

# Vegan Naan

Another dish for the Church's potluck lunch. I feel like I'm in the Coptic Lent version of the Great British Bake Off.

This week's theme was Indian and I originally intended to make vegan gulab jamun which was a disaster. So I switched to naan and it turned out quite well actually with the substitution of coconut yogurt. The flavor of ghee is hard to replicate but with a blend of oils you can come pretty close.

You might recall last week's church bake and the marital troubles that ensued. Well, we came to an agreement which was pretty fair. I do my baking after the kids go to bed or during the little one's nap. So, since baking is essential to my mental health I am perfectly willing to wake up a little earlier on church mornings to get things done. This weekend I was making both naan and chai for church and when I woke up I realized I didn't have soy milk. The little man was already awake at 6:30 AM because he had just gotten a new toy with which he wanted to play. This posed a dilemma. Little man likes his cereal as soon as he wakes up and the whole point of this exercise was to avoid waking up the Dad and alerting him to my potential child-neglecting activities while I baked.

Some women hide their shopping. I hide my baking (much trickier). I pulled it off though and I have assembled some tips for you in case you face a similar challenge one day:

1. Prepare an extra large bowl of cereal for your child so that he is barely finished eating it by the time you get back from the store with the soy milk (or other essential item). In my case, he actually said, "Wow, Mommy, you were fast!"
2. If another child wakes up and your baking project starts to run over-time then quickly scramble an egg for second child to make it look like you are a totally dedicated mom who feeds [at least one child] a hot breakfast.
3. Since you went to the trouble of making 1/3 of your

children a hot breakfast you can then ask the Dad to feed her the hot breakfast . You then have a few minutes to go back to baking (in my case, making naan).

4. Now, its your turn again. Since the naan takes 2-3 minutes to blister on each side you can grab the baby, run upstairs and dress her and then run back downstairs by the time the naan needs to be flipped. Go ahead and gild the lily. Put a matching barrette in her hair – it will earn you another point in the awesome Mom tally and also serve as a distraction while you continue baking e.g. “Look how cute she looks!”
5. By now you have proven how dedicated of a Mom you are to the Dad. You let him sleep in. You mostly provided breakfast to the kids. You dressed one of them. Now you must be the first one in the car so that the illusion of got-it-togetherness is complete and you can thus max out on your points later. For example, “I let you sleep in this morning, so...”

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## Vegan Chai

Sometimes I just want to get to the recipe and don't want to read the long spiel that goes along with it. So not all of my recipes are going to be accompanied by a story. Briefly, I got this recipe from an old friend, Chris Suradejvibul, and have been using it for years. I just adapted it for Lent. I used a combination of coconut milk and soy milk for mine. You can use what you prefer. Check out this [post](#) for a great description on how to make a large quantity of chai in your instant pot.

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## Guḷab Jamun



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# The Traitor Cake

This is one of the cakes of which I am most proud. I hardly ever come up with my own design ideas – I think medical school deadens any imagination you might have had – but this one was all mine. When I initially googled “traitor cake” to find an idea for a coworker who was moving on to a different position I found quite a few that were, lets say, unprofessional. Let us also say that I don’t have a cutter in the shape of a hand with one finger sticking up. I was also a little concerned that our practice manager would not approve. I had very little time and one 6-inch round and one 6-inch hemisphere with which to work. Whenever I have a little extra cake batter I bake off a small cake and freeze it. They come in very handy for last -minute cakes. So, the cogs are grinding away on the right side of my brain when suddenly it hit. A gravestone on an untended mound! My husband walked in to the room just as I was having this “aha!” moment and saw the huge Cheshire cat grin on my face.



I stacked the hemisphere on the round with some ganache in between. Then I slapped some ganache haphazardly on the outside. I used my grass tip with some SMBC for the grass. I made the gravestone with modeling chocolate so it was ready to go in minutes (as opposed to fondant). Quite possibly the easiest cake I ever made but one that induced the most laughs.

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# The Cake Wreck that [Almost] Never Was...Vegan Chocolate Cake with Caramel Drip and a Marital Disaster Cake Collar

Two prophetic sayings kept running through my mind today as I drove this cake to church.

#1: The first half of the trip: "The difference between an amateur cake decorator and a professional cake decorator is that the professional one knows how to cover up their mistakes."

#2: The second half of the trip from my husband: "The closest we ever come to divorce is when there is one of your cakes in the car." Truer words have never been spoken. So, sit back and enjoy this story.

Once upon a time there was a beleaguered stay-at-home Dad whose only respite at the end of a long day with the kids was a trip to the grocery store. Now, you might think that this is not much of a respite but this Dad actually enjoyed any and all kinds of shopping so as soon as the Mom was able to put 1-2/3 kids to bed he would go to the "flee market." He would have his list on a shared app that the Mom would often update at the last minute thereby adding to his neurotic state. But he was quite content to do the grocery shopping whereas the Mom hated it. However, since the Mom is the baker and frequently had some odd items on the list this led to many terse texts back and forth while Dad was at the store. Once the Mom would get 3/3 kids to bed she liked to relax and not respond to the banal text messages such as those asking which kind of salt she needed.

One day in particular she had asked for coconut milk to make

vegan ganache. Dad, of course, texted multiple pictures of coconut milk which she mostly ignored but in deference to him quickly sent a formatted "sure" response from her Apple watch.

Unfortunately, Dad brought home coconut milk beverage instead of canned coconut milk (pay attention, this is lesson #1 in what not to do when using coconut milk in baking). Since Mom usually does the baking when the house is quiet late at night she found herself with no other options but coconut milk beverage with which to make her vegan ganache. The Mom also prefers to do her baking at night to avoid the possibility of Dad circling her repeatedly and asking inane questions such as "where is the salt that I just bought?"

The reason coconut beverage does not work is because it does not have the same fat content of full-fat canned coconut milk and it is watered down. You need the fat content to create a proper emulsion with the chocolate. But the Mom plugged away.

Every time she would heat up the ganache it would harden again in under a minute making frosting her vegan cake a hair-pulling experience. Now, at the end she was thoroughly unsatisfied with the appearance of the cake. With a little vegan caramel and raspberries she was able to make the top look good but the sides were an embarrassment. Now she remembered a prophetic saying (see #1 above) and desperately tried to come up with a decoration for the sides. Piroulines would have been perfect had they been vegan. She went to bed thinking she would have to live with the mortification of presenting a less than presentable cake. But this Mom has serious obsessive-compulsive traits. She shot up at 6:45 AM on a Saturday (even though she could have slept in) and raced to the kitchen to make her first-ever cake collar to cover the sides. IT WAS MAGNIFICENT! It made her feel like she could do anything! No one would have to see the lumpy ganache or the gloppy caramel (again, made with the wrong coconut milk)!  
Hooray! Hooray!

They take two cars to church that day because the Mom has to

go to work afterward. She doesn't even care she has to work on the weekend because her cake is a success. She is humming along with her son in the back to their favorite song. They stop at a light. Dad is right behind. She is checking her makeup and then...it all comes crashing down, literally. The Dad decides to honk at her because the light turns green and with a start she revs the gas pedal, the car jerks forward and her beautiful cake collar crashes down on one side. Now, go back and read prophetic saying #2 above because the things running through my head for the rest of the trip cannot be repeated here.

Because they were going to church and because the cake was not horrible when they got there the Mom decided to forgive the Dad (but only after they were half-way through the Liturgy) and I am certain that they will live happily ever after. THE END

I did promise myself that I would post the good, the bad, and the ugly so here it is. The good news is that it was delicious and one friend said that it looked like abstract art!







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## Vegan Tahini Truffles for Lent

Truffles for Lent? Yes, because as my blaspheming husband recently said, “I’m not Jesus.” That comment shocked me initially until I realized he was verbalizing in a crude way what many of us feel during this time – we are weak and sometimes need chocolate. Ok, I feel like that almost every day and Lent is no different. And I am not too proud to admit that I licked the chocolate off my hands AFTER I finished making these truffles for church. And, yes, I secretly believe that dark chocolate is a magical gift that was provided to us especially for Lent. Kind of like manna in the desert. Like I said. I am weak.

This recipe was adapted from one in Paul A. Young’s [\*Adventures with Chocolate.\*](#)

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