an insane amount of leftover cooked brown rice, some homemade

cilantro sauce and a few other leftovers from this passed Shabbat. Most importantly, it's the result of sitting at a stop light on the way back from work thinking, "I can do this. I can make up a recipe". Of course any one can make up a recipe, but can you make one up that results in now husband exclaiming over and over again how good it is? I think not.

Southwestern Brown Rice Latkes with Cilantro Cream Sauce

Brown Rice Latkes

What?!

2 cups of cooked brown rice
1 bunch washed and chopped cilantro
1 bunch washed and chopped green onions
1/2 cup shredded Pepperjack cheese
1/8 cup green chiles (optional)
3 large eggs – beaten
Panko bread crumbs
Salt
Pepper
Cumin
Garlic Powder
Canola Oil
Avocado for garnish

How's That Now?!

Places all ingredients except for canola oil in a bowl and mix

well. Please note that I do not recommend a measurement for spices because spices are subject to taste when it comes to latkes. Additionally, I started out with a little bit and kept adding as it was clear after tasting my first latke that you can lose the flavor to the strength of the fried rice so really, the more, the merrier (though careful with that salt, ya'll).



Bowl of pre-latke goodness



Green Stuff

Heat gobs of canola oil in a saucepan. Do not start your frying until you know it's good and hot. Once oil is ready, use a large table spoon to make a golf ball sized ball out of the mixture. Place in frying pan and gently pat down until about 1/2 inch thick. Your brown rice latke will not stay together unless the it's good and thick. Let cook on each side until golden brown, at least 2 -3 minutes. Transfer to towel lined plate for oil soaking to commence. Repeat until all mixture is done. Garnish with sliced avocado.



Delicious Latkes Complete



Bonus points for plating

Cilantro Cream Sauce

What?!

- 1 (8oz) Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1 (7oz) can tomatillo sauce or salsa (same thing, different companies label them different)
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon celery salt
- 1 tablespoon taco seasoning
- 6 cloves garlic
- 2-4 jalapenos, seeded (or leave the seeds in for extra heat)
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro
- the juice of half a lime

How's That Now?!

Combine all the ingredients together in a food processor or blender. Puree until smooth. Transfer to a jar with a tight fitting seal, and refrigerate for up to 1-2 weeks. adapted from www.mrshappyhomemaker.com