

Loosing My Hair + A Raw Banana Split Smoothie (together that's just yum)

One day, in 2006, I was at my desk at work in Chicago, loving life and having fun when I got a phone call from my Dad. It's rare that my dad calls me in the middle of the work day so I picked up to say "hi". As soon as he said 'hi' back I knew something was up. He had that thing in his voice that lets me know that what he's about to say is no joke. And, what he said was, unfortunately, no joke. He had called to tell me that his father, my Caw Caw, had died. It was sudden. He was dancing when it happened as he had gotten into ballroom dancing late in life. (He was also an avid cake-maker and took mile long walks every morning. He was amazing). Regardless, it was shocking and I wasn't prepared. It just so happened to be the week of Thanksgiving and I had plans to drive to Louisville, KY with my cousins that week anyway, but unfortunately, the trip wouldn't be as lighthearted as expected.

The thing is, I don't have horrid memories of that week. In fact, I have some really lovely ones. I remember driving with my cousin, Mike, and his wonderful girlfriend (now wife), Dana and my dog, Ted, through a blizzard in order to get to Kentucky. I remember pulling into a Burger King in the midst of that snow storm to get something to eat (this is B. K. – Before Kosher). I remember asking if I could bring Ted in there so he could stay warm and I also remember feeding him chicken fries (sorry Ted) under the table. I remember joking with my step-mother about something that we thought was so funny it's possible I may have tinkled my pants a little (I'm known to do this from time to time. I own it. What can I say? I'm a hardcore giggler). However, apparently, the stress of that week was more intense than I realized because several weeks later, while at the salon, my stylist noticed something.

I had a few bald spots; spots that weren't there 6 weeks before. This led me to make an appointment with a dermatologist, who subsequently diagnosed me with Alopecia Areata. Alopecia Areata is a common immune disorder that results in the loss of hair in various parts of the body, not just the head. However, for me, it's the head. My mom, being the incredibly supportive mom that she is, found out everything she could about Alopecia. She also invested in all sorts of hair-growth products to help me get back on track.



Me with My Dad, Grandma Viv and Caw Caw
circa 1988

The irony of an autoimmune disorder is that it gets

exacerbated by stress. My dermatologist suspected that the stress of my grandfather's death kicked my Alopecia into high gear. She told me I would need to be vigilante about my stress levels for the rest of my life while also keeping a close eye on my scalp to make sure I don't have any bald spots. There's really nothing I can do if there is one. It's more like an indication to take a deep breath and slow down. Here's the thing though, that's like, really really really hard. I've been noticing a lot of hair loss lately and the even greater irony is, of course, that this stresses me out. It's been really bad lately so I took this week off and have plans to get out of town for two days with a very dear friend. I'm so blessed with a wonderful family, fulfilling job, a creative outlet in my cooking and this blog, but it's been hard to balance it all and I'm not sure I've been good at destressing lately. Part of that de-stressing also involves eating healthy and exercising. I'm also trying to be conscious of eating foods that supposedly help build healthy skin and hair. A lot of research shows that omegas and all those good fats are great for building healthy skin and hair and since it's summer time and I've recently fallen back in love with my Vitamix again (shalom lover), I'm been getting those happy omegas through delicious smoothies. I'm also trying to balance sugar intake while still giving a little, 'What's up' to my sweet tooth so there have been a lot of trial and errors with the sweet smoothie. Below is my ultimate, most favorite recipe so far. You don't have to have a Vitamix to make – any blender will do. Enjoy!



Sweet Decadence

Raw Banana Split Smoothie

Ingredients

- 1 Ripe Banana
- 1/2 Cup, Frozen Strawberries
- 3 Tbsp, Raw Cocoa Nibs
- 1/4 Cup, Raw Walnuts*
- 1 Cup, Almond Milk

1 Tsp, Vanilla Extract
Chia Seeds



Getting Started



This is Getting Good

How?

Combine all ingredients into your blender and blend away! I was a naughty girl and topped mine off with some whipped cream but come on guys, it was organic! And I topped it with chia seeds! And raw cocoa nibs! That's super healthy, right?!

*If you are someone who does not like texture in your smoothies, feel free to omit the walnuts.



Bring It On