

# Tu B'Shevat Chocolate Dirt Cakes





Do not adjust your computer screens. You are actually seeing a new post from me. I can't believe I actually got my sh\*t together enough to pull off cooking, staging, photographing



and editing a post. It helped that I have been wanting to make this recipe in honor of Tu b'Shevat since I made a larger dirt cake last year for our dear friend, Dave's, birthday Shabbat dinner, which just happened to fall on Tu b'Shevat. At the time I thought to myself, I said, "Self, you HAVE to remember this and do it better and cuter for next year's Tu b'Shevat" and so, here we are!

So what's been going on since I last posted WAY back in July? Welp, the biggest news is that I am currently 6 months pregnant with our 3rd kiddo. Yep, we took the plunge. If you are a loyal Jewhungry reader, you'll remember that I was wrestling with the question of whether or not to get pregnant in a previous post. When we finally came to the decision that, yes, we were going to try for a third, I felt so certain in that decision. That being said, 6 months into the hardest pregnancy I've experienced, I am FREAKING OUT. Ok, I don't know if it's fair to say 'freaking out' in all caps but I am having a lot of misgivings. A lot of, "What was I thinking!?" has been running through my head in the last 5 months. I started getting sick almost immediately and the nausea hasn't stopped, which hasn't helped my doubts. I am like a she-beast. I must be fed every hour on the hour or else I will puke on you. Seriously, you think I over exaggerate but I do not. Just ask my beloved husband or co-workers. It's not pretty.





Nausea aside, I keep thinking to myself that we have a nice little routine down with the girls and why on Earth did we



decide to make a decision that was going to mess that up!? They have such a strong bond, will this new little critter threaten that? Also, dear Gd, these two girls sleep through the night have been since our current youngest was roughly 6 months old. Like, I get sleep and stuff. Why oh why did we f\*ck with that scenario too!? I have enough experience as a mental health professional to know when I'm starting to spiral so I'll stop here. I'm pretty confident you get the drift. That said, I'd be ever so grateful to know if you have more than 2 kids and had the same experiences of doubt. Please, seriously, normalize me!!!

Deeeeeeeep inhale and exhale.





**Cookie crumble ->**  
**Chocolate cake ->**  
**Cookie crumble ->**  
**Chopped peanuts ->**  
**Vanilla frosting ->**  
**Cookie crumble ->**  
**Chocolate pudding ->**

So back to these here chocolate dirt cakes for Tu b'Shevat. In case you're unfamiliar with the holiday, Tu b'Shevat occurs on the 15th of the Jewish month of Shevat so the name of the holiday literally translates to 15th of Shevat. It's also occasionally referred to as the New Year of Trees and is thought to be an agricultural day marking the first day of Spring. I'm sure if you're reading this somewhere like



Minnesota or Massachusetts you're all, "Seriously? Spring in January!?" But remember, we're talking about Biblical Israel here so it's a wee bit warmer there this time of year. Tu b'Shevat technically a minor holiday but it's just so dang fun that we make a point to 'celebrate' it in our household. A lot of commentary exists out there pointing to the fact that humans are "compared to the tree of the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19) and that the 'fruit' we bear is not only children (which is the first mitzvah in the Torah we are given to fulfill) but also the living of a life embedded in goodness. It's become tradition that folks plant trees and/or hold a Tu b'Shevat seder during which it is customary to eat dried fruits and nuts, specifically figs, dates, raisins, carob, and almonds. Many people also incorporate the Seven Species into their seders, wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.

I also encourage you to incorporate these chocolate treats into your seder cause they're delicious and fun to make. Please note that the trees I used in my recipe are NOT edible. They are there cause they're just too cute. What is edible? The several layers of chocolate used to assemble these treats. My favorite component is the homemade chocolate cookie crumble. You can also always take the trees out of the scenario and have yourself a fancy little trifle dessert for any day of the week. Enjoy!





















She just HAD to get into the picture.

### **Ingredients/Method**

*(Makes for 4 – 5 mini trifles depending upon how much you use during assembly)*

### **For the Cake and Pudding:**

OK, so for the cake and pudding I used ready-made items cause I have 2 kids, a full time job and am 6 months pregnant so SOMETHING had to give. You can opt to also use Oreo cookies for your cookie crumbles but the chocolate cookie crumble recipe provided is so user-friendly and nets you incredibly delicious crumbles. For the cake, I used Betty Crocker's Original Recipe Scratch Cake Mix but any ol' boxed cake will do. The pudding was your trusted Jell-O Dark Chocolate Pudding Packs. I also incorporated chopped nuts into my recipe but feel free to omit if you have a nut allergy!



## **For the Chocolate Cookie Crumbles:**

(makes 2 1/2 cups)

- 2/3 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

## **Method for Chocolate Crumbs:**

- Preheat the oven to 350 (F).
- Combine 2/3 cup flour, 1 teaspoon cornstarch, 1/2 cup granulated sugar, 2/3 cup cocoa powder, and 1 teaspoon kosher salt in the bowl of a freestanding electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment on low-speed until mixed.
- Add 6 tablespoons melted unsalted butter and paddle on low-speed until the mixture starts together in small clusters and clumps – at this point, it should look a little bit like wet sand.
- Spread the clusters on a parchment-lined sheet pan. Bake for 20 minutes, using a dough scraper to break them up occasionally. The crumbs should still be slightly moist to the touch at that point; they will harden and dry as they cool.
- Let the crumbs cool completely before using in the recipe.

## **For the Vanilla Buttercream Frosting:**

- 3/4 cup butter, softened to room temperature
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 – 2 tablespoons milk or cream



- pinch of salt

### **Method for Vanilla Buttercream Frosting:**

- In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment or using an electric hand mixer whip the butter until light and creamy on medium/high-speed.
- Once the butter is pale in color and light slowly add in the confectioners' sugar one spoon at a time on medium speed. Let the sugar fully incorporate before adding in more sugar.
- Add the vanilla extract, salt and cream.
- Whip on high-speed for another 3-4 minutes until very light, creamy, and fluffy.
- Use the buttercream straight away for keep it refrigerated for up to 4 weeks. Before use make sure it comes to room temperature.

### **Assembly:**

I assembled by adding a base layer of pudding, then cookie crumble, vanilla buttercream (piped from a piping bag), chopped peanuts, another layer of cookie crumbs followed by chocolate cake that my kiddo crumbled up herself and then one final layer of cookie crumble. I encourage you to try-out your own order of assembly though it should be noted that this order got rave reviews from the husband and kiddo.

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## **Siona's Vanilla Cake with Chocolate + Tahini Sauce**



**Siona's  
Vanilla Cake +  
Chocolate + Tahini  
Sauce**



I swear this blog is not turning into a dessert blog. I also swear this blog is not being sponsored by a tahini company (though I wouldn't be opposed to it . . . hint, hint tahini companies). Anyway, like I said, this blog is not necessary a dessert blog it's just that with the holidays approaching, my husband finishing his PhD and Winter Break officially beginning, we've got a lot to celebrate and plenty of reasons to bake!





My crazy sous chef.





I call this recipe, "Siona's Vanilla Cake" for two reasons. 1) It's so easy to make that when I need to bring a quick dessert



for a Shabbat dinner or potluck, she and I grab our matching Jewhungry aprons and within minutes, we've got ourselves a cake baking in the oven and 2) this kid LOVES vanilla cake. Most cake she actually just eats the frosting off of and then doesn't actually eat the cake but this cake? This cake she'll devour. The additional chocolate sauce and sprinkles helps too.

I love baking with this kid. It started a couple years ago when she and I had just moved to LA and the hubby was still in Miami finishing his PhD work. I needed something for us to do on Sunday mornings and we just naturally fell into the habit of baking together. She has mastered the scrapping down of the bowl in between mixing and can sift flour like a pro-baker. Let's not forget, she's 4. Baking together has become such a normal part of our weekends that she actually has turned down the opportunity to watch a movie in favor of baking together. Seriously. Hashtag parenting win.







I can't express to you how easy peasy this cake is to make. The chocolate and tahini sauce aren't a necessity but, I mean, come on. It's chocolate and tahini sauce so yeah, it's a necessity. It also dresses up the cake so if you do bring it to a potluck, folks will be all, "OMG! Did you make that?! It's gorgeous". And you'll be all, "Hell yeah I did. Who's the Cake Boss now, Buddy!?"





### **Ingredients for Cake:**

1 cup margarine (I use Earth's Balance) at room temperature  
1 cup granulated sugar  
3 large eggs  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 tsp baking soda  
2 tsps baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 cup vegan sour cream (I used Tofutti)  
2 tablespoons clear imitation vanilla extract (this is what gives it that old timey cake flavor).

### **Chocolate Sauce recipe [HERE](#)**

For tahini sauce:

1/4 cup raw tahini  
4 tbsp of hot water

### **Directions for Tahini:**



Combine ingredients and stir until well-combined.

### **Directions for Cake:**

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Spray a Bundt pan with non-stick canola oil spray and set aside.

In a medium bowl, sift the flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt together. Set aside.

In the bowl of a mixer, cream together the butter and sugar. With the mixer on low, add the eggs one at a time beating after each addition. Add in the flour mixture, and then the sour cream and vanilla. Beat well until combined. The batter will be thick.

Spoon the batter into the Bundt pan. Bake until golden brown, 35 to 45 minutes. (Mine took 45 minutes but every oven is different and due to the density of this batter, you will want to make sure it is clearly cooked in the middle.)

Remove the cake from the oven and allow to cool in the pan for 15 minutes. Turn out onto a cooling rack and continue to cool to room temperature.

Once completely cooled, artfully drizzle the chocolate sauce onto the cake followed by the tahini sauce. Add sprinkles at your leisure.

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## **Passover Chocolate Chip Cookie Cake + A GIVEAWAY**



# Passover Chocolate Chip Cookie Cake



Ummmmm, is this not the most amazing cake you've ever seen?  
And it's KOSHER FOR PASSOVER! That part, I cannot get over.



Melinda at Kitchen Tested made this for my birthday (which, yet again, falls on Passover) and I'm just so touched and overwhelmed by it's creativity and beauty. I mean, look at the thing. This sure beats all those dang potato starch cakes from Passover birthdays of yore. See below for Melinda's post, the recipe to this glorious post PLUS, an opportunity to win something fancy!







Happy early birthday, Whitney! I know your birthday isn't for another week but how could I resist giving you this beautiful cake, right?!?! Okay, so it's story time...

My birthday is in May and normally Passover is over already but one year when I was a kid, my birthday actually fell out right in the middle of this chometz-free holiday! My cousin and I celebrated our birthdays together rolling down amazing grassy hills at our Passover program, playing with snails and hanging out with our families. When it was time for dessert, we each got our own cake to blow out the candles then everyone wanted a slice. What came next was a tasteless Passover cake with an overly sweet frosting...NOT good! Not good at all. To this day, I still think about that cake and how it made me feel like I never wanted to have a Passover birthday again. But that has all changed! Forget about the potato starch, matzoh cake meal and imitation vanilla! It's time for cakes that you could eat all year long that just happen to be Passover friendly and delicious.

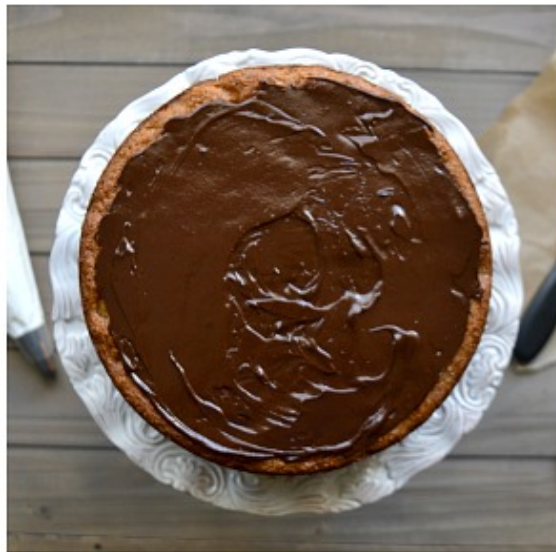
So now let's get to your special birthday cake. These layers of chocolate chip cookie cake, whipped cream and chocolate ganache are EVERYTHING!





**QUICK TIP** \*How to line a round pan with parchment paper: Place the round pan on top of a sheet of parchment paper. Using a knife with a sharp tip, trace the pan on to the parchment paper then set the pan aside. The traced circle should easily pull away from the rest of the parchment. Spray the pan with cooking spray, place the parchment circle inside of the pan then spray the pan again with more cooking spray. Set aside until ready to bake.





(Whitney, again) Also, because I am so grateful to you for reading this blog, I thought I'd do a birthday giveaway in honor of you! I found the perfect present for you too! A matzah cell phone case from Amanda at Sealed with a Case.

Cases are available for the iPhone 4/4S, 5/5S, 6/6 plus as well as the Samsung Galaxy models – and they are available with black, white or clear sides. You can enter by clicking the following link --> (a Rafflecopter giveaway)











The chocolate chip cookie layer is made with almond flour and it is light and fluffy, just like a piece of cake. You can even make regular sized chocolate chip cookies with this recipe so double the recipe and you can have cake AND cookies. Did I mention that this recipe is completely dairy free and grain free? Let's just call this cake "healthy" and eat more than one slice!

## **Passover Chocolate Chip Cookie Cake**

### **INGREDIENTS:**

#### **Chocolate Chip Cookie Batter**

3 cups almond flour

1 tsp baking soda

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt

2 eggs

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup honey

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup coconut oil, melted (or vegetable oil)

1 tsp vanilla extract

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups chocolate chips

#### **Chocolate Ganache:**

1 cup chocolate chips

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup whipping cream

#### **Whipped Cream:**

1 cup whipping cream (suggested brand: Rich Whip)



1 Tbsp sugar

1 Tbsp vanilla extract

## **DIRECTIONS:**

### **Bake the Cookies**

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. and line three 8 or 9 inch round pans with parchment paper \*quick tip below on a quick way to line a round pan with parchment.

In a mixing bowl, blend the almond flour, baking soda and salt. In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, honey, coconut oil and vanilla extract. Pour the liquid into the dry and stir until just combined. Add the chocolate chips and stir again. Chill the batter in the fridge for 15 minutes.

When the cookie batter has chilled, separate the batter into the 3 prepared round pans and spread out with a spatula. To make sure each pan has the same amount of batter, use a measuring cup to place the batter in the pans.

Bake for 30-35 minutes, until the tops of the cookies have turned golden brown and the center of the cookies have set. Leave the cookies inside the pan on the counter to cool completely. When the cookies are cool, run a sharp knife around the edges then flip on to a cooling rack. Peel off the parchment paper and discard it.

### *Prepare the Ganache and Whipped Cream*

In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine the whipping cream, sugar and vanilla extract. Whip on high until stiff peaks form.

While the whipped cream is whipping, prepare the chocolate ganache by combining the chocolate chips and more whipping



cream in a microwave safe bowl. Microwave for 30 seconds then stir. Microwave for another 30 seconds then stir again until the chocolate has melted.

### *Stack the Cake*

Place the first cookie on a cake platter or plate and top with a third of the chocolate ganache. Allow to set for just a few minutes then add a large dollop of the whipping cream and spread on the cake. Top with a second cookie then repeat the layering process two more times, ending with chocolate ganache and whipped cream on top of the cake. Top the cake with chocolate shavings and birthday candles!