

Sex with a Side of Roasted Carrot Soup w/Coconut Milk (Kosher Connections Link Up, Jan., 2013)

Sex was brought up a lot at work this week. Let me explain. I am a middle school counselor. That's right. I get paid in ~~nickles and warm fuzzies~~ the big bucks to be emotionally and physically available to middle school-aged children 9 hours a day, 5 days a week (well, I get out early on Friday for Shabbat). It's not a job I EVER, I repeat, EVER thought I would do much less love but I do love it. I was originally hired at the school as a co-director of student life and then 2 weeks after school started I walked into a meeting I thought was about our kosher food bank program and it turned out to be a "how'd you like to be a school counselor" conversation. I am a trained social worker so it's not far off. I also love working with youth, which was my concentration in social work school but my focus was in community organizing, not in individual practice (IP). In fact, I distinctly remember somewhat tuning out in the mandatory IP courses thinking, "There's no way in H*LL I'm ever going to do this." Ha. Jokes on me. So here I am, a school counselor—for middle school students. I mean, the apex of awkwardness, 'drama', emotions, depression, everything in a child's developmental life. I have learned so much about young people through this job. Heck, I've been asked parenting advice and that was before I had a child. Parents come to me desperate for advice or an explanation as to why their child is behaving the way they are and often I bring up the frontal-lobe/brain development stuff but mostly I tell them that this is normal. Your child is going through a change that is so intense the only ages that match it's intensity of development is 0-2. It's amazing the

sigh of relief I see when parents hear, "You're not alone." Of course, the other side of the job is occasionally recommending continual outside therapy and let me tell you, NO ONE likes the person in the room who is recommending therapy.



Mommy, where do babies come from? Ummm . . .

So why sex? Well, I run a girls group--a small group 'lunch bunch' of 6th grade girls. Working with girls in helping them

feel confident, understood, and healthy is a passion of mine, especially in Miami where the exposure to weight-loss ads, Botox, and the expectation of beauty is so overwhelming I have 6th graders telling me they want to be 'skinny' when they grow up. It's heartbreaking. I had the first two sessions of my two 6th grade girls group this past week and during this time I always ask them what they want to talk/learn about. I get the usual—gossip, cliques, parents, peer pressure, etc. But this time around, someone in both groups said puberty. Last year I ended up teaching 'unofficial' sex education when it became very clear that my girls had no idea what their periods are and what happens to their bodies during puberty. I closed the shades, told them that I reserved the right to not answer a question they might ask and then let them ask me any question they ever had about the issue (within reason, of course). It was very "Reading Lolita in Tehran", except this was "Learning about My Uterus in Jewish Day School" (remember people, its *uterUS* not *uterU*). Could I have gotten fired? I'm not sure. But dang it, it's too important that our girls are educated about their bodies so that they can make educated decisions about what happens to it as they grow up. So now I'm getting permission to officially talk about it in girls group plus I've been asked to teach sex ed. in health class. It's intense but it's all in a day's work.

On top of all that sex talk, I was asked to compile a list of resources for a mom who wants to talk about sex with her eleven year-old son but is terrified to do so. And then it dawned on me, 'Holy shit, I'm gonna have to do this with Siona one day'. And then another thing dawned on me. As a relatively observant Jewish woman, my husband and I practice *Taharat Hamishpacha*, The Laws of Family Purity, part of which is going to the mikveh every month for a ritual cleansing. One day Siona is going to realize that mom leaves the house once a month all showered, no make up, hair wet, and is gone for about 20 minutes (Gd bless those mikvot that take reservations) and then comes back all hair still wet. She's

going to want to know what's up with that and eventually I'll need to be honest about what it is and why mommy does it. It's kind of a beautiful way to explain the birds and the bees to a child. It certainly beats learning about it from your awkward Math teacher when you're 10 years-old. I'm still debating whether that was a good thing or a bad thing as in the end, I was terrified of sex for quite a long time. Thanks Mr. H. Maybe that's why I hate Math so much.



Carrots: Pre-roasting

This week's recipe is soup. I've started cooking 3-4 dinners/week for a dear friend/co-worker who wants to go semi-Paleo and doesn't want to cook for herself. It's such a great opportunity because it challenges me in the kitchen and I get paid. Holler! I was craving roasted carrot soup for myself so went ahead and made it for Dana and then saved some for me. I hope she likes it (and you too)!



Carrots: Post-roast

Roasted Carrot Soup with Coconut Milk and Cilantro

What?!

8-10 carrots cut in 1/2 in. rounds
Olive oil for drizzle
1 medium onion, chopped
1 tbsp coconut oil
1/2 can coconut milk
4 cloves of garlic, minced
1/2 tbsp ground coriander
4 cups of water or vegetable broth
Sea salt
Pepper
1 bunch of cilantro

How?!

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees F. Place cut-up carrots spread

out on a baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with sea salt and pepper and place in oven for about 30 minutes. About 15 minutes into the roasting, coarsely chop onions and mince the garlic. Place a stock pot on the stove with the flame on medium-high heat. Put coconut oil in pot. Let sit for a minute and then add onions. Sauté until clear, about 4-5 minutes. Turn down flame and add minced garlic. Sauté with onions for another minute or so. Add carrots to the mix once they are done (they should be nicely browned and soft). Add the ground coriander. Sauté for another minute. Add the water and bring to a boil. Reduce the water to simmer and let sit, covered, for about 10-15 minutes.



One Big Happy Soup Family

At this point you can either blend in batches in a food processor or, if you're really good, you have a hand blender and just blend the crap outta it. I LOVE the hand blender. It's the easiest way to make any soup. Just roast vegetables, add water or broth and then blend. Once it's smoothly blended, add the coconut milk and stir. This part is up to you. Taste and if you like the consistency, keep it as is. If you want it richer, then add more. Add a bit more sea salt and pepper to

your taste. Top with bunch of fresh cilantro and serve.

This soup is delicious. I'm pretty proud of myself for this recipe. I may or may not have high-fived myself after eating.



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