

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.

Baked Chocolate Chai Donuts with Tahini Glaze



Baked Chocolate Chai Donuts *with* Tahini Glaze

So you might be thinking to yourself, “Dude, Whit, it’s Chanukah time! Why aren’t you frying those donuts!?!” Well

friends, because I'd rather fry my latkes and bake my donuts then do both so my first recipe of the season is a baked recipe. Also, it's been seeming like every. single. person I work with is on a specialty diet and since every time I bake for a post, I take the extras into work, I figured baked donuts would have a better chance of actually being eaten than fried donuts. Even my beloved co-worker, Julee, who is like my appetite-twin, is on a specialty diet. She told me about how she made fried onions out of buckwheat flour and coconut oil and a little part of me died inside. No. No, no no. Sigh. So, therefore, I give you baked donuts.

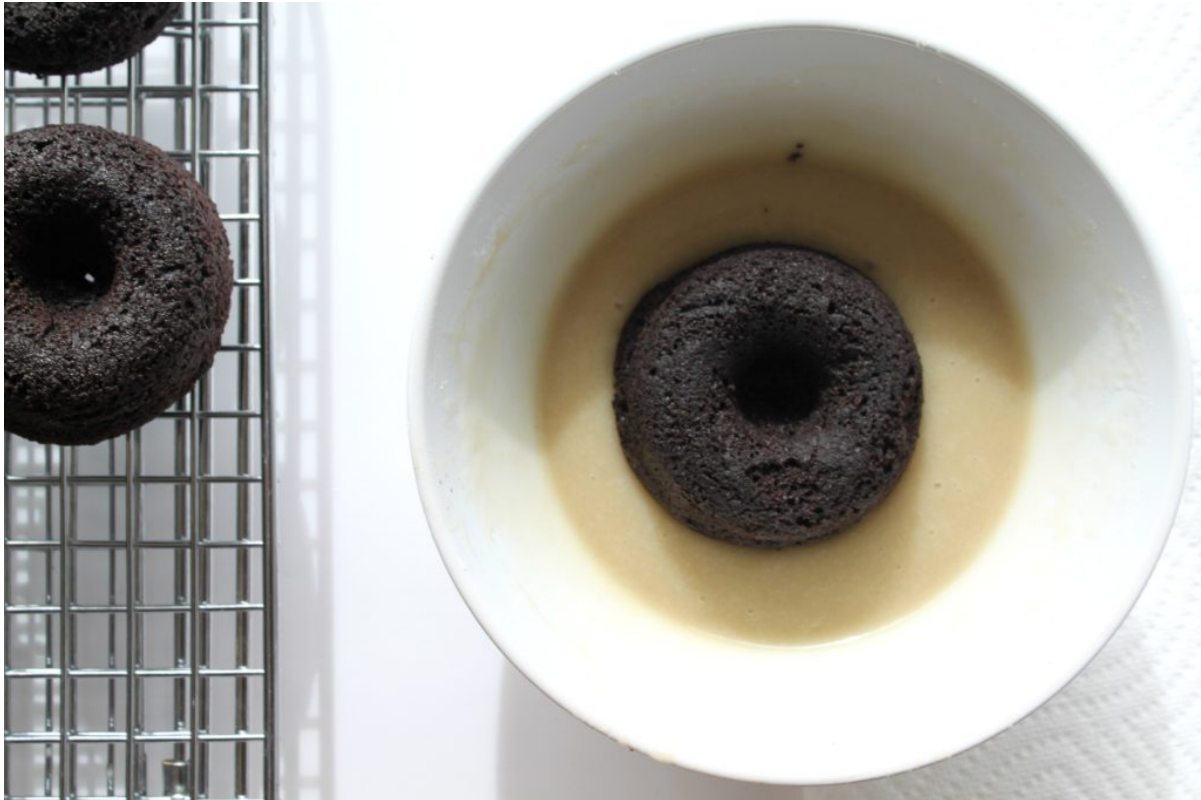
So, with that out of the way . . . how are you? How was your Thanksgiving? I tend to think of Thanksgiving as my holiday 'off'. After the intensity (and expense) of the high holidays I want nothing to do on Thanksgiving but drink coffee, watch the Macy's Day Parade, maybe make a pie or two and then head to someone else's house for dinner, which is exactly what we did. Thank you, friends.

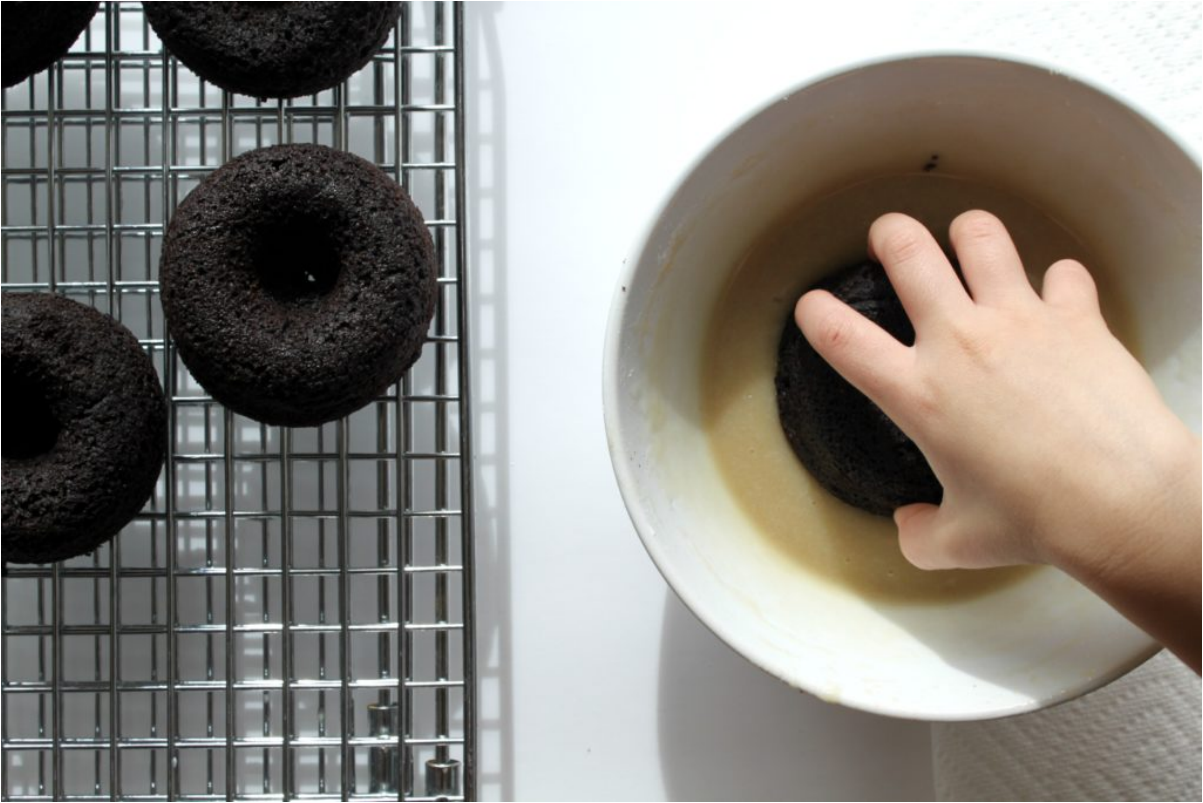




Donuts have become one of my new LA delights (along with ramen, tacos and specialty ice cream parlors). They aren't a foodie treat I really enjoyed until moving here. What's ridiculous is that apparently about a year ago, a Dunkin' Donuts opened in Downtown L.A. and folks were lined up around the block for it. There were articles written about it and people missed work just to get their hands on it. I personally do not get the obsession with the Dunkin'. Maybe it's because I grew up with Dunkin' Donuts but also cause it's a donut and as much as I love yummy treats, I don't love waiting in line for well, anything. That said, now that I've dabbled in baked donuts and realize how easy they are to make, I don't foresee heading to a lot of donut places anymore. Once you've got the foundation of the mixture for your donut down, you can mix in other spices or toppings as you see fit. Since I'm a MAJOR tahini fan, I, of course, needed to make something that paired nicely with tahini and so a nice moist chocolate donut spiced with chai flavors won out. I originally had no plans to top these bad boys with sprinkles but then my sous chef, Siona,

had to help me with this recipe, which meant that there would be sprinkles involved. And, to be honest, it totally elevated the donut. That Siona . . . I tell ya.











Ingredients

- 1/3 c. + 1 tbsp. milk
- 1 tsp. vinegar
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 1/2 c. unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/4 c. white whole wheat flour
- 1/4 c. unsweetened cocoa powder (I like Hershey's Special Dark)
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/8 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 c. sugar
- 3 tbsp. cold brew coffee or cold espresso

- 2 tbsp. honey
- 1 large egg

Tahini Glaze

- 1 c. powdered sugar
- 3 tbsp. tahini
- 3 tbsp. milk
- dash of kosher salt
- sprinkles (optional)

Just a note – I use piping bags for getting the dough into the donut pan. I used to use a small spoon until reading about this little piping bag tip from an old issue Bon Appetit and haven't looked back. Also, when storing leftovers store uncovered, otherwise, donuts will get goopy.

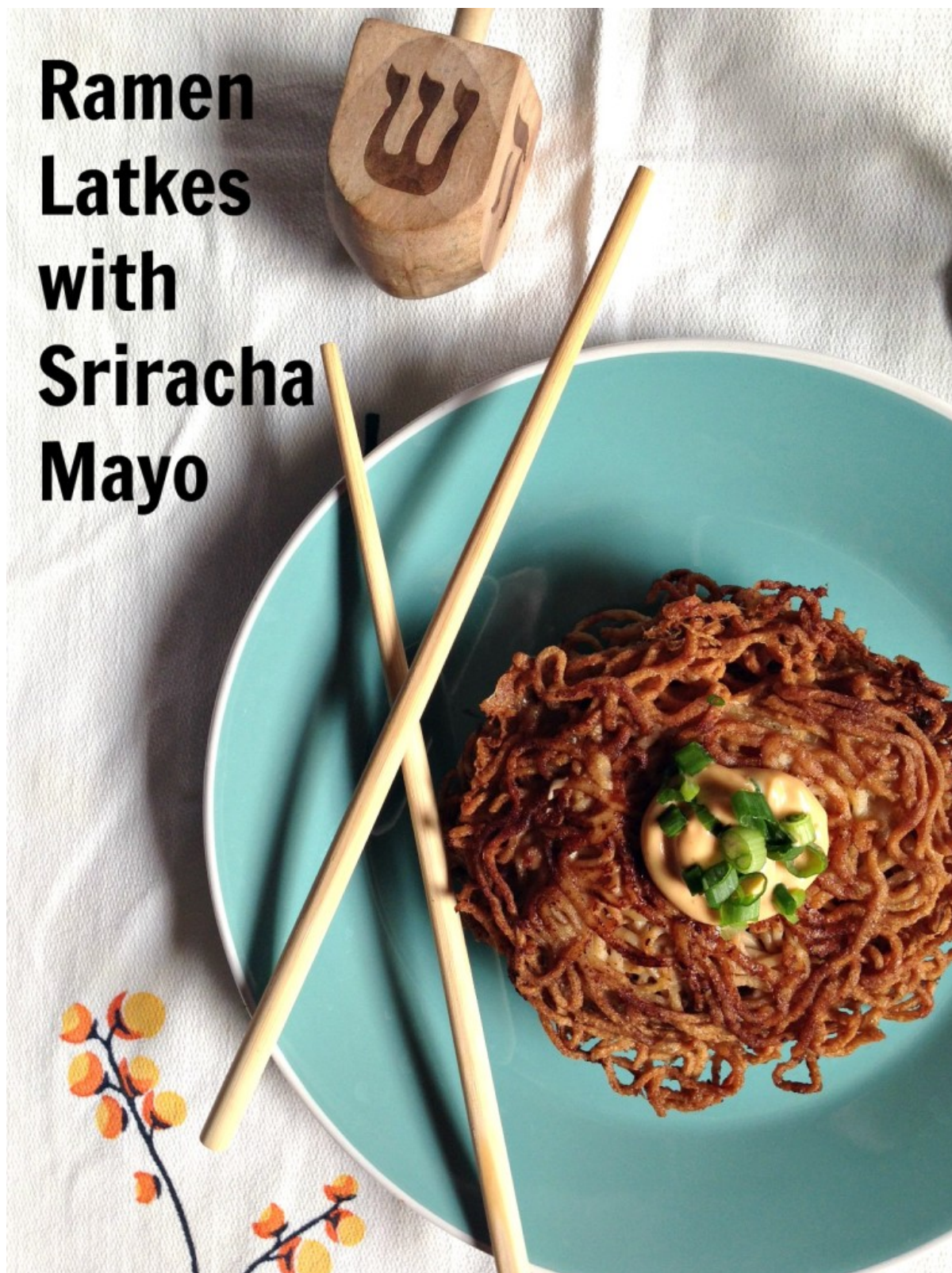
Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a small bowl, mix together milk and vinegar (Mazal! You've just made buttermilk!). Allow to sit for about 5 minutes to curdle. Melt butter in a small bowl and set aside to cool.
3. Meanwhile, sift together flours, cocoa, baking soda, sea salt, and chai spices in a large bowl. Set aside.
4. Into the cooled butter, whisk in sugar, honey, coffee, and egg until evenly combined. Add in buttermilk.
5. Whisk together wet and dry ingredients until just combined. Over-mixing will create a dense donut.
6. Spray donut pan. Add batter to a piping bag and pipe evenly into the pan (about 2/3 full). You will have a little extra batter. Make a couple donut holes or mini donuts.
7. Bake for 7 minutes. Allow to cool 1 minute before turning pan over to remove donuts onto a cooling rack.
8. Meanwhile, make glaze. In a flat-bottomed bowl, whisk together half and half and powdered sugar until smooth.
9. Once donuts have cooled completely, about 15-20 minutes,

dunk in glaze, flipping to cover the entire donut as expertly demonstrated by Siona in the pictures above. Place on cooling rack and allow to dry for a few minutes. If going for sprinkles, dump a bunch of them in another small bowl and dunk the glazed donut in just as you did into the tahini glaze.

Ramen Latkes with Sriracha Mayo

Ramen Latkes with Sriracha Mayo



Hey there. Long time, no see. In case you forgot, my name is Whitney and I blog about kosher food, parenting, and life as a school counselor in Los Angeles. I'd be writing this blog for a little over 2 years when I decided to call it quits this

past summer.

The decision to call it quits was a hard one but then, all of a sudden, it wasn't. I was with my oldest kiddo, Siona, at the beach when the decision hit me. It was a Sunday. It was gorgeous outside and we had decided to haul ourselves to Venice beach for our morning activity. I was roughly 7 months pregnant at the time and tired but feeling good. Siona was playing in the sand and I was messing around on Instagram when I realized, after scrolling through picture after picture of glorious new posts from my fellow food bloggers, that I hadn't posted anything to the blog in weeks and I was fine with it. Actually, I was more than fine. I was relieved. Finding the time to cook something, take the pictures, edit said pictures, and then write a post was just not happening anymore. My husband was in Miami all last year (He's back! Hallelujah!) and working full-time while caring for our toddler was just a weeeeeeee bit of a time suckage. I had managed to squeeze out a few posts last year but it just got too much. So, cut to that sunny day and my decision was made. I thought I would feel like I was missing something when I gave it up. I kept waiting for that feeling of foodie "FOMO" (Fear Of Missing Out) to come up during the ensuing weeks and it just didn't. Instead, my focus has been on becoming an expert in my job as a Director of Counseling, of caring for my kids (Oh! I had another baby!) and of spending time with my husband. But, to be honest, another reason I stopped with the blogging was because I needed a break from the blogging world.

I've been reading blogs for the last 5 years. The majority of the blogs I read are/were food blogs with the occasional dip into the parent blogging world. However, over the last 2 years, my focus shifted from mostly food blogs to parenting blogs. I wanted to connect with other parents who blogged, especially moms, and I liked reading stories that I felt related to my own experiences. However, during the last year I started noticing a shift in how bloggers were writing and

being celebrated as parenting experts. We live in a world where society has given expertise-status to some of these bloggers. Well-intentioned friends and friends of friends have posted pieces by bloggers, bloggers who have absolutely no background in mental health or childhood development, and have shared these pieces on their Facebook profiles as gospel on child-rearing. Their advice is not housed in data or evidence-based and yet, they're getting book deals and being celebrated as experts in a field that isn't really theirs. That isn't to say that they aren't experts in raising their *own* children, but that certainly doesn't mean they should be giving seminars on adolescent development. As someone who does have a background in mental health and childhood development, this was driving me crazy and I needed a break. I also needed to be honest with my own participation in this phenomenon and take a step back from my own contributing behaviors so I wouldn't be a big a** hypocrite. And so, with that time to reflect, I decided I should take several steps back and reevaluate whether or not this is something I want to pursue.

{Gets off soap box}

And so, I've taken a break and it's been a good one. This isn't the relaunching of Jewhungry. I still really don't feel like going through all the hard work it takes to run a food blog. I have no desire to make it my full-time job when I have a full-time job I really love and a full-time family that I really love even more. Instead, I hope to be posting here and there on The Nosh, as long as the lovely Shannon will allow me. But for the time being, I will drop this ramen recipe on ya so head on over to The Nosh to get it cause it's a good one.

OK, gots to go. Billy on the Street is on.



Lately, on the Jewhungry Instagram page (@jewhungry)



and now, back to ramen latkes . . .

