

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.

Lemon Garlic Broccoli
Meatballs



Hello. Is it me you're looking for? I hope so! It's me! I'm back! Can you believe it? I surely can't. It's really nice to be back and writing and creating again and I have my dear friend, Sarah Lasry, and the folks at Pardes Farms to thank for bringing me back from blogging obscurity. Let's catch up from last we spoke, shall we?

So we had a 3rd kid. If you follow me on Instagram this should

not be new information for you but if you don't well, then, SURPRISE! His name is Amos Ephraim and he is such a yummy baby boy. He is very loved and will definitely end up in his school counselor's office when he gets older and realizes that not everyone claps and celebrates him for every little thing that he does (as is his experience now as the baby of 2 oldest sisters and 2 adoring parents). Our family has spent the year navigating the ups and downs of life – being forced to move out of our home, helping our kids adjust to 1st grade, pre-school, daycare, full-time working parenting, side hustling, etc. We've met new friends and have attempted to work on building up and maintaining older friendships. I've built a nice little network of friends in my little corner of Los Angeles that I really love though one of my most favorite people moved to NYC.



In reflecting on my life since I last posted over a year ago, I can't say that I've necessarily reached any concrete goals but I also don't think I set any goals other than trying to maintain a structured and loving household now that there are 3 kids. I knew it would be hard. I did not know it would be this hard, but we are doing it and I can't believe how far

along my hubs and I have come since meeting that day in Jerusalem (read that story [here](#)). Blogging isn't the only thing that's been left to the wayside since birthing a 3rd human (I remember this thing, 'exercise'? I've heard of it but . . .) but my beloved friends who have been in the parenting game longer than me keep reminding me that I'm in the thick of it right now. I need to remember to be kind to myself and remind myself that these little kiddos won't be so little for long so try, TRY, to enjoy it. And I do. I honestly really do.



Lemon Garlic Broccoli Meatballs

- 1/2 pound ground beef
- 1/2 pound ground lamb
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup matzah meal
- 2 tbsp kosher salt
- 1 tbsp ground pepper
- 1/2 cup Pardes riced broccoli – defrosted and thoroughly dried

3 tbsp oil

Lemon Garlic Sauce

3 tbsp margarine

Juice of 1/2 lemon

4 cloves of garlic, minced

Chopped parsley (optional)

Directions

Place all ingredients for meatballs into a large bowl. Mix with hands (you get a more even mixture if you do this by hand). Shape into golf ball-sized balls and set aside.

Add the 3 tbsp of oil to a large frying pan and place over medium-low heat. Cook the meatballs for 8 – 10 minutes on all sides, until browned and cooked through. Remove to a clean plate and set aside.

In the same skillet, melt 3 tablespoons of margarine. Add lemon juice and minced garlic to melted margarine and let simmer for 3 – 5 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning if you feel you need more acid (a.k.a. lemon juice). Put meatballs back into the skillet and let the sauce and meatballs cook together for an additional 2 – 3 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning to your liking. Garnish with parsley for added flare. Serve hot!



10 Easy Vegetarian Meals PLUS 10 Must-Have Essentials for New Parents



As you may or may not know, depending on how closely you follow this here blog or my Instagram feed, I am pregnant with our 3rd kiddo. As of this writing, I am just about 8 months pregnant. I still cannot believe that we are having a 3rd kid.

I know I've mentioned that before but I still cannot believe it. When I was 8 months pregnant with our first kiddo (who is currently 5 1/2), I was so full of excitement and joy. I don't so much feel that now and not because I don't feel excitement or joy for my kiddos (if you know me at all, you know I probably love my kids a little 'too' much) but because the newborn stage isn't my favorite. The first newborn stage I went through was marked by a 3 month-long bout of postpartum depression. The second newborn stage was actually kind of awesome, if I'm being honest. I knew what to expect in terms of the sheer exhaustion and, you know, the part where you're terrified that if your baby even remotely looks at you weird it means they're sick and/or don't love you. I leaned into it, made a lot of espresso and allowed myself to binge watch a looooooooooooooot of shows (I love you, *Homeland*). But now I've got 2 others kids and, oh yeah, I GAVE ALL MY BABY STUFF AWAY. That's right. I was so certain that we would only be having 2 kids that I sold off or gave away all our baby gear so now we're back to square one. Thus, the impetus for this post.

If there's 2 things I know about preparing for a new baby to enter your life it's that above all else you need to have delicious, ready-to-eat food on hand **AT ALL TIMES** and you need baby gear that helps make your life easier (such as sleep systems, instant swaddles, easy-to-use thermometers and washable rugs). Therefore, I combined these two certainties to present to you this epic post of 'Must Haves' for both food and gear for new parents. If you are about to have a baby, send the link to this post to all your friends and family with an email that reads simply:

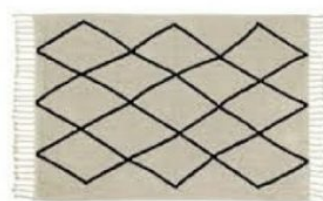
Dear Loved Ones,

We're gonna need some help. See all links and items in this blog post (and here's where you'd insert the link to this post).

Love,

Me

Trust me. They will respond. Ultimately, your loved ones will want to help! I hope you enjoy this post. I picked the baby gear items based entirely on items that I have been my 'must haves' for both kiddos and will be for this one save for the amazingness that is the DockATot (which was not yet on the market when our 2 year-old was born) and the Lorena Canal rug, which is also new to the market and has been a life saver for this type A cleaner.



10 "MUST HAVES"

for new parents



1. First, the DockATot. DockATot is a multi-functional lounger, co-sleeper, playtime lounger. When Siona, our oldest was born, we tried every kind of co-sleeping or bassinet on the market (I mean, not really, but it felt like it). Eventually we just gave up on co-sleeping as the co-sleeper we had didn't fit our bed and it only fit on one side of the bed so only one of us truly got to co-sleep. With Eden, we gave up entirely and swaddled her and set her on a pillow in between us (I'm sure you're thinking we are negligent parents for doing so but I'm happy to report that little infant is now a healthy, sassy 2 year-old). Because I was terrified of rolling on top of her, I barely slept when she did. But now the Lord has brought us the DockATot and I am so thrilled for this item to be on the market. For safety reasons, the DockATot is meant to be placed in the middle of the bed, which allows for husband and I to both feel like we are co-sleeping with our newborn. It's made in Europe and designed in Sweden, tested for breathability, hypo allergenic, machine washable and OEKO-TEX certified, which means it was independently tested and certified so you can feel safe knowing the folks at DockATot truly believe in baby safety. Seriously, all that's left is for the folks at DockATot to figure out how it can do my taxes and it would be THE perfect all-encompassing parent tool.



The DockATot

2) Lorena Canal Rugs is also a product I only recently discovered and, honestly, even if you don't have kids, it's an amazing product. First and foremost, you need to know that they are machine washable and can be dried in the clothes dryer. I repeat: THESE RUGS ARE MACHINE WASHABLE! In addition, the colors used in these handmade rugs come from all natural dyes, eco-friendly and contain no VOCs like most carpeting and rugs. And if the fact that all parents can now breathe easily when their kids are handling washable paint around rug wasn't enough, you can also feel good about the purchase of a Lorena Canal rug as proceeds from the sale of their products go towards the Sakula Project, a school the company founded in Haryana, the North of India. Dudes, seriously, it's a win-win.



Lorena Canal Rugs

3) A Diaper Clutch (one featured is from Skip Hop). My dear friend, Rachel, went off registry when she got me this as a gift when our first baby was born and I'm SO glad she did. This is the item I get all friends who have their first baby. Seriously, I NEVER go off registry but for this one, I do. It's an all in one – carries the diapers, the wipes and is the clean thing you lay your baby down on for a change. I have legit laid this puppy down on the floor of an Anthropologie and changed a baby's diaper on it. We use it to this day. It's come in handy on planes, trains and in automobiles. I can't tell you enough how this has saved our tushes!



4) A GOOD sound machine – I use the same sound machines for drowning out my loud Jersey husband as I do for blocking my confidential conversations with students as a school counselor. I learned my lesson when I bought a ‘cute’ sound machine rather than a functional one when our 2nd kid was born. Though the sound machine was adorable, the actual white noise sound it made sounded like a broken TV. The one pictured is the model I recommend. Therapist grade, baby!



5) An ear thermometer – OK, we have gone through every kind of thermometer possible and an ear thermometer is the best. I learned this when I started supervising a school nurse and she ‘schooled’ me on the best products for adolescent health care. We had received a digital forehead thermometer with the birth of our second baby and, to this day, I still can’t work that thing and husband is convinced it’s always a degree or two off, which counts! And so, I say to you, get thee a good digital ear thermometer and be done with it!



6) A SwaddleME Swaddle – or really ANY swaddle that is user-friendly and doesn't require you constant access to maternity ward nurses who can swaddle a baby in just about anything. I gave up on trying to achieve the perfect swaddle about 2 weeks into the birth of our 1st born and have been in a believer in velcro-based swaddles ever since. Seriously, DO IT.



7) The Backpack Diaper Bag – Oh, you think I give a crap about the latest designer, over-the-shoulder diaper bag? Cause I don't. I started using backpacks as diaper bags when the oldest was 2 (about 3 years ago) and haven't looked back. I started with a standard backpack and then upgraded to a yoga backpack within 6 months. Next thing I know, the market is being saturated with diaper bag backpacks. Now, I'm not saying I STARTED the trend, necessarily. But I'm also not saying I

didn't. Seriously, every time I was out with the kiddos and had the over-the-shoulder bag on and bent down to help my toddler with something, I would knock her in the face. Backpacks do not facilitate the toddler knock out PLUS, they're better for the back.



8) The Wubbanub – I don't know what it is with our babies and Wubbanubs but they love them. Our kids aren't pacifier kids (they're usually done with it by 6 months of age) but as infants, they love the Wubbanubs. I can't point to what it is about them, except they're super cute and harder to lose because they're bigger than a standard pacifier that doesn't come with a plush animal attached to it.



9) A Portable High Chair – Holy cow! Honestly, to this day we do not have one of these and we NEED ONE! We suffer through it as semi-constant roadtrippers and it's a nightmare. Ultimately, we end up sitting the kiddo in her carseat, which

is on top of a table, or one of us ends up with the baby on us the entirety of the meal. #neveragain



10) A Plush Sloth – Do I really need to explain this one? It's a plush sloth! GAH! I want one!



And now for the meals . . .



Brown Rice Pesto Breakfast Bowl from Jewhungry



Freezer to Oven Stuffed Sweet Potatoes from Sweet Peas and Saffron



Cheesy Broccoli Kale Pesto Pizza from Peas and Crayons



Cold Asian Noodle Salad from Lexi's Clean Kitchen



Vegan Red Curry Pumpkin Noodle Soup from Nutmeg Nanny



Three-Ingredient Energy Bars from Sheri Silver



Skillet Spanakopita from Dessert for Two



Italian Chickpea Salad from Iowa Girl Eats



Veggie Fajita Enchiladas from Delish Knowledge



Moroccan Carrot Red Lentil Soup from A Cedar Spoon