

# **One-Pot Creamy Kale + White Bean Pasta**



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Pasta**

Hello from Dallas, Texas! I'm blogging at you from the BBYO International Conference. Yes, that makes two blog posts from conferences so clearly, I clearly pay close attention to presentations and am not distracted at all when you invite me to a conference.

Anyway, It's an honor to be here for so many reasons! First, I love teenagers! They're inspiring and motivating and hilarious and loud and sometimes smelly but I love them anyway. Second, I got to speak on using social media and blogging as a means to build understanding for issues that I'm passionate about, like food justice and mindful living. But, most importantly, it's an honor because on Shabbat, I get to speak in partnership with the one and only Amy Kritzer from What Jew Wanna Eat! After years and years of being Internet friends and even co-authoring a e-cookbook together, we finally got to meet in person! Amazing! We met at the airport upon arrival into Dallas and have only paused from each other's side to sleep and do our presentations. I'm tellin' ya folks, if loveliness exists in this world it is house within Amy. What an amazing individual! This lady is so amazing for tons of reasons but the thing I honestly love the most about her is her willingness to support other bloggers – competition be damned! She sees the success of other Jewish bloggers as a success of her community and gosh darn it, that is beautiful!







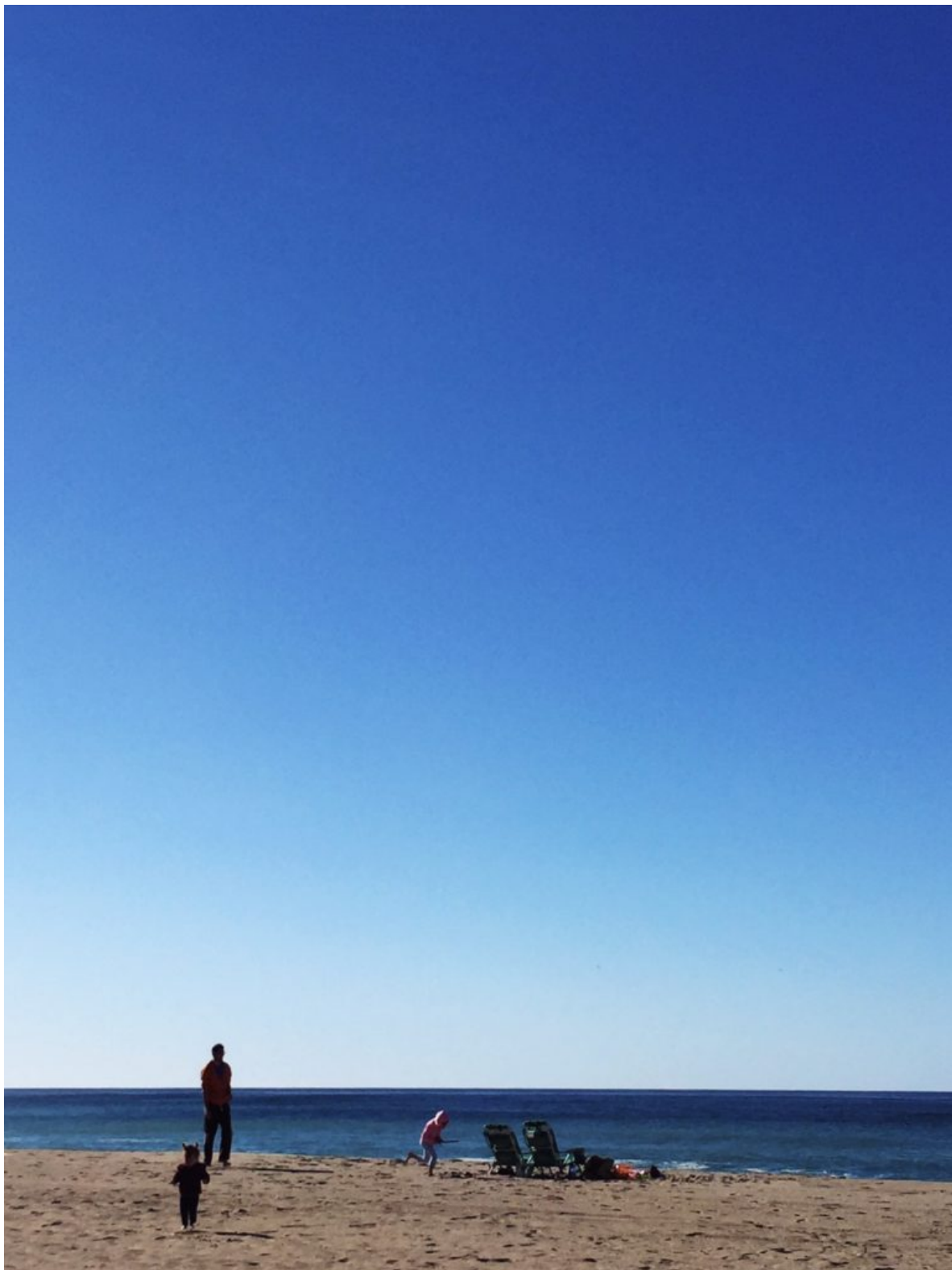


So aside from gushing about Amy, I'm here to write about one of my favorite subjects – PASTA! If you've met me you'll know already that carbs and I are besties. If I could, I'd eat pasta every single night. Back in my younger years when I was living in Chicago, my favorite dinner for myself was a giant bowl of spaghetti, dripping in sauce with layers and layers of cheese on it (most specifically, American cheese but, whatever). Because I no longer have the metabolism of a 24 year-old, I don't eat like that anymore. However, as a working parent in her late 30s with two young children, pasta certainly visits our dinner table at least once a week. In

order to assuage some of my guilt of eating pasta, I like to mix in healthier, easy proteins and vegetables. Two of my favorites are frozen kale and canned beans. This is a dish I often throw together on those later evenings when I leave work later than normal and don't have as much time to cook dinner. Feel free to omit the cream but I like the tanginess it brings to the dinner. And, if you're like me and you are looking for little more nuttiness to your pasta, go ahead and top it with mounds of Parmesan cheese. Trust me, your taste buds will thank you.







My squad in Malibu.





Me and my soul-sista, Amy from What Jew Wanna Eat

### **One-Pot Creamy Kale + White Bean Pasta**

- 1 box whole wheat spaghetti
- 5 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, smashed
- 1 cup frozen blue curly kale
- 1 can, Cannellini bean, rinsed
- 2 cans diced tomatoes with juice
- 3 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream or half and half
- 1 tbsp kosher salt + more for final dusting before serving
- 1/2 tbsp coarse ground pepper
- 1 tbsp dried basil
- 1/2 tbsp dried fennel seed

Using a large stock pot, cook pasta as indicated on the back of the package. Drain, reserving 1/2 cup of the cooking liquid. Set both pasta and cooking liquid (separately) aside.

Wipe down stock pot. Add olive oil to pot and place back on stove over a medium-high heat. Once smoking just a bit, add diced onions, garlic and kosher salt. Saute for roughly 3



minutes or until fragrant. Add pepper, basil and fennel seed to the onion and garlic mixture and saute for another minute. Next, add the diced tomatoes and tomato paste, mix and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down to low and let mixture simmer for about 5 – 7 minutes. Taste and add more salt if necessary depending on your flavor preference. After mixture has simmered for a bit, using a handheld immersion blender, blend tomato and onion mixture until semi-smooth (I like to leave mixture a bit chunky but this is my personal preference). Add in the whipping cream and stir until combined.

Next, add the beans, kale and about 3/4 of your cooked pasta back to the pot. Mix until almost combined. Add in about half of your reserved cooking liquid to help coat the pasta and allow for sauce to adhere to the pasta. Taste. Adjust seasoning to your liking. Serve hot!

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## **Kahlo's Green Shakshuka**



(as seen on my Instagram feed like 3 weeks ago – I finally decided to post).

It was 2007 and I was living in Jerusalem. I had moved there for the year so that I could better my Jewish education as well as kinda reassess where my life was going. I landed in Jerusalem in May of 2007. As of June that same year, I had met the man I would eventually marry. I won't bore you with the story of our meeting again, but I thought I'd share the story of meeting his parents . . . The Fisches.

I met the Fisches about 7 months after I started dating their youngest son. They only knew the following about me:

1. 6 years older than their son



2. Non-Jewish dad

3. Born and raised in the Reform movement in Atlanta, GA

4. Currently attending yeshiva

5. Name is Whitney (what kind of Jewish name is 'Whitney'?!).

Oy. Vey. For a traditional family from Modern Orthodox Teaneck, New Jersey, my stats weren't super promising. My only saving grace was that I was in Israel and I was currently enrolled in a yeshiva (Jewish educational institution). I'm positive they had mental images of this giant, Southern girl coming to steal their sweet Jersey boy away. I'm positive because that's what my soon-to-be-husband told me after he finally told his parents about me. To be fair, it was really his Jewish mama who had the biggest concerns. And I get it.

As a Jewish mama myself, I get the expectations and envisioning your future for your child. I've already envisioned my daughter as a powerful (yet kind) Executive Director of some sort of human rights NGO so yes, I get it. It's just harder on the other side, knowing that you are not the person your future spouses' parents envisioned for their beloved son.



Some of your players



That being said, the time eventually came for me to meet the parents. I ended up suggesting one of my favorite cafes in the neighborhood of Talpiot where I was living. I didn't have a lot of money to throw around when I was living in Israel so



there wasn't a lot eating out. However, when I did, I always tried to go to Kahlo. Kahlo, named for Frida Kahlo, was small, busy, and delicious. The coffee was strong and the food was traditional Israeli but with a modern twist. Every time I went I ordered the same thing—the green shakshuka. I have enjoyed traditional shakshuka all over Israel but this was the first time (and only time) I saw green shakshuka on the menu. Once I tried it, I was hooked.

But I digress. Let's get back to the story. The day had come for my meeting of the parents. I made sure to leave my apartment early enough so that I could walk there and still have 20 minutes to spare. Parents hate waiting, right? Sadly, they were already there when I arrived (I say 'sadly' because my idea of winning them over with my punctuality was subsequently squelched). This only exacerbated my nervousness about meeting them. I then hugged them. BIG. MISTAKE. I have since learned that you NEVER hug Modern Orthodox Jewish men. NEVER. But I couldn't help it! I'm Southern. I hug! I'm a hugger! Damnit! OK, so there was mistake number 2. I was really doing a great job (insert eye-roll here). After an awkward exchange of names and introductions, we were then led to our tiny table in the corner. I remember making eye-contact with my man on the way to the table and attempting to have a mental conversation. "They hate me, don't they?", I tried to say with my eyes. "No, no, you're doing great!", is what I was hoping to read from his eyes but instead all I got was, well, nothing. We had to work on our mental conversations. So there we were, just four peas in a pod.

Well, three peas and me. And then something awesome happened. My future father-in-law made a joke. I can't remember how the subject came up but we were talking about their last name and how to spell it—Fisch—when my future father-in-law looked at me and said, "It's like I always tell people, you can't have 'Fisch' without the 'C'. Get it? Fish. Sea. Genius. I laughed. Out loud. A real laugh. It wasn't a 'pleaselikemepleaselikemepleaselikeme' laugh but a real

belly laugh. And with that silly joke, deep breaths were had, green shakshuka was ordered and 2 years later, I married their son.

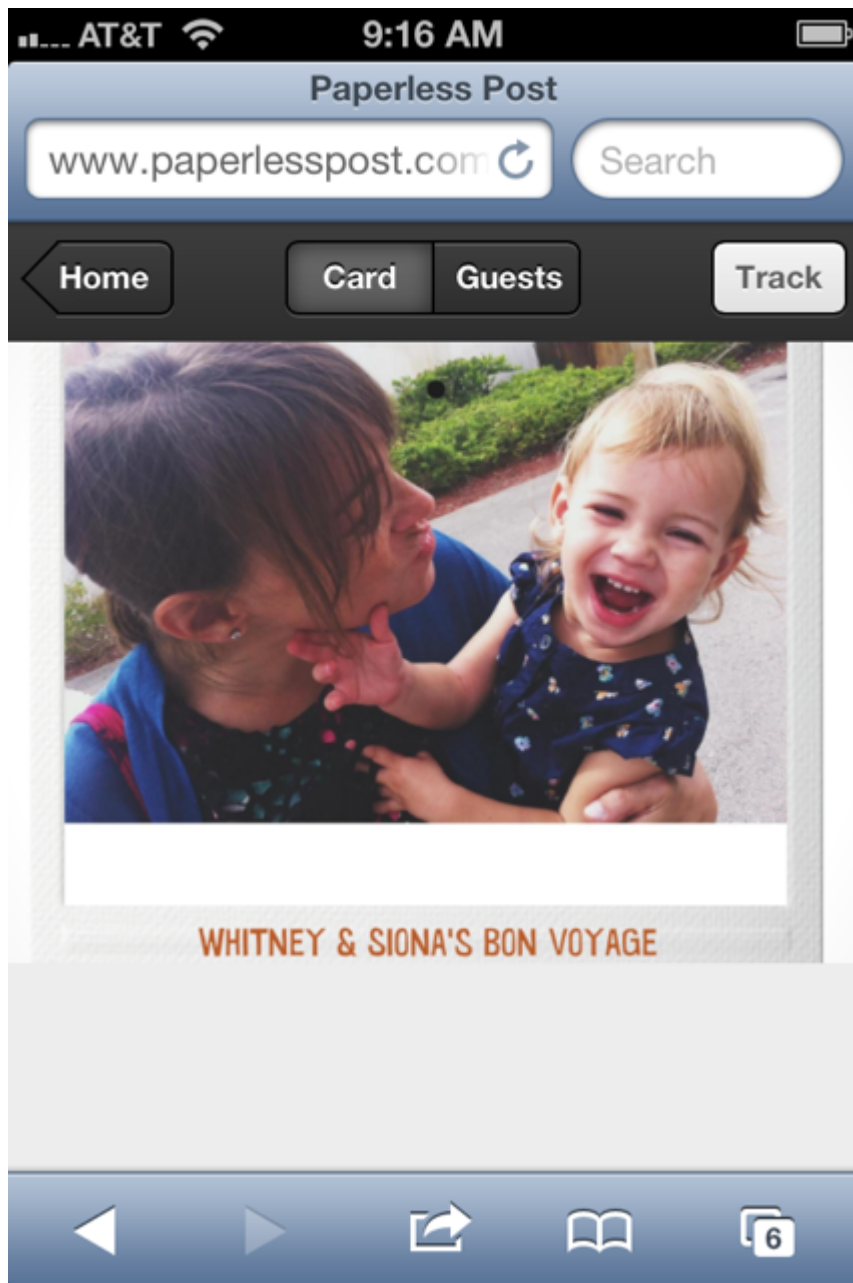


Decisions, decisions. Future-husband and I at the Israeli/Syrian border in 2007.





By the way, this is happening (see below). I signed a lease. I booked the movers. We are officially 6 weeks from moving to LA. Oh. Sh\*t.



The recipe below is my interpretation of the Kahlo recipe.

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## Kale & Butternut Squash

# Quesadilla? Yay! New Years? Meh.



For the passed several years, New Years has been a weird time for me. It's not for the regular, semi-cliched reasons either. I don't get sad when I reflect and let it sink in that yet another year has come and gone, though I do get blown away by how quickly time truly does go by. Nope. New Years has become a weird, confusing time for me lately because, well, I already did New Years.

As observant Jews, my husband and I celebrate the new year in the Fall during Rosh Hashanah, known to the world as "Jewish New Year". That's the time of year that I get a bit more reflective and/or contemplative. That's the time of year that I seek to change negative behaviors I see in myself while maintaining the good stuff I see in myself. It's during this "New Years" that I reach out to old friends to tell them how much I miss them and to make promises to be in contact more often, though we both know it's probably not going to happen. And because we read the same portion from the Torah every Rosh



Hashanah, it's so much easier to remember just where I was the year before, both spiritually and physically.

I'll never forget Rosh Hashanah from three years ago. I sat in synagogue listening to the haftorah story of Hannah and her desperate want/pleads to have a child. I sat in that service and so identified with her. My husband and I desperately wanted to be pregnant. I don't think I ever prayed so hard as I did that new year—begging Hashem to bless us with a child and asking Gd if he/she wouldn't mind glossing over some questionable behaviors from my early 20s and maybe focusing more on my recent work to help up the blessing 'ante'. Sure enough, one year later, we brought our 6 week-old baby with us to the very same synagogue to listen to the very same Torah portion and I truly never felt more grateful (or tired. She was only 6 weeks old, after all).

So, you see, this whole December 31st/January 1st thing isn't such a big deal over here. Now, I'll take any excuse to by champagne on sale and I do love the glitter that comes with this New Years (mental note: Find way to bring more glitter into Rosh Hashanah), but we already had our New Years' time of intense reflection. We still do a little count down because we are citizens of this Earth and I do LOVE watching the ball drop from Time's Square (mental note: Find way to bring a giant ball drop in Time's Square into Rosh Hashanah) but we don't go all out for New Years. Last year we started a little tradition of making homemade sushi and setting up the air mattress on the balcony for dinner and a movie al fresco but chances are, I'll be asleep by 11.

Happy New Year.



There's no "i" in "Team", but there is kale.

Ok, I made this recipe last Tuesday and I have to say, it's one of my new favorites. The crispness of a lightly buttered and fried tortilla mingled with the soft, sweetness of butternut squash and Monterrey Jack cheese just does good things to me. You don't need a lot of spice to this recipe because the natural flavors of the veggies and cheese do it for you. Make sure your kale is chopped small so you can easily get a good bite out of it once it's in the tortilla and enjoy!



As you can see by the pan, I really do cook these here recipes.



Nerd alert: I honestly do pay close attention to what goes in which layer when I make a quesadilla.





Cheese: It's the glue that holds us (and this quesadilla) together.



When it comes to quesadillas, it really is ALL about what's inside.

# Kale and Butternut Squash Quesadilla:

(Makes 3 – 4 Quesadillas)

What:

1 Cup of kale, destemmed and chopped small  
1 Cup of roasted butternut squash (see roasting direction here)  
2 Cloves of garlic, diced  
1/2 Tbsp cumin  
Salt  
Pepper  
3 Tbsp of oil – Coconut or olive works nicely  
Flour or whole wheat tortillas  
Butter – for pan  
1/2 – 3/4 Cup shredded cheese (I recommend Monterrey Jack or white cheddar)

How:

Break out a sauté pan, turn the stove to medium, and put your oil of choice in the pan (coconut or olive are my go-to). Thrown in your kale and sauté for just 1 minute. Next, throw in the garlic and sauté for another minute or so or until kale is bright green. Remove from heat immediately, place in separate bowl and set aside.

Next, wipe the pan down with a paper towel and put a little bit of butter in it. Turn the heat to medium low and place one tortilla in the pan followed by a layer of shredded cheese. Next, add your sautéed kale/garlic mixture and top that with a heaping scoop of butternut squash. Smush the squash down a bit so it's evenly spread out in the center of the tortilla. Next, add another layer of shredded cheese and the other tortilla. Once that final tortilla top is on, give the quesadilla a nice final smush so that everything gets nicely “stuck” together.

Let tortilla sit on the heat for 2-3 minutes, checking a few times to make sure it's not burning. The secret to the perfect golden and melted quesadilla is too cook it slow and low (heat). After you've checked and the bottom tortilla looks good and golden, carefully flip quesadilla over using a wide spatula. If you feel it necessary, and I ALWAYS feel it's necessary, add a bit more butter to the pan and make sure it gets under the new bottom tortilla. Let sit another 2-3 minutes, checking for perfect golden-ness. Once done, remove and serve hot with favorite toppings (my go-to are sour cream, Sriracha and cilantro).