

Mommy Blogs and Meatballs: A Blogdentity Crisis

This week was an interesting one. A rollercoaster of emotions, if you will. It was the first week back at school with the kiddos so I was up at 6ish every morning and at work by 7ish, which meant I was gone before Siona was awake. I was exhausted but running on buckets of coffee and adrenaline. Though it's my 3rd year in my job as a school counselor, this was my first time at the first week of school in my job. The first year I was still in my original position as Student Life Director and the second year I was on maternity leave. I was nervous and overwhelmed. I also took over as 'senior' school counselor in the Middle School, which didn't help my anxiety. I was trying to train our new counselor while tending to the needs of my students and colleagues. And though this past week I survived on adrenaline, iced coffee and water, I thrived on being able to be there for my students; being able to be there for one of my new 6th graders who sobbed for over an hour in my office in fear of Middle School and my 8th graders who are already freaking out about high school and college.



One of the many ridiculous things I do for my students – dressing up as Effie from the Hunger Games for Color War back when I was pregnant.

While I was kicking a** and taking names in my role as school counselor, this blog wasn't fairing so well and it was bringing me down. This summer allowed me a bit more freedom to be present for this blog, which made me really happy. I finally was able to interview my friend, Zak the Baker. I made the fried chicken recipe that had been living in my head and I finally was able to write down my own love story. It felt

wonderful to have the time to do all that. But this past week brought on the realization that, once again, my free time is extremely limited. And then, on Thursday morning, I received an email in my inbox from a blog I follow (or, now, used to follow). The blogger is an incredible writer and, in my estimation, would fall into the category of 'mommy blogger'. She writes about her adventures with her young daughters set against the back drop of Montana. Her Instagram account should be sponsored by the visitors bureau of Montana, the pictures are that incredibly beautiful. But that's besides the point. This post was about her living her dream of quitting her job so that she could be home with her girls. As beautiful and ethereal as this post was, it also enraged me a bit. I felt badly about having these feelings of anger. And, as I like to remind my students, no one can "make" a person feel anything. Instead, we allow these feelings to occur. We give them life and this post was bringing all sorts of life to some not-so-nice feelings for me that I really needed to get to the bottom of.

I don't know this woman in the slightest. I follow her on Instagram and read her posts but I don't know her. I don't know her except what she wants me and the rest of the world to know about her. And please don't misunderstand me, she seems like a lovely person. It's not necessarily her that I take/took issue with. I think this post came at the wrong time for me, personally. I had barely seen my daughter all week. I only saw her for an hour on Wednesday, between coming home from work and then having to go back for a parent night. One hour out of 24. And here I was, reading a post about how this woman got to leave her day job and now spends her days going on adventures with her daughters. So yes, bad timing.



She gets me.

I ended up writing a comment about how I thought her post was beautiful but that it was also difficult to read as I too dream of being at home with my daughter but I can't. She wrote back because that's the type of blogger she is; always wanting to be there for her readers. But what she wrote back enraged me even more. She responded with all the write buzz words/phrases, 'walking in the path of your dreams', 'walking with your heart and soul', like a new Oprah for the hipster mommy-set.

And while I appreciate the conversation, what I realized this morning, after finally getting a solid 11 hours of sleep (Gd bless Shabbat), was that not anywhere in her post or in her response did she talk about the privilege of being able to stay at home and 'live your dreams'. And then I realized that though this blog of mine is technically a food blog, I sometimes delve into the 'mommy blog' world, which, I now clearly understand, is not the place for me. My sister-in-law, Caitlin, of The Joy of Caitlin, had a very sweet post published by the Huffington Post this week. She worked really hard to get it out there—posting it all over the place, and she absolutely deserved to have it posted. So I thought, why not follow her lead and try to get more stuff out there. I tried posting the only post I could find in my blog archives that I thought would fit into the 'mommy blog' or parenting category. I took 20 minutes out of my work day on Friday to post it on various parenting/mom pages and bloggers but it just didn't fit. Hell, one of them flagged me for spam, which I thought hilarious. But with that notification that someone thought my post was 'spam' came the realization of what I was doing. I was trying to fit a pentagon into a round hole. This community is not for me. I love reading my food blogs and I am so appreciative of the community of food bloggers I've become close to via the Kosher Connection and Instagram but the circle on mommy/parent bloggers is another realm and though a lot of them speak of light and peace, the general feeling I have is that it's a competition of who has the most hipster

dressed kids and appearance of a near-perfect life. And if you're thinking I sound a little angry or frustrated, I am. In all my mommy/parenting blog reading, I have not once read the term 'privilege'. Not once has one of these bloggers spoken about the privilege of staying home; the privilege of breastfeeding; the privilege of eating organic or 'clean'. Every time one of these parent bloggers posts a meme on their Facebook page about the evils of formula or GMOs or baby cereal or the like, I wonder if they've ever thought about the countless moms and dads who don't have the privilege of buying GMO-free, or organic or whose breasts didn't quite work out as expected; much less stay at home to be with their children, and what that must feel like for that parent on the other side of their meme. Have they ever thought about privilege? Thanks to social work school, I think about it all the time. It's a privilege I have this computer so that I can write down my thoughts. It's a privilege that I have amazing friends and family who support me. It's a privilege I can afford daycare and still have enough cash to pay rent and occasionally shop at Whole Foods. People don't like thinking about privilege because they feel they have to apologize for it, but that's not how I see it. If you can acknowledge it and not take advantage of it or acknowledge it and be self-aware enough to recognize what it means for those who don't have it, well then, that's a different story. That I can support.



Late-night blogging.

And so when this particular mommy blogger's post landed in my inbox I thought if I calmly comment, maybe I'll get over my feelings of frustration. But I didn't. In fact, it got a little worse for me. When the blogger responded to my comment that she advocates for the ability to 'change our minds', I thought to myself, 'wow, what a privilege it is to even think that that's always an option'. I can change my mind until I'm blue in the face but the fact of the matter is that I can't afford to stay at home with Siona. And what would I miss if I did (besides food, shelter, health insurance and the like)? I'd miss the amazing community of people I'm surrounded by at work. I'd miss learning from them and laughing with them. I'd miss the diversity of thoughts they bring to my life. Some of these people are women with children, some of them don't have any children. Some are married and some are not. Some of these people are men. Some of these people are white, some black, some Jewish and some Catholic. Some are straight and some are gay and the majority of all these folks are humble and self-aware. And, just like in real, I crave that diversity of mind

and spirit in my online world as well. So, I'm giving up on my attempt to fit into the mommy world and instead will just be whomever it is I am . . . just like in real life. I will give time to the blog and let it develop organically (no pun intended) into whatever category it fits into, if at all. I will stop following all these other mommy's on Instagram whom I first started following way back in the depths of post-partum depression, when I needed reminding that children do eventually sleep and that parenthood can be fun. We just don't seem to have anything in common anymore. I will stick to food and family and see what comes.

And as for the recipe? Well, these are my most favorite meatballs. They are not gluten-free, but could be. I sometimes make them with veal and sometimes a mixture of veal and ground beef but usually with ground turkey. They are kind of like Thanksgiving all rolled into a delicious ball. I hope you enjoy and I thank you for reading.



For her.

Thanksgiving Meatballs:

What

1 package of ground turkey
3 tbsp olive oil

1 small onion, diced

2 carrots, diced

1/2 pint of button mushrooms, diced

1 clove of garlic, diced

Dried bread crumbs, preferably challah, diced into small chunks (should be bigger than store-bought bread crumbs but not bigger than croutons)

1 egg

Thyme

Sea Salt

Pepper

Rubbed Sage

For the Stove Top*

Vegetable or Coconut Oil

1/4 Cup all-purpose flour

**I go back and forth between frying and baking these meatballs . . . depending on my mood. If you do decide to bake rather than fry, bake on a greased baking sheet on 375 for roughly 20 minutes*



Those Colors!



Those Look Like Ping Pongs, right?

How:

Pour the olive oil in a deep frying pan with a flat surface. Let sit on medium heat for a few seconds. Saute the onions until transparent. Add the carrots and stir, sauteeing until carrots are golden. Add the garlic and continue sauteeing for another minute. Finally, add the mushrooms and saute for another minute or two. Sprinkle the mixture with a dash of salt and pepper, stir and pour into a separate bowl and set aside.



Preparing for Frying or Baking

In a large bowl, combine ground turkey with the vegetable saute mixture, bread crumbs, egg, a dash more salt, pepper, thyme and finally, the rubbed sage. Stir mixture until well-combined (I use my hands and really get into there). Meanwhile, pour your flour into a small bowl and set on the stove near your frying pan. Also, in preparation, set out a plate with a few layers of paper towels in order to soak up some of that yummy grease after frying. After setting up, roll your meatballs into balls the size of ping pongs and set on a plate.



Post-baking



Hello little friends.

Once done shaping your meatballs, place frying pan on the stove over medium-high heat and pour in enough vegetable (or frying oil of choice) oil to cover 1/2 inch of the bottom of the pan. Roll each meatball into the bowl of the all-purpose flour so that each meatball is lightly covered in a flour dusting. Place 5 – 6 meatballs in the pan for frying, making sure to cook evenly on each side, giving about 4 -5 minutes of cooking for each ball. Once done, place on paper towel for grease-soaking.



A Shabbat staple