

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.

Black & White Creamsicles



Hello! Summer has officially arrived at Jewhungry! If you follow me on Instagram (and I hope you do – check out the sidebar to see all the fun you’re missing in case you aren’t), you’ll know that a few weeks ago, I posted what turned out to be a popsicle fail. I was so thrilled to be asked to join in on the my first ever #popsicleweek by the incredible Billy Green (of Wit and Vinegar). I was all excited to join in on the popsicle fun but then my husband went out of town for two weeks, summer school started and I fell waaaaaay behind on posts. You see, unlike actual seasoned food bloggers, I do not and cannot plan and execute my posts weeks in advance cause I just don’t have the time. My posts usually come together last minute on a Sunday that I’ve blocked out 3 days prior to a deadline. It’s not the MOST effective way to work but 9 times out of 10 it actually works. Two weeks ago, however, it did not.

So, like I was saying, if you follow me on Instagram you’ll remember that I posted a melted mess of a chocolate and vanilla creamsicle that I was hoping would have made it in

time to actually be included in my first ever Popsicle Week. But, alas, it did not. Well, 5 days later, husband finally came home from being gone for 2 weeks and helped me make my Black and White Creamsicle dreams come true. And while they didn't get done in time for Popsicle Week, they still got done in time for summer and you can find the recipe and some thoughts on the power of the Black and White cookie over at Interfaithfamily.com. Click [HERE](#) for the recipe! Happy Summer!







Oreo Hamantaschen



Hello and happy (almost) Purim! Can you believe that it's almost Purim time? I seriously feel like it was JUST yesterday that I was making cheddar Sriracha latkes on The Feed Feed and now I'm making hamantaschen? How can this be? My waist line is not ready for all the holiday hamantaschen baking! Blargh!







I'm back from my little jaunt to exotic Dallas, Texas for the BBYO International Convention. I was there giving two separate presentations – one on food sustainability through the kosher lens plus a joint session with my girl, Amy from What Jew Wanna Eat. Amy and I had a session up against Aidy Bryant from Saturday Night Live and while our workshop was heavily attended, I'm not convinced that the majority of our audience weren't students who weren't able to get into the Aidy Bryant workshop. But that's OK! They got to learn about food blogging so ha! Suckers! Ya learned something new!

I had SUCH an amazing time with Amy and meeting so many teens who frikkin' love their Jewish selves. It was a bit of a mind-trip to be at a BBYO conference as a 36 year-old mother of two. My days as a Jewish high school convention-attendee were so much fun but also so incredibly awkward (here's to being a teen in the mid-90s). It felt crazy to be walking around this convention with the confidence that a grown woman should have while my 16 year-old self was screaming out, "Look

at me now! I'm a grown a** woman. Now watch me lay in bed for an hour and read before turning out the lights for a sensible bed time of 9pm!"



But these hamantaschen! Oy! These hamantaschen. I did some research on Pinterest to get some inspiration for this year's hamantaschen flavors. I have another flavor combo in my back pocket for the next week but for now, I'm really loving on the intensity of the chocolate in this dough and the realness of the fluffy middle. My official taste-tester for these was my husband as he ate enough Oreo/Hydroxy cookies as a child to consider himself an Oreo/Hydroxy expert and he swears it tastes like the real deal. Only, be warned, this chocolate dough is chewy and soft, the way I prefer my hamantaschen. You MUST be vigilant with your refrigeration/freezing of dough. Do not skip these parts of the process. They are vital. But, in case you do miss a bit and end up with wonky-shaped hamantschen, just delicately squeeze some filling over it and no one will ever know!



busy licking the spatula



a journey through Amy and Whitney learning how to pose for a picture.



(Heads up, this is NOT a hard cookie dough. I am not a fan of hard cookies so I made a soft, chewy cookie dough. See narrative and notes in the directions on maintaining the dough's form while baking. Happy eating!)

Ingredients for Cookie

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Earth Balance (or butter), room temperature
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp Almond milk
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ Tbsp cold, brewed espresso or strong coffee
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 cups all purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{8}$ cup cocoa powder (I prefer Hershey's Special Dark)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
- 1 egg + 1 tsp water (egg wash)

Ingredients for Cream Filling

- $\frac{1}{2}$ stick unsalted butter, softened
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable shortening
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions for Cookie

In the bowl of a stand mixer (or using handheld mixers), beat the butter and sugar together until smooth. Add egg, milk, espresso or coffee, and vanilla until mixed thoroughly.

In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, cocoa powder, and salt. Slowly add dry mixture to wet mixture until incorporated. (*Note: if the dough is too soft, increase flour amount by $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of flour until firm – see notes written in narrative regarding the chilling and softness of the dough*).

Shape dough into a disk, wrap in saran wrap and chill for AT LEAST (I chill mine overnight) an hour. Once chilled, preheat oven to 350 degrees with rack in the center. On a floured work surface, roll out dough to a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thickness. With a $2\frac{3}{4}$ -inch round cutter, or wide-rimmed drinking glass, cut

out circles; place on parchment-lined baking sheets. Gather scraps, chill while previous cookies are baking, and repeat with your roll-out and cutting until all dough is used.

Whisk together remaining egg and 1 teaspoon water in a bowl. Brush circle edges with egg wash; pinch seams together. Freeze until firm, about 30 minutes. Bake cookies on a parchment-lined baking sheet, 1 sheet at a time, about 10 – 12 minutes. Allow to cool completely before adding filling.

Directions for Filling:

Using a mixer, cream the butter and shortening until fluffy. Beat in the confectioners' sugar and vanilla. I used an icing bag with a small, round tip for filling centers of the cookie. You could just as easily 'ice' the centers with a knife or spoon but I do not think it will be as easy as using an icing bag and tip.