

Mexican Quinoa Salad: A Recipe for Love from a Non-Cook

Hello Dear Readers,

Shanah Tovah, happy new year and happy Monday. I hope everyone is feeling well. Today's guest post in the Love Series comes from a tiny bundle of energy and talent all rolled up into a Sarah Jessica Parker look-alike package known to me as my cousin, Ayelet. I have two cousins, many distant cousins, but two first cousins--Ayelet and her brother, Michael. Ayelet and Michael (known to the family as Micki) grew up in Israel and emigrated to the US in 1989 to live their American dreams, which at the time, consisted of listening to Billy Joel and Vanilla Ice on rotation while wearing an obscene amount of neon. Ayelet is one of the most passionate people I know, who about 3 years ago, left everything she knew to fulfill her dreams of becoming a certified dog trainer. Below is the story of how she met her partner, Alex, and how, thank Gd, they finally wised up to decide to share their lives together, which works out really nicely for me because now we have another incredibly talented musician in the family. Enjoy. Love, Whit xoxo

P.S. For a sample of Alex's music and for purchasing information after you fall in love with his music, go [here](#).

My husband and I met in 2006, but the stars took a few years to finally align for us.



On Our Wedding Day

In 2006, Alex and I were cast opposite each other in a 10-minute, 2-person play as a couple who lived together. At the time I was in a serious relationship so I just thought of him as a sweet guy from London. Once the play ended we loosely kept in touch for a few months and because he only had a Visa to stay in New York for a year he eventually moved back home.

However, while he lived in London, he was always coming back to New York for visits, and about every 6 months I would run into him on the street in random places. It was as if [insert your preferred Higher Power here] kept putting him in my path saying "What about this guy?," "Hey, remember this guy?," "HELLO! THIS is the guy." But I was still in that relationship and so would say a quick hello and keep walking, never giving it a second thought. The last time we happened to run into each other was in the fall of 2009 when I was with said boyfriend and he was with his producer. After introductions

the conversation went a little bit like this:

Me: What are you up to these days?

Alex: I'm recording an album and playing a lot of shows in this neighborhood. You should come some time.

Me: Sure! We'd love to!

When we parted ways I said to my boyfriend "We're not going to see his shows. Everyone's a musician or an actor here. Between all of the friends I go to support and my own stuff I don't have time to start supporting someone else." It was callous, and I'm embarrassed to admit that I said that, but there it is. We did, however, become Facebook friends.



Loving Life

A few months after that I broke up with the boyfriend, moved out and starting living the proper single New York City life.

A few weeks into my Singledom I got a Facebook invite from Alex to a benefit concert for Haiti Relief. Since it was a fundraiser I knew I should go and support the cause, but before confirming that I would come I decided to check out his music to make sure I wasn't committing to a night of terrible music. I found his MySpace page (remember those days?) and was blown away. I felt like such an ass for not supporting his music before. His music was brilliant. I was transfixed. A few weeks later I showed up to the show and it was sold out! I was so disappointed. But there was a light at the end of the tunnel. He had also invited me to his first record release show, which was a couple of weeks later, on Valentine's Day. I got my dear friend Hannah to go with me and that's when everything changed.

That night, as I was listening to him sing, I was blown away. Not just by his talent (of which there is an endless supply), but by his honesty. Besides my brother and father I had never met a man who was emotionally expressive. And here was Alex, pouring his heart out in the most beautiful way. It was like finding the holy grail y'all. Hannah looked at me, watching him perform, and she said "You like him!" to which I promptly and maturely answered "Shut up, no I don't." But she knew better and so did I.



That's my awesome cousin, smack in the middle, leading a flash mob at my wedding.

After the show we went to his after-party and briefly caught up. He asked me if I was married yet to which I said, "no, quite the opposite. I'm single."

"In that case," he said "I'll be back in New York in October. We should go on a date then." "Sounds good" I answered, totally blown away by the lack of games; and then late into the night, as I was leaving, he kissed me.

I was almost relieved he was leaving New York the next day because I was in no place to get into a relationship so soon after a serious one ended. The problem was, I couldn't stop thinking about him. Constantly. Being with him felt like I was home. I was so thrown by this that I actually started practicing yoga to find my center. (For those of you who don't know me, I really don't like yoga, but I was desperate).

About a month after his departure I got a call from an international number. My family is all over the map so I thought it could be one of them. But the second I heard his voice say "hi" I knew it was him and my heart soared. He said he had been thinking about me. That was the first of many long

conversations we'd have over the next year and a half.

He would come back to visit every now and then, but we both knew he didn't have his Visa to stay, and we didn't know when that would happen. Though we spoke a lot and we'd see each other when he was in New York, we both wanted totally different things. I was coming to the point where I was ready to date, settle down, and as I put it "find my person and make little people together."

Alex was not there at all. On New Years Eve of 2010/2011 we had a frank conversation in which I told him it was clear we wanted different things, and that I would never ask him nor expect him to change, so we should call a spade and spade and stop pretending that this was going to be a relationship. I had joined J-Date to find the person I was going to marry and he was seeing someone casually back home because his plans were so up in the air, so why draw this out? I had no idea that being so bold, honest and willing to walk away would result in us actually becoming closer.

You know the whole "if you love someone let them go..." saying. Well I'm here to tell you it's true. The phone calls started coming more frequently and the conversations became longer. I remained guarded and continued to date, but there was this inexplicable thing that was happening. It took a hold of me. Getting to know him was magical. He would listen and care about everything that was going on in my world. He would text me "Shabbat Shalom" on Fridays (something I discovered his mother does too, which I love so much). He loved his family and friends unabashedly. He was hilarious. He was honest.

It was a difficult balancing act: I couldn't stop getting to know him, but I couldn't allow myself to be drawn in if he didn't want what I wanted. On his end, without my knowledge, he had been doing some serious soul-searching. He later told me that he wasn't prepared to lose me and started talking to his friends in successful relationships to get advice. Then

one late night he told me he loved me. I told him I loved him too.

A few months after that he came back to New York and we went on our first official date. That was October of 2011. In February of 2012 I went to London to meet his family. A few months later, in April, I went back again for another visit, during which time he got down on one knee and asked me to be his wife. Seven months after that we were married.



Celebrating Alex's Album Release

I wake up every day thanking G-d for bringing me the most caring, loving, kind, generous, understanding, supportive man I have ever met. I have no idea what I ever did to deserve such love but I am thankful for it with every breath I take. I had no idea that love could be this good and that true partnership was a real thing.

The recipe I'm sharing with you is the first dish I ever made for Alex. In February of 2012, I turned 30. Alex knows I like a good party and he went all out. The entire weekend was full of celebrations and surprises. I had never felt more loved. As a "thank you", I wanted to give him something extra special. I decided the most special things are the ones that take time,

effort and thought. For me, that was cooking. From the beginning of our relationship I told him I don't cook and never will. I am terrible at cooking and I don't enjoy it. He said that was fine because he would cook but I could see a tiny light go out in his eyes. So as a special thank you, what better way to show my appreciation than going out on a limb and cooking?!

This recipe is SUPER easy and so delicious. I hope you enjoy!



Quinoa from the "non-cook". Looks good to me!

Mexican Quinoa Salad (Vegan/Parve)

What:

1 cup quinoa (I use multi color or red or a combination of whatever is around)

2 cups water

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

juice of 2 fresh limes (3 if they are small)

3/4 tsp cumin

pinch of red pepper flakes (optional – I don't use them but it's great for a kick)

1 can black beans, rinsed and drained

1 1/2 cup cherry tomatoes, cut in quarters

5 green onions, finely chopped

1/4 cup chopped cilantro

1 avocado, chopped

salt and pepper to taste



The 'Players'

How:

Add quinoa to a saucepan with the water, cover, bring to boil and reduce to simmer – cook until all water is absorbed. 10-15 min.

Turn off the heat and leave it alone for 10-15 minutes. Remove lid, fluff with a fork and pour into a large bowl. Add black beans, tomatoes, onion, cilantro, and avocado. Separately, whisk together extra virgin olive oil, lime juice, cumin and red pepper flakes. Add salt and pepper. Toss dressing with quinoa mixture. Season with salt and pepper.

This salad can be stored in the refrigerator for a day or two because the lime juice will preseve the avocado.