

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 lounge, co-sleeper, playtime lounge. 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

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.

Chocolate Hamantaschen with Tahini + Caramel Drizzle



**chocolate
hamantaschen**

**with tahini +
caramel drizzle**



Alright, alright. I got one more hamantaschen recipe for ya. What can I say? I like triangle-shaped cookies that can indulge my love of toppings or 'fixin's', as we say down South. Oh man, I love fixin's. Gimme alllllll the toppings. Be them sweet or savory, I love toppings. As a kid, I had some weird eating habits that revolved around toppings or condiments. One of my favorites was a baked potato in which I would top with shredded cheese and salad dressing (a

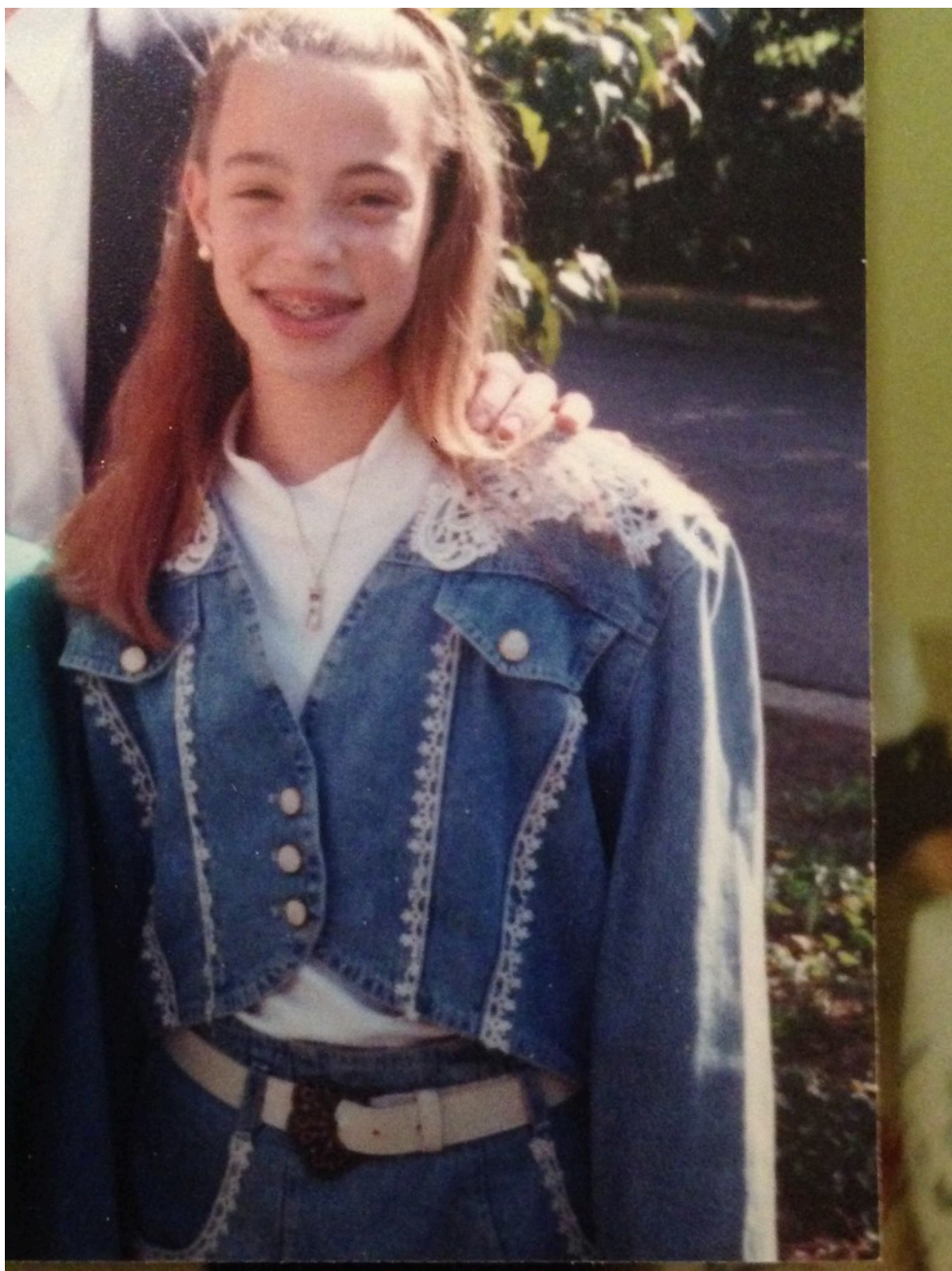
vinaigrette was my preferable dressing for this delicious dish).





I also went through a phase in which I ate lunch foods for breakfast. This included, but was not limited to, microwaveable mac n' cheese and Chef Boyardee spaghetti and meatballs. Have I mentioned I should be 500 pounds? Anywho, for as much as I love condiments (I'll take all the mayonnaise please), there are a few condiments that if you were to put them on my food, I might threaten to shiv you. These include mustard (Only on hot dogs and THAT IS IT), whipped cream (Waste of calories. It's just fluffy air), shredded coconut

(NEVER. EVER. EVER.). But tehina, yes please!! Oh my goodness, just put it on everything, especially these cookies. I based these hamantaschen off of Danielle Oron's Salted Tahini Chocolate Chip Cookies, made beautifully by Molly Yeh. I've been following Danielle on Instagram for a while and truly love what she's doing with food, especially since she brings so much tehina into the mix. So I took the flavors from those amazing looking salted tahini chocolate chip cookies and made them into a hamantaschen. I think it worked out nicely. Maybe you'll make them and let me know?



Me in Middle School, circa 1993, probably

dreaming about something with cheese and
mayonnaise on it.



[amd-zlrecipe-recipe:24]

