

A Little Heavy and A Lot of Fake Cheese



“Cheese”

It's no surprise that as a new mom, or really, a mom, I don't really get a lot of free time. Between work and spending time with Siona there's not a lot of 'me' time. This thought kept running over and over in my head the first couple months of my daughter's life. I know it's not really talked about but the first three months as a mother were some of the most difficult months of my life. Yes, I felt excited but mostly I felt terrified. I was terrified of all the change. I was terrified of not being able to cut it in my new role as a mom/wife/friend/sister/employee. How would I balance it all? Would I ever watch a movie again? Cook? Read a book? It was so overwhelming at times I felt like I was drowning in a sea of anxiety until one day I had a realization that all that fear and anxiety was getting in the way of actually connecting with my child. My husband, who just happens to be an incredibly fun and light-hearted individual, had this amazing relationship with her but I wasn't getting smiles or giggles. I was the

overly concerned, constantly worried mom in the corner just trying to catch my breath and catch up with my life. So of course, one shabbat evening, as my husband and I sat across from each other over dinner, I had my little meltdown. We talked, I cried a little and then the next morning we woke up and I felt lifted. Since then, about 3 months ago, things have gotten a lot better. I still battle with the occasional bout of anxiety (hey, I'm a Jewish mother. I mean, I can't shake that) but it's nothing compared to all those months ago and the result of this self-realization is a happier, more connected relationship with not only my daughter but with myself as well.



It's easy to connect when you force your child to hang out on you. P.S. Awesome drool shot, no?

Since then, not only have I seen more movies than I can keep track of, I've even found a little 'me' time (this blog can attest to that). Before I became a mommy, I would spend my shabbat mornings on our balcony, sipping iced coffee and reading for hours. I was never one for schul after leaving Jerusalem and not connecting with a schul since living in Ann

Arbor. Instead, I would find my solace on the balcony; coffee in hand and book in lap. Nowadays, I feel blessed to get 45 minutes to an hour on a shabbat to read and drink coffee and dang it if that's not all I need. I don't even need a marathon nap, though, I do miss those. Just a little quiet time to escape in a book, a cup of coffee and maybe, if I felt ambitious that week, a sweet little chocolate treat.



New book, new love

Now that there has been a little balance restored to my life, and clearly cooking is back, I decided to take on the task of cooking for a colleague (as mentioned in the previous post). I'm doing a 'trial' run with another potential client for this week who was intrigued with the idea of someone else cooking for them, especially more healthy, clean food. I've been asked to prepare as much Paleo or vegan-friendly meals as possible. My kitchen being a kosher kitchen, they're also getting kosher food but of course, kosher being flexible (it's true! I promise!), all that Paleo/vegan cooking isn't as scary as I thought.



Veggies—so perrrdy



They actually put 'cheese' on the label

I decided to try out a recipe I found on Oh She Glows. It was easy and pretty delicious. I don't usually cook with fake cheese but luckily, my 'client' (and dear friend) puts a lot of trust in me and let's me be adventurous and I'm SO grateful for that. I followed the recipe pretty word for word so have to admit, I wasn't super adventurous this time around and didn't make up my own recipe but hey, it was a busy weekend. Can't a girl catch a break ☐

Oh She Glows' "Naughty & Nice Vegan Enchilada"

What?

- 8-ounces dry fusilli pasta (3.5 cups dry noodles or half a 16-oz package)*
(I used brown rice noodles to keep it closer to Paleo-friendly. Make sure to cook for no more than 10 minutes if going brown rice noodle or else they will get mushy).
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 red onion, chopped

- 1 medium jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped*
- 3 bell peppers (I used 1 red, 1 orange, and 1 yellow), chopped
- 1-3 tbsp taco seasoning mix (I made my own with a dash or two of cinnamon, cumin, ground coriander and sea salt)
- 1 can black beans (or 2 cups cooked), drained and rinsed
- 1.5-2 cups homemade enchilada sauce (see above, or use store-bought)
- 1/3-1/2 cup Daiya cheese (or other non-dairy cheese)
- 1 cup chopped green onions
- salt & pepper, to taste
- 20 tortilla chips (about 2 handfuls), crushed
- Avocado, salsa, sour cream, etc, to garnish

How's That Now?

1. Preheat oven to 350F and grab a 2-quart casserole dish. Add dry pasta to a pot of boiling water and cook for 7-8 minutes. Be careful not to overcook the pasta or it will get mushy in the casserole. Drain and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process.

2. In a large skillet, sauté the chopped onion, jalapeno, and peppers in the olive oil over medium heat for about 7-8 mins.

3. Add the taco seasoning, drained and rinsed black beans, and 1 cup of the enchilada sauce. Stir well and cook for another 5 mins.

4. Stir in the cheese, pasta, and chopped green onion. Season with salt and pepper to taste and adjust seasonings if necessary.

5. Spread 1/2 cup of enchilada sauce over the bottom of the casserole dish. Scoop on the skillet mixture and spread out evenly. Spoon on the rest of the sauce on top and sprinkle with cheese.

6. Bake for 15-20 mins at 350F until heated through. Sprinkle with crushed nacho chips, chopped avocado, salsa, and sour cream if desired just before serving. Serve with a big green salad and nacho chips.

Note 1: Be sure not to handle the jalapeno seeds as they can make your fingers (and anything you touch) sting badly. You can also wear plastic gloves too.