

6-Layer Mediterranean Dip with Tnuva Labaneh + Feta



Shalom! Reporting live from the couch where I'm currently enjoying our 2nd day of winter break. I'm trying to ignore the ridiculous episode of Miraculous that my oldest is enjoying after her hour of quiet reading time. Yes, you heard me correctly – an hour of quiet time. This is not me bragging.

This is me celebrating! This is the first winter break where we've finally nailed down a schedule and nailed it down quickly + it's going well (I mean, it's day 2 so . . .). Anyway, our schedule is looking like this:

1. Wake up (no TV before 7 AM)
2. 2 Shows + play
3. Breakfast
4. Shower/get dressed
5. Morning activity out of the house
6. Lunch
7. Nap for littles + quiet for Siona
8. 1 hour afternoon TV time
9. Pre-dinner play
10. Dinner
11. After dinner play + 1 episode of Nailed It!
12. Bed

Good Lord. When you look at it it's a bit more exhausting. The husband + I are SO blessed to have this break alongside the kiddos since we both work in schools. It's the time we get to actually enjoy the kids instead of running around like maniacs on a Sunday trying to balance errands with quality time with the kids. The first semester of this year has been insanely busy as I started doing consulting and facilitating workshops on adolescent development and diet culture outside of my regular work at the school I work for plus trying to be present for the kids + this here blog. It's a lot to juggle and sometimes I can do it and sometimes, well, not-so-much.

Today's morning activity, however, was truly a study in how joy can facilitate connection + deeper relationships. I find that sometimes, even though I truly love the life I live, I'm not having as much fun living it as I could because I am constantly moving from one thing to the other. I feel like I'm constantly telling my kids to, 'Hurry! We're late!' So this 2-week break I am committing myself to one thing – taking it easy and being more present in the moment. So this morning we

grabbed the kids + headed out to Santa Monica where we rented a family-sized bucket bike and went riding on the boardwalk path along the beach. I'm not sure the last time I laughed that much. And sure, I almost ran the family into a sand dune but still! The sun was shining, we were smart enough to bring snacks, the girls had their scooters and we just went for it!





The other place I am taking it easy this winter break is in the kitchen! And while I'd love to be eating out nonstop because I love eating at restaurants + also I love someone else doing the cleaning + cooking, we can't afford that life. That said, I do plan on keeping meals simple + using leftovers as much as possible. Case in point, this 6-layer Mediterranean dip featuring my favorite labaneh + feta from Tnuva. I made the fried eggplant for another dish from earlier in the week so when it came to making something fresh and yummy for a Chanukah gathering we were hosting, I snagged those leftovers + added my favorite flavors to make a Mediterranean version of

a classic 7-layer dip taco (only minus one layer mainly because it wouldn't fit into my cute little glass dish – if it would have, I would have added roasted cauliflower). This dip can be made in individual little containers like this one or in a giant dip bowl for sharing. If you aren't afraid of a little spice, the feta and labaneh would pair wonderfully with a spicy harrisa. You can also take this dip out of the bowl and enjoy it over some tortilla chips as Mediterranean nachos or pair it with some falafel balls for a yummy falafel pita sandwich or deconstructed salad. The world is your delicious, kosher oyster, people! Go for it!





6-Layer Mediterranean Dip with Tnuva Labaneh + Feta

Ingredients:

1 eggplant, chopped

Canola oil for frying (roughly 2 – 3 cups)

kosher salt

2 Roma tomatoes, diced

1 cup of Tnuva labaneh, divided

1/2 chopped feta, divided

1/4 cup sliced Israeli green olives

Handful of cilantro, finely chopped

Method:

For frying the eggplant – Layout paper towels. Slice the eggplant into 1/2 inch thick rounds and place onto the paper towels making sure they aren't overlapping. Sprinkle the slices with kosher salt and let sit for about 25 – 30 minutes. This will draw out the moisture making sure the eggplant is crispy and not soggy. After 30 minutes, dab the eggplants with one of the paper towels already out to soak up the water that's collected on top of the eggplant. Next, place a large frying pan with enough oil to fill the pan to the midway up the pan. While the oil is heating, chop eggplants into cubes. Once the oil is fully hot (test this by dropping a small droplet of water into the pan. If it immediately sizzles, the oil is hot enough and ready for frying). Place about half the eggplant cubes into the pan (you don't want the eggplant cubes to be on top of each other). Let the eggplant cubes fry until golden brown while occasionally stirring throughout the process. Once one batch is done, remove from frying pan and place on a paper towel to absorb excess oil. Finish this process until all cubes are fried.

Assembly (this is to your discretion but I went with the following) –

Put labaneh on the bottom layer. Next, add the eggplant + chopped tomatoes + feta cheese + green olives + chopped cilantro. Top with a drizzle of your favorite hot sauce or harrisa to add a little kick to your dip (and to get you to an even 7-layers).

*This post was absolutely sponsored by Tnuva, a company whose products I genuinely love to eat.

Sheet Pan Chicken – Quick and Kosher-for-Passover



I'm currently sitting in bed. I'm sitting in bed and I'm trying to take care of myself. It hasn't been easy lately. Every since having our second baby, I feel like I'm in a

constant game of catch-up. I know this sounds crazy, but I'm not sure why having the second kiddo destroyed me as much as it did. OK, "destroyed me" is a little dramatic, but I can't seem to stay awake past 9pm, which means I average a decent night sleep. And, thank Gd, my kids are pretty decent sleepers. So why am I so tired?



I've decided there are tons of answers to this question. Maybe it's the fact that I over-schedule my day, just like most every other person I know. It also probably has to do with not exercising as much as I should but mostly I think it has to do

with the amount of stuff I have reeling around in my head. I appreciate the feminist movement and I consider myself a feminist but I'm not sure the feminist movement of the 70s knew what it was getting into when it rallied for fair and equal employment opportunities for women. But, I am grateful. I used to work in a school whose administration over-valued stress and exhaustion. People were heralded for working long hours; the bags under their eyes their little red badges of courage. Now I work for a school where taking a 'mental health day' is understood. I have a boss who openly talks about why she doesn't want us answering texts and phone calls after working hours – the boundary of work and life firmly in tact and celebrated. But still, I get home after picking up the girls and I still struggle with balancing all my responsibilities. When beloved friend and co-author, Sarah at The Patchke Princess started her Sheet-Pan Dinners Instagram handle, I started following immediately. She's a lot braver than me when it comes with experimenting with sheet-pan dinners, but nevertheless, she has inspired the recipe in this post. We eat meat at least once a week, aside from Shabbat, and being able to throw it on a sheet pan, combine it with roasted vegetables and the perfect seasoning without having to clean anything else makes me so happy. I mean seriously, it is the little things and no additional cleaning is to be celebrated as a big 'little thing'. Consider this sheet pan chicken a blank slate for which to experiment for further dinners. I hope you enjoy.





Sheet Pan Chicken

Ingredients:

2 chicken leg quarters, cut at bone and separated

3 carrots, skinned and cut into 1/4-inch rounds

5-6 Yukon Gold potatoes, quartered

1 medium onion, quartered

1/2 pint cherry tomatoes

3 garlic cloves, diced

1/4 cup olive oil

3 tbsp parve Ranch dressing mix powder

1/4 cup mayonnaise

1 tbsp kosher salt

1/2 tbsp black pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat to 400°F. Place a large 9 x 13" rimmed baking sheet in the oven while the oven is heating. While that's heating, combine Ranch dressing mix, mayonnaise, kosher salt and black pepper into a medium-sized bowl. Stir to combine. Set aside.

Clean chicken and dry well. Using a spatula or spoon, coat the chicken in the Ranch mayonnaise mixture. Place the chicken skin-side down on the pre-heated baking sheet. Let that cook for about 10 minutes.

While the chicken cooks, combine all the vegetables into a large bowl. Add olive oil, garlic, salt and pepper to the bowl and stir until well-combined. Once the chicken has cooked for 10 minutes, add the vegetable mixture to the sheet-pan, making sure that none of the vegetables overlap, and cook for another 20 – 25 minutes or until vegetables are soft.

Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.

Brown Rice Pesto Breakfast Bowl

Brown Rice Pesto Breakfast Bowl



Before arriving in Los Angeles, I heavily researched the city in order to figure out what part of the city we'd live in. And by research I of course mean that I watched old episodes of the original Beverly Hills, 90210 and poured over the most recent Bon Appetit at the time that had a lovely spread about hipster hangout, "Sqirl" (so hipster, in fact, that the 'u', 'r', and 'e' are apparently not necessary). In the article, they mentioned a sorrel pesto bowl that is the restaurant's number one seller. At the time I was absolutely not interested in trying a savory bowl of sorrel for breakfast. Why in the world would I want brown rice when I could have cinnamon rolls or sticky buns or brioche toast!?!? I mean, come on!!





So when we arrived in Los Angeles in the summer of 2014, my patient husband and even more patient daughter let me drag

them to the Mecca of hipsterville, Silverlake, to stand in line with every other sucker and wait for breakfast. And let me tell you, it was one of the greatest culinary decisions I've ever made (and not only because within my first 24 hours in LA I got to see the high Jewess of the world, Natalie Portman, who was also eating at Sqirl). This meal was so. friggin'. YUMMY. I was feeling adventurous and also feeling that there was no way my husband was going to be up for shlepping all the way to Silverlake from the Westside again so I went ahead and passed by all the brioche options and ordered the brown rice pesto bowl. When our meal arrived, I looked at my husband's brioche toast topped with chocolate ganache and thought, "I have made the greatest mistake in the world". But then I took my first bite of the pesto bowl, all mixed in with lacto-fermented hot sauce (still have no idea what that means), feta cheese and a perfectly cooked poached egg and I knew I was forever changed. Let me tell you. Putting pesto in brown rice and topping with a poached egg, feta, radishes and hot sauce is THE GREATEST IDEA EVER. Therefore, I went ahead and copied it as much as possible. This has become my go-to Sunday morning breakfast ever since that fateful day in Silverlake.



Brown Rice Pesto Breakfast Bowls

Ingredients for Bowl:

1 cup cooked brown rice
1/2 cup pesto (see below)
2 eggs (or more, depending on how much you love eggs), poached
1/4 cups feta cheese
3 radishes sliced thin
Optional: Sriracha

Ingredients for Pesto:

2 cups fresh basil leaves, packed (can sub half the basil leaves with baby spinach)
1/2 cup freshly grated Romano or Parmesan-Reggiano cheese (can omit and use 3 tbsp of nutritional yeast to make it vegan)
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil.
1/3 cup chopped walnuts
3 garlic cloves, minced

Directions:

Cook brown rice according to package. Remember that brown rice takes about 45 minutes to cook so make sure you plan accordingly. Once done, transfer rice to a large mixing bowl and leave about 3 – 5 minutes.

For the pesto. If you want to be kind to yourself and your time, you can please feel free to buy pre-made pesto. If you want to make your own pesto, place the basil leaves and walnuts into the bowl of a food processor and pulse a several times. Add the garlic and cheese and pulse several times more. Scrape down the sides of the food processor with a rubber spatula. While the food processor is running, slowly add the olive oil in a steady small stream. Adding the olive oil slowly, while the processor is running, will help it emulsify and help keep the olive oil from separating. Occasionally stop to scrape down the sides of the food

processor. Stir in some salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Set aside.

For the poached egg: I learned how to poach an egg via The Kitchn's tutorial so I'm sending you there for this recipe. Come back and read on when you're done. ☐

Once brown rice has somewhat cooled, add 1/2 cup of the pesto to your brown rice and combine. Top with 1 poached egg, feta, and sliced up radish. Serve hot.