

fit MOMMA

**VEGAN**  
*holiday*  
**GUIDE**

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## BEST PRACTICES AS YOU ENTER THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Most of us look forward to celebrations; a time when we get together with friends and family to commemorate a special occasion. Food tends to be a central feature of such festivities and sharing food and drink is an important way of connecting. Unfortunately, these celebrations tend to serve a lot of animal products. The best way to connect with non-vegan family members and friends at these celebrations is with respect and vegan diplomacy. Diplomacy is the fine art of honoring your own ethical principles and social consciousness without judging, condemning, or otherwise injuring another person. Your clarity, warmth and kindly humor will go a long way toward challenging people without making them feel judged or otherwise threatened. Even if your world is almost entirely non-vegan, it is populated with many who are trying, in their own ways, to make the world a better place.

## THE HOLIDAYS

You want to be part of these occasions and you want your children to be a part of these celebrations, yet you also want to honor your rights and values. Think of things that will make you more comfortable during these time of celebrations or opt to celebrate through non-food activities. Below I share options to create happiness on each side.

## CREATE A HAPPY COMPROMISE

Reach out to the holiday host ahead of time and hold the compromise conversation to establish details that you and your family will be comfortable with and provide the host with enough time to emotionally process your requests. First, offer to bring vegan friendly dishes. Through these dishes, your family is introduced to wonderful vegan food and may even switch to the vegan dishes over time. This option keeps the doors open and may impact your family in unexpected ways. Also, offer a gentle vegan education about what is and isn't vegan. Do not expect the host to have a complete understanding about what you do and do not eat. Next, ask the host any additional requests you might have in order to feel comfortable such as keeping the large animal carcass hidden in the kitchen instead of on the table. Finally, go over some basic dining etiquette in regards of what to say to your children. Kindly request the host and other guests refrain from pitying or patronizing your vegan children because they do not eat the same food as everyone else.



# The Meal

Below, I share some of my favorite holiday dishes that are sure to be a crowd pleaser.



# Side Dishes

## GREEN BEANS

### INGREDIENTS

- Cooking spray or olive oil
- 1 1/2 lbs. green beans, trimmed
- 1/2 cup almonds
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Spray a rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Place beans on sheet in a single layer and spray tops with additional cooking spray. Roast for 15 minutes or until tender.
3. Combine almonds, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, salt, and pepper in food processor and process until roughly chopped. Spoon over green beans before serving.

## SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE WITH A CRUNCHY NUT CRUMBLE

### INGREDIENTS - Sweet potato mash

- 4 large sweet potatoes
- 1 1/2 tablespoons vegan butter
- 1 1/2 tablespoons virgin coconut oil
- 2 1/2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon fine grain salt, or to taste

### INGREDIENTS - Crunchy Nut Crumble

- 1 cup rolled oats (use certified gluten-free if necessary)
- 1 1/3 cups pecan halves, chopped
- 1/3 cup almond meal or almond flour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon fine grain sea salt
- 2 tablespoons virgin coconut oil (unrefined), melted
- 2 tablespoons vegan butter, melted (I use Earth Balance)
- 2 1/2 tablespoons pure maple syrup

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Peel and roughly chop sweet potatoes into large chunks. Place into a steamer basket, steam for 15-20 minutes or until the potatoes are fork tender.
2. Preheat oven to 375F. Lightly grease a 2.5 quart (10 cup) casserole dish and set aside.
3. Prepare the crumble topping: Pulse the oats in a food processor until coarsely chopped. In a medium bowl, stir together the chopped pecans, oats, almond meal/flour, cinnamon, and salt.
4. Pour on melted coconut oil, melted butter, and maple syrup. Stir until combined.
5. Once steamed and soft, place sweet potatoes into a large bowl.
6. Mash potatoes with the butter and coconut oil until smooth. Now, stir in the maple syrup, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Adjust to taste if desired.
7. Spoon into casserole dish and smooth out. Sprinkle the crumble topping all over the sweet potato mixture, evenly.
8. Bake, uncovered, at 375F for 16 to 23 minutes, until the dish is hot throughout. Plate and serve.



## SIDE DISHES

### CRANBERRY SAUCE (JELLIED)

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 bag fresh/frozen cranberries (14 oz to 1 lb)
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 orange, zest
- 1 cup sugar (or more to taste)

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add cranberries, water, and orange zest to a pot. Cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes, covered so a small amount of steam can escape. You'll start to hear the berries popping as the skins split. Check on them after about 10 minutes.
2. Add the sugar. I like 1 cup of sugar, but I think even that doesn't make it quite as sweet as the canned stuff.
3. Stir until the sugar is dissolved and let it simmer for 1-2 minutes.
4. Pour the sauce in a lightly oiled mold or a cupcake tin, for individual rounds of jellied sauce.
5. That's it! Now chill it for a few hours. It'll keep for 2-3 days, so you can make it in advance of a big meal.



# The Main Event

## THANKSGIVING DAY STUFFING

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. butternut squash, cubed
- 1 lb. brussels sprouts, halved
- 1 medium gala apple, cut into a 1/2 inch cubes
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided into 2 tbsp and 1 tbsp
- 1 cup onion, diced
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 10 slices bread of choice: crusty sourdough, dry cornbread, whole grain. \*\*Prior to preparing the recipe, leave bread out for a day to become slightly dry, then cut into cubes\*\*.
- 1 ½ cups vegetable broth (plus extra as needed)
- 2 teaspoons fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh sage
- ⅓ cup dried cranberries
- Sea salt and pepper to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees. Toss the squash, brussel sprouts, apples, and shallots in 2 tbsp. oil and season well with salt and pepper. Roast till vegetables are very tender (40ish minutes) and remove from oven. Reduce oven heat to 350.
2. Heat the other tbsp. oil in a large pot. Sauté the onion and celery till translucent (about 5-8 min). Add the bread cubes and allow them to get golden brown with the veggies in the oil. Add a dash of salt and pepper.
3. Add the roasted vegetables, vegetable broth, cranberries, and seasonings. Stir the mix till the broth has almost entirely absorbed in the toasted bread. Transfer to a baking sheet and bake at 350 for about 20 minutes. Serve hot.

## FESTIVE MAC N CHEESE

### INGREDIENTS

- 16 oz macaroni (or any pasta shape you have; I used the squash pasta from Trader Joe's)
- 2 tablespoons whole wheat flour (or flour of choice)
- 2 tablespoons vegan butter (I use Earth Balance)
- 1 ½ cups non-dairy milk (unsweetened)
- ½ cup nutritional yeast (nooch)
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 can pumpkin puree, unsweetened
- salt and pepper, to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook the pasta according to package instructions.
2. In a saucepan, melt the butter over medium to high heat, then add the flour, stirring with a wooden spoon to combine (this creates a 'roux'.) Gradually pour in the non-dairy milk while continuously stirring. After a handful of minutes the sauce will begin to thicken. If it threatens to boil over, lower the heat a bit.
3. You can now add the nooch and garlic powder to the sauce, stirring as you do so. When the sauce has thickened sufficiently, take the pan off the heat and stir in the pumpkin puree.
4. When the pasta is cooked, drain the water but retain about half a cup of the cooking water, which you will stir into the sauce to bind it and thin it out if you have accidentally cooked it too long.
5. Pour the sauce over the pasta and stir. Pour the pasta and its sauce into a greased casserole dish, sprinkle some nooch over the top and bake uncovered for 20 minutes in a pre-heated oven at 350°F.

## STUFFED SEITAN

### INGREDIENTS - Stuffing

- 1/2 large onion, chopped
- 1 rib celery, chopped
- 4 ounces mushrooms, sliced or chopped (any type of mushrooms will do!)
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon rubbed sage (there is actually a spice called Rubbed Sage)
- Generous grinding of black pepper
- 3 ounces whole wheat bread (about 2 slices), cut into small cubes
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries or cherries
- 1 teaspoon whole chia seeds or ground flax seed
- 1 tablespoon Bragg Liquid Aminos
- 1/2 cup water (more as needed)

### INGREDIENTS - Baking Broth

- 1/2 cup vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon Bragg Liquid Aminos

### INSTRUCTIONS - Make the stuffing

1. Sauté the onion and celery in a non-stick skillet until onion is becoming translucent. Add the mushrooms, thyme, sage, and a generous grating of black pepper and cover. Cook until mushrooms exude their juices, about 3 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients along with enough water to moisten the stuffing but not make it soaking wet. Remove from heat and keep covered.

### INGREDIENTS - Seitan

- 2 cups vital wheat gluten
- 1/4 cup nutritional yeast
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon rubbed sage
- 1/3 cup quinoa flakes or quick oatmeal
- 1 teaspoon chia seed or ground flaxseeds
- 1 1/2 cup vegetable broth
- 1 cup great northern beans , cooked
- 2 tablespoons Bragg Liquid Aminos
- 1 clove garlic, peeled
- 1 tablespoon tahini (preferred) or other nut butter

## STUFFED SEITAN

### INSTRUCTIONS - Make the seitan

1. In a mixing bowl, combine the dry ingredients (vital wheat gluten through chia seeds). Place the 1 1/2 cups of broth, white beans, Braggs, and garlic in blender and process until liquified. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients, add the bean mixture, and stir until gluten is completely moistened. Drizzle the tahini over the top and knead it into the dough. Keep kneading until dough holds together in a ball. Set aside while you make the broth.

### INSTRUCTIONS - Make the broth

1. Heat all ingredients until hot but not boiling over the stove.

### ASSEMBLE

1. Preheat oven to 400. Lightly oil a baking dish, 11-13 inches long and 6-8 inches wide.
2. Line your work surface with plastic wrap, parchment paper, or waxed paper. Place the dough in the center, cover the seitan with plastic wrap, and roll out the seitan, making sure that it is the same thickness in all places, until it's about 9x13 (an inch or so either way doesn't matter, but make sure it's not longer than your pan). Spread the stuffing evenly, leaving a 1-inch margin on all sides.
3. Lift up the plastic wrap on one of the long edges and roll the seitan up like a jelly roll. Pinch the ends sealed first and then pinch well to seal the long seam. Take care to make sure that the edges are completely sealed and no gaps or stuffing shows.
4. Lift the seitan roll carefully and place seam-side down in the prepared casserole dish. Pour the baking broth over it, and cover tightly. If the dish doesn't have a cover, use aluminum foil to cover tightly. (Did I mention "tightly?" Tightly! I enclosed even the bottom of the dish in foil.)
5. Bake for 25 minutes. Remove from oven, baste with broth, recover tightly, and bake for another 25 minutes. Baste again and return to oven uncovered for about 30 minutes. Baste 2 or 3 times as it's cooking. Seitan is done when top seems firm and brown and the broth has evaporated. You can test it by cutting a small slit in the middle; if it is doughy rather than firm, return to the oven.
6. Remove from the oven and let cool for 5-10 minutes. Transfer carefully to a cutting board or serving platter and cut into 1/2-inch slices.



# Desserts

## PUMPKIN PIE

### INGREDIENTS - Crust

- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1/2 cup pitted dates (packed)
- 1/3 cup almond butter
- 1/8 teaspoon sea salt (omit if almond butter has salt)
- 2 tbsp non-dairy milk (unsweetened)

### INSTRUCTIONS - Crust

1. Prepare a pie plate (I use a glass pie plate) by lightly wiping inner surface with a dab of oil (or spray).
2. In a food processor, add the oats, dates, and salt for the crust. Puree until fine and crumbly.
3. Then add the almond butter and puree for about a minute.
4. Add the milk and pulse through until the mixture becomes sticky (it should hold together when pressed/pinched). If it's not holding together, add a little more milk, 1 tsp at a time, until it does. Remove and transfer to prepared pie plate.
5. Press mixture in with your fingers until evenly distributed around the base and up the sides of the plate.

### INGREDIENTS - Pie Filling

- 2 - 15oz cans of pumpkin
- 1/2 cup pure maple syrup
- 1/4 cup plain non-dairy milk
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Pinch ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch

### INSTRUCTIONS - Pie Filling

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. In a blender, puree together pumpkin, maple syrup, milk, coconut oil, vanilla extract, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, salt, and cornstarch until very smooth.
3. Pour into the pie shell and bake for 60 to 65 minutes until the center looks semi-firm (a little jiggle is okay).
4. Remove from oven and place on a cooling rack for 30 minutes, then chill for at least 4 hours before slicing.



## DESSERTS

### CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 large avocados
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup agave nectar or maple syrup
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract (you could also put in 1 1/2 tsp. of almond extract if you want)
- Dash of cinnamon
- 1/2 pint fresh raspberries, for garnish

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Throw this all in the blender and pulse until you have a decadent chocolate mousse.
2. Pour into a martini glass if you want to be fancy, or simply pour in a paper cup.
3. Add some fresh raspberries on top and enjoy your vegan treat!



## DESSERTS

### APPLE COBBLER

#### INGREDIENTS - Crisp

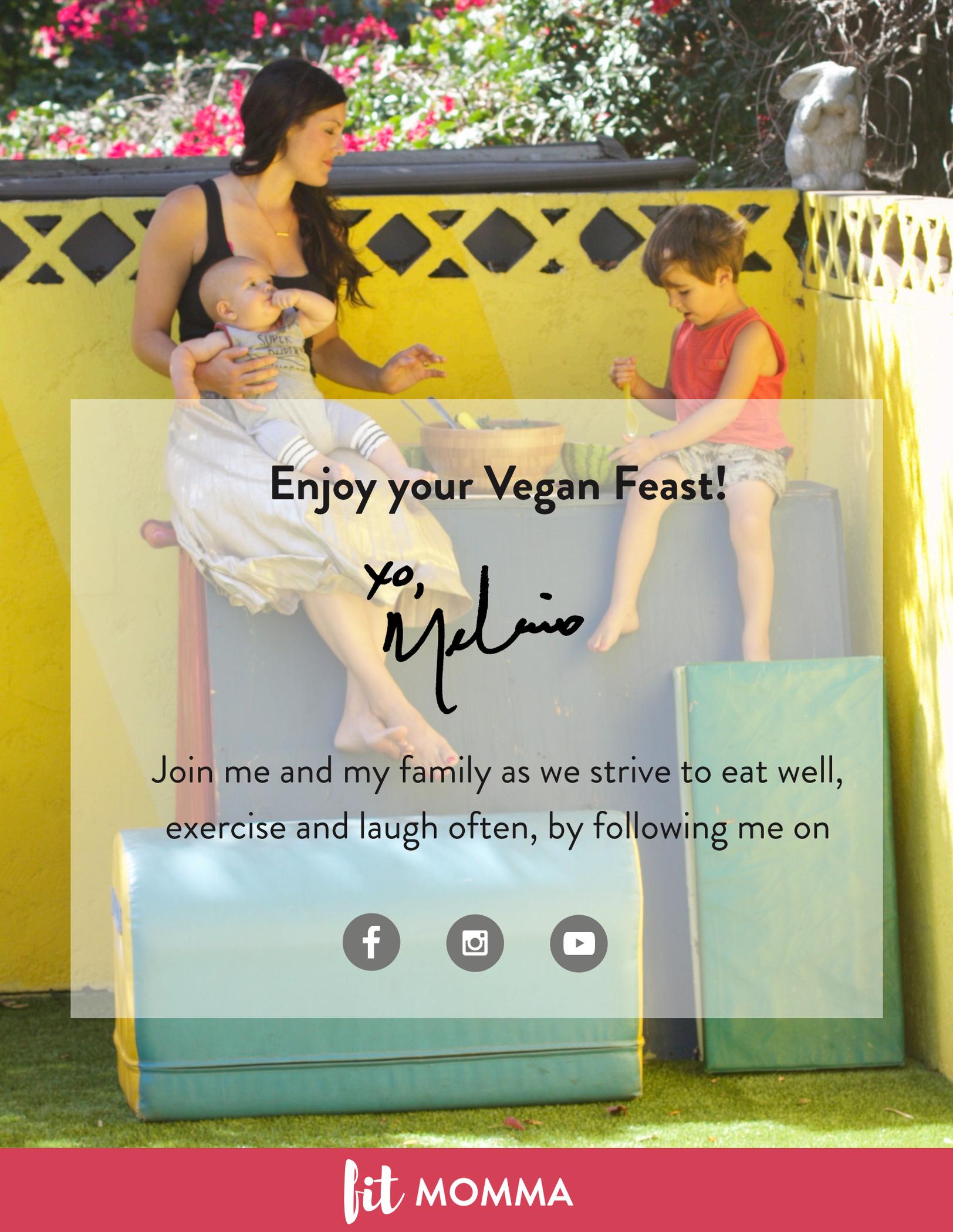
- 8 small-medium apples, peeled, cored and chopped (a variety of both sweet and tart - about 6 cups worth)
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- heaping 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- pinch of salt

#### INGREDIENTS - Topping

- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1/2 cup old fashioned oats
- 1/4 cup almond meal
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- pinch salt
- 1/3 cup vegan butter melted, such as Earth Balance

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375F and lightly grease a 9x9 baking dish.
2. Add apples to a large bowl or plastic bag and toss to coat with granulated sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, and salt.
3. Transfer to baking dish and set aside.
4. Rinse and dry bowl and add brown sugar, flour, meal, oats, cinnamon and salt, then stir. Add melted butter and mix until it resembles wet sand.
5. Sprinkle topping over the apples and bake until apples are soft and topping is golden brown (between 45 minutes to 1 hour).
6. Let rest 10-15 minutes before serving. Is great with vegan vanilla ice cream.



Enjoy your Vegan Feast!

yo,  
*Melina*

Join me and my family as we strive to eat well,  
exercise and laugh often, by following me on

