

A Word on Pesach

I wasn't raised in a particularly observant household. I love my childhood connection to Judaism and appreciate the entire journey of life that has brought me to Pesach in Teaneck for the last several years. First night Seder goes well into the late night hours and four full glasses of wine are always enjoyed. I have incredibly fond memories of my mom's perfectly boiled eggs sitting in just the right amount of salt water and that perfectly formed matzoh ball swimming in harmony with carrots and chicken. I carry these memories with me as I join the Seder at my in-law's table and though observance level might be a bit stricter, I think I'm finding a comfortable place at each table.



Living a more observant life tends to naturally call for a stricter observance of holidays and really, well, everything. For the past 2.5 years, as Pesach looms nears, I get a little panicky at the thought of all the cleaning and prep our observance level calls for and don't even get me started on the dread of saying good-bye to wheat, beans, peanuts, corn, etc. for a week. It's not just because my love for pasta rivals that of any full-blooded Italian or the fact that kosher for Pesach food is more expensive than regular kosher

food (I'm saving my rant on the high cost of kosher food for another day), but it's also the fact that I don't have a cadre of kosher for Pesach recipes in my head like my mother-in-law or a woman who was raised in this kind of observance level. It's a bit intimidating actually. But then my very thoughtful and thought-provoking brother-in-law said something that completely changed my mind about Pesach (and was also one more bit of proof as to why he is such a great Jewish educator). See, we were talking about how folks run out and buy some of the more disgusting, laboratory-enhanced kosher for Pesach (heretofore known as KFP) foods like KFP Oreos or KFP soy sauce (which is imitation since soy isn't eaten on Pesach) and fake cereals when he made the statement, "if only people could realize it's not about what you're limited to or what you can't bring into the house but rather what you can bring into the house—fresh fruits, vegetables, pure, whole foods." Genius, right? So while we remember that we were once slaves and now we are free, let's really BE FREE, no? Let's free ourselves from overly processed imitation foods that have that ever-coveted P deeming it KFP. Let's free ourselves from the junk that we put in our body in the name of Pesach and instead choose to honor the memory of Moshe and our ancestors who were once slaves in Egypt by eating foods from the earth, not a lab, and allowing ourselves the privilege MOST of us have to be creative, think outside the culinary box and truly be free.

