

The
Mama Natural

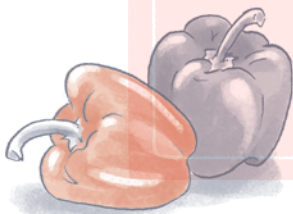
WEEK-BY-WEEK GUIDE TO

PREGNANCY
& CHILDBIRTH

GENEVIEVE HOWLAND

DIRTY DOZEN

Apples
Bell Peppers
Celery
Cherries
Cherry tomatoes
Cucumbers
Grapes
Nectarines
Peaches
Spinach
Strawberries
Tomatoes



THE CLEAN 15

Avocados
Asparagus
Cabbage
Cantaloupe
Cauliflower
Eggplant
Grapefruit
Honeydew
Kiwi
Mangoes
Onions
*Papayas
*Pineapple
*Sweet corn
Sweet peas

*May still be GMO (see page 18).



THE MOST IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS FOR MAMA AND BABY

Vitamin A	Supports eye, brain, heart, and respiratory development.
Vitamin B ₆	Helps red blood cell formation and eases morning sickness.
Vitamin B ₉ (folate)	May prevent neural tube defects and supports the placenta.
Vitamin B ₁₂	Promotes blood formation and may prevent birth defects.
Choline	Assists in brain formation, liver function, and healthy metabolism.
Vitamin C	Nourishes the amniotic sac and placenta; good for gum health.
Vitamin D	Helps mom utilize calcium and strengthens baby's bones.
DHA	Builds baby's brain and promotes a healthy fetal weight.
Vitamin K	Supports strong bone formation and healthy blood clotting.
Calcium	Aids bone and teeth development as well as muscle function.
Iron	Helps prevent anemia, low birth weight, and premature delivery.
Iodine	Enhances immune system and healthy thyroid function.
Magnesium	Helps with good blood pressure and blood sugar levels.
Zinc	Supports immune system functions and enzyme production.

SAFE SEAFOOD DURING PREGNANCY

Wild seafood is some of the most nutritionally dense food on the planet: full of protein; loaded with trace minerals like iodine, selenium, and zinc; and packed with omega-3 fatty acids. The FDA, the American Pregnancy Association, and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics *all* recommend moderate fish consumption for pregnant mamas, provided you limit yourself to 12 ounces, or about two to three servings, a week.

The concern about fish during pregnancy—and the reason it was once considered off-limits during pregnancy—has to do with mercury, which collects in oceans, lakes, and streams and accumulates in the bodies of fish over time, where it turns into methylmercury, a potent neurotoxin. High levels of methylmercury can cause nervous, digestive, neurological, and immune system problems in adults. For babies in utero, it's especially dangerous.

In other words: you want to eat fish, you just want to make sure—and this is crucial—that it's the right type. Smaller species are best, since bigger fish tend to have higher levels of mercury. To further reduce environmental contaminants, remove the skin and *always* make sure your fish is well cooked.

Seafood to eat during pregnancy (lowest in mercury)

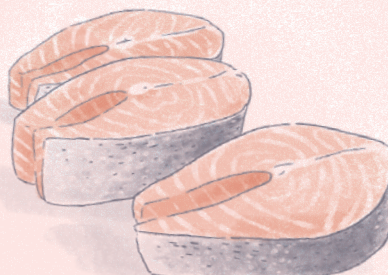
Wild salmon	Sardines
Herring	Trout
Shrimp	Atlantic and Pacific mackerel
Anchovies	Oysters (cooked)

Seafood to limit during pregnancy (no more than 6 ounces per week)

Bluefish	Sea bass
Grouper	Albacore or “white” tuna

Seafood to avoid during pregnancy (highest in mercury)

Swordfish	Tilefish
Marlin	Orange roughy
Mackerel (King or Spanish)	Ahi tuna
	Shark



NOM OF THE WEEK

Pepper Salad

Since your bag of waters and placenta are forming as we speak—well, as you read—support them both by boosting your intake of vitamin C. You might think oranges are the best source of this important nutrient, but did you know that bell peppers contain three times as much? That's why this week's recipe isn't citrus-based, but instead features an array of vitamin-packed veggies!

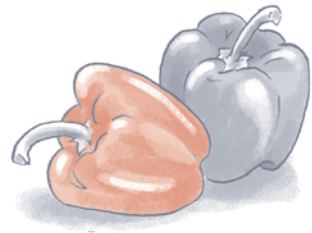
INGREDIENTS

1 large organic red bell pepper
1 large organic yellow bell pepper
1 large organic green bell pepper
2 organic cucumbers
1 pint organic cherry tomatoes
1 avocado

VINAIGRETTE

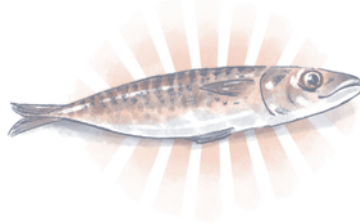
¼ cup olive oil
2 tablespoons raw apple cider vinegar
1 clove garlic, crushed
Sea salt and cracked black pepper to taste

Start by washing your veggies well, then chop peppers and cucumbers into bite-sized squares and slice the cherry tomatoes in half. Toss your veggies into a large bowl and set aside. In a smaller bowl, whisk together the vinaigrette ingredients. Pour the dressing onto your salad and toss. Garnish with fresh avocado. Serves four to six.



Semi-Tolerable Sardines

Baby's major organs are developing this week, which makes now a great time to eat a few servings of fatty fish. They're high in omega-3s, a nutrient our bodies can't manufacture. (In other words, they must come from food.) Wild salmon is delicious when baked with lemon and garlic. Cod liver oil is easy enough to choke down if you mix it with a little OJ. Sardines, however . . . Now those are a little harder to saddle up to. And that's a shame. Canned sardines are not only inexpensive and environmentally friendly, but they are high in omega-3s, calcium, selenium, and vitamin D. Which is exactly why I'm gonna share with you three ways to mask their flavor:



- ✂ Try sauteeing sardines with onion and Dijon mustard, and serve over brown rice.
- ✂ Cook some sardines in tomato sauce and serve over whole wheat pasta.
- ✂ Make a sardine salad (think: tuna salad, just with sardines) with plain yogurt, mustard, raw apple cider vinegar, and scallions.

For all you vegetarian mamas, great plant sources of omega-3s include flaxseed oil, chia seeds, and hemp hearts.

Collard Greens and Bacon

We probably hear more about folate than any other nutrient during pregnancy—and for good reason. Adequate folate levels can reduce your baby’s risk of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida. And since the neural tube is forming this week, now’s a great time to supplement what you’re already getting from your prenatal vitamin with some collard greens (naturally high in folate) and bacon. Mmmm, bacon. Not a pork-eater? Omit it and top your greens with a dollop of avocado; the fat will improve mineral absorption.

INGREDIENTS

4 strips pastured bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces

1 small yellow onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

Pinch of sea salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup raw apple cider vinegar

1 large bunch collard greens (about 16 oz.), stems removed, chopped

1 cup chicken broth

Cook bacon over medium heat until slightly browned. Then add onion and cook until translucent, about five minutes. Add garlic, salt, and pepper, and cook for an additional minute. Add the apple cider vinegar, and simmer until the amount of liquid in the pan reduces by half. Finally, add the collard greens and chicken broth, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until the collards have wilted and turned dark green, about 15 minutes. Serves four.



Morning Sickness Smoothie

When nothing sounds good to eat (or nothing will stay down), it may be time to try some liquid nutrition. Broth, natural ginger ale, and pureed soups are all good options. Smoothies, however, can be especially great, since the blender does some pre-digesting for you, which may ease your tummy troubles. (Some mamas also find that cold or frozen foods are easier going—and staying—down.) This smoothie is specifically designed to replenish some of the nutrients lost during vomiting. Added bonus: your partner will probably think it's pretty tasty, too.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 frozen banana (rich in potassium)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup coconut water (high in electrolytes, including potassium and magnesium)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked, chilled oats (the fiber and complex carbs steady blood sugar)
- 1 to 2 tablespoons all-natural almond butter (high in protein and healthy fats)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon organic ginger powder or 1 teaspoon grated ginger (for its anti-nausea effect)
- 1 tablespoon raw honey (for sweetness)
- Ice (optional)



Combine in a blender and puree. For added minerals and protein, add a dash of sea salt and a scoop of protein powder. You can also empty a probiotic capsule into your smoothie to boost gut flora.

Nourishing Bone Broth

As baby begins building connective tissue, it's a great idea to increase your broth consumption. You heard me right. Chock-full of alkalizing minerals, chicken stock (a.k.a. bone broth) has nourished societies for thousands of years. When made from scratch, it's also loaded with gelatin-based protein, a digestive aid and healer. To make bone broth, toss the bones from a roasted chicken into a large stockpot. (To supercharge your broth, add a few pounds of chicken necks, backs, or feet—ask your local farmer or butcher. Alternatively, you could use lamb or beef shanks, oxtails, or other bones.) Cover the bones with cold, filtered water and a few teaspoons of raw vinegar or lemon juice, then let sit for an hour or so in the fridge; this extracts more minerals from the bones. Next, place the stockpot on the stove and bring the broth to a boil. Let cook for 10 or 15 minutes, skimming off any scum that floats to the surface with a slotted spoon. Then reduce the heat to the lowest setting and let it gently simmer for anywhere from 4 to 24 hours. (Don't worry—you have to do this only once. When you're done, you'll have pints and pints of broth, and it freezes beautifully.)

When the broth has finished cooking, remove the bones and let it cool completely. Store in the fridge for another 24 hours, so the fat can rise to the top. Skim off the fat and discard. Portion your broth into several glass containers or Mason jars, and enjoy it in soups, stews, sauces, or even on its own. It can be stored in the fridge for 3 to 4 days or in the freezer for up to 3 months. FYI: when you heat it up, it'll no longer be gelatinous.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Sweet Potato Custard

Vitamin A—crucial for the development and long-term health of baby’s eyes—is our star performer this week. Of course, if you’re taking your daily cod liver oil, you’re already getting a decent dose. Other good sources include egg yolks, cream, and butter . . . Are you noticing a theme, here? Animal-based sources of vitamin A are the easiest to assimilate, but I like adding in some plant-based sources, too, since they’re rich in phytonutrients. This cozy sweet potato custard combines both.

INGREDIENTS

2 medium organic sweet potatoes
2 organic, pasture-raised eggs
½ cup organic cream (or substitute coconut cream)
¼ cup coconut sugar or 30 drops stevia
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice (or a mix of ground cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger, and allspice)



Preheat the oven to 350°F. Wash the sweet potatoes and pierce them a few times with a fork. Place in the oven and let cook for 45 minutes or until soft. Remove from the oven. Once the sweet potatoes have cooled slightly, scoop out the flesh and place in a bowl. Combine all remaining ingredients and mix with an immersion blender. Pour into small ramekins and bake for 30 minutes or until slightly browned. Serve with a dollop of whipped cream. Serves 4 to 6.

NOM OF THE WEEK

(Non-Alcoholic) Hot Toddy

Baby's chompers are developing now, so be sure you're getting plenty of calcium every day. Of course, whole-fat dairy products are a great option. But so are bone broth, canned salmon and sardines, almonds, white beans, and—bet you weren't expecting this one—blackstrap molasses (which also happens to be rich in iron, potassium, and magnesium).

Try this velvety delicious take on a hot toddy (non-alcoholic, of course). Since it's full of calcium, it'll lull you right to sleep.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup organic milk (or almond milk)
1 tablespoon organic blackstrap molasses
Pinch of nutmeg (optional)
Pinch of sea salt

To make, gently warm your milk on the stove. Add your molasses and mix well. Finish with a pinch of nutmeg and sea salt. If you're feeling fancy, you can even “froth” the sweetened milk in a blender or with the steam wand of an espresso machine.



WHAT I THOUGHT BEFORE BECOMING A MOM	WHAT I KNOW NOW
Michael and I will make “date night” a priority. That’s what grandparents and sitters are for, right?	Good luck finding a sitter on short notice.
Just because I’ll be a mom doesn’t mean I’ll have to dress like one.	Most days, you’ll be wearing “Mommy’s Eau de Toilette,” a charming blend of spit-up, breast milk, snot, and poop.
No yoga pants or grubby T-shirts for me!	Your “fancy” clothes will move to the back of the closet.
I’ll be able to sleep in <i>sometimes</i> . There are two of us, after all. Michael and I can tag-team it.	HAHAHAHAHAHA.

NOM OF THE WEEK

(Ridiculously Tasty) Date Oatmeal

As a nutrient, silica doesn't get much playtime, which is sort of silly when you think about it, since we literally need it to stand up straight. This important mineral helps build strong bones, as well as healthy hair, skin, and nails. And while you can boost your silica intake by eating more green beans, bananas, and brown rice, oats are one of the richest sources on the planet. My absolute favorite way to eat oats? This ridiculously tasty date oatmeal.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups organic rolled oats

5–6 cups filtered water, divided

2 scant teaspoons raw apple cider vinegar
or lemon juice

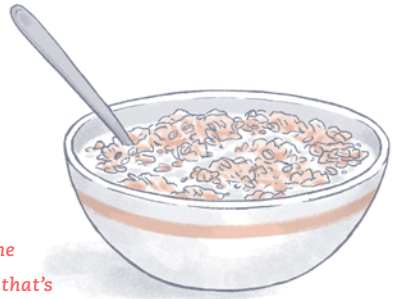
3–4 coconut rolled dates

2–4 tablespoons coconut flakes

½ cup coconut milk

Raw honey or stevia to taste

In a large saucepan, soak the oats in 4 cups water and the vinegar for 24 hours. In the morning, drain the oats and rinse well. Add 1 to 2 more cups of water (depending on how soupy you like your oatmeal) and cook on high heat until the water comes to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook uncovered for 15 to 20 minutes. About halfway into the cook time, mince your dates and stir them into the oatmeal. Add coconut flakes and coconut milk. Finish cooking until most of the liquid has absorbed and you're left with a thick, nutty oatmeal that's still easy to dish out. Serve it up with some honey, stevia, or fresh fruit. Nuts and maple syrup make for scrumptious toppings, too. Serves 4.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Supercharged Chicken Soup

Well, I had to include chicken soup in here *somewhere*! Make yours with homemade bone broth (recipe on page 89) and you'll get the added healing benefits of gelatin-based protein. Add some garlic for its cold-busting properties and Asian mushrooms (think: maitake, shiitake), which contain antiviral properties, too.

INGREDIENTS

1–2 tablespoons olive oil
2 medium onions, chopped
2 medium carrots, diced
2 celery ribs, diced
2 parsnips, diced
2 to 3 cloves garlic, crushed
1 tablespoon pastured butter

1 cup shiitake or maitake mushrooms, sliced
2–3 quarts bone broth (if you're short on broth, dilute what you have with filtered water)
1–1½ cups diced or shredded roasted or rotisserie chicken
Fresh parsley, chopped
Cayenne pepper (optional, but avoid if you're running a fever)

In a large stockpot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion, carrots, celery, parsnips, garlic, and a pinch of salt and pepper to the pan. Cook until vegetables are softened (about 5 minutes). In a separate skillet, heat butter over medium heat. Add mushrooms and a pinch of salt; sauté until just brown (about 5 minutes). Add mushrooms to stockpot with vegetables. Pour in bone broth and bring to a simmer. Add chicken and parsley and simmer until heated through. Salt and pepper to taste. For a kick, add a pinch of cayenne pepper—it's a natural analgesic, or pain reliever.



DON'T FORGET TO STAY HYDRATED, MAMA!

It's important to drink plenty of fluids during pregnancy—but sometimes mama just needs something to drink other than water. (Can I get a witness?) These recipes will keep you hydrated, support digestion, ward off morning sickness, improve circulation, and satisfy your taste buds. Pick one each morning and sip throughout the day.

Citrus Cooler

1 grapefruit	1 teaspoon raw honey (optional)
1 orange	1 quart filtered water
1 lime	Dash of sea salt
1 lemon	Ice (optional)

Hand squeeze your citrus fruit and put the juices into a quart Mason jar. Mix in your honey (if using) and let it totally dissolve. Add filtered water and sea salt. Add ice if desired.

The Mama Mojito

4 limes	6 to 8 mint leaves, minced
1 tablespoon raw honey (or 15 drops liquid stevia)	1 quart filtered water
1 tablespoon raw apple cider vinegar	Ice (optional)

Juice your limes and add to a quart Mason jar. Add sweetener, apple cider vinegar, and mint leaves. Fill the jar with filtered water and mix well. Add ice if desired.

The Ginger Snap

2 lemons	1 heaping teaspoon grated fresh ginger
1 tablespoon raw honey (or 15 drops liquid stevia)	1 quart filtered water
1 tablespoon raw apple cider vinegar	Ice (optional)

Juice your lemons and add to a quart Mason jar. Add sweetener, apple cider vinegar, and ginger. Fill the jar with filtered water and mix well. Let sit for 15 minutes. Strain the ginger and add ice, if desired.

Watermelon Water

2 large slices of watermelon
Filtered water

Cut up watermelon into 1-inch cubes. Put cubes into an ice-cube tray and freeze. Once frozen, place 8 to 12 watermelon cubes in a quart Mason jar and fill with filtered water or, for a bubbly treat, sparkling water.



Red Raspberry Leaf Tea

If you talk to virtually any midwife or doula, you're practically guaranteed to hear about the miracles of red raspberry leaf, an herbal tea that's been used for thousands of years to support respiratory and digestive health and—here's where things get really interesting—to ease and shorten labor.

If that sounds too good to be true, there are some studies to back up these claims, including one published in the *Australian College of Midwives Incorporated Journal*, which suggested that women who drank the tea were less likely to need forceps or vacuum assistance or require a C-section. (Some other studies on rats, however, were less conclusive.) I put the most stock, however, in my personal experience.

Based on the advice of my midwife, I tried drinking red raspberry leaf tea during my first pregnancy, early in the first trimester. I felt some very slight uterine cramping, however, which scared me, so I quit the tea and forgot all about it. You already know how my son's birth went—twenty-seven hours of labor and a hit of Pit.

During my second pregnancy, I decided to do things differently. Starting at fourteen weeks, I made warm red raspberry leaf tea—16 ounces with a splash of coconut milk—my afternoon ritual. The week of my due date, I brewed a super-strong batch, drank it for two consecutive days, and BAM! Baby Paloma made her debut so quickly I almost didn't make it to the birth center. Call me crazy, but I am convinced the tea played a major part in making my second birth drama-free and virtually painless.

Keep in mind that most healthcare providers will recommend waiting until the second trimester—there is a slight concern (though no actual scientific evidence) that drinking the tea too early could increase your risk for miscarriage. As I mentioned, I felt some slight cramping when I tried it during my first trimester. By the second trimester, however, I was able to enjoy it (anywhere from one to two cups a day) with no problems.

Red raspberry leaf tea tastes great on its own (kind of like a weak black tea), but it can get a bit boring, day in, day out. So here are two easy ways to jazz it up.

For a warm, creamy treat: Steep 1 tea bag (or 1 tablespoon of loose tea) in 8 ounces of boiling water for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove the tea bag or strain and add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup coconut milk and 1 tablespoon raw honey or another natural sweetener.



For a refreshing red raspberry orange cooler: Steep 4 tea bags (or 4 tablespoons of loose tea) in a quart of boiling water, add 2 tablespoons raw honey, then put in the refrigerator. Once cooled, add a bit of fresh orange juice (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup per serving) and garnish with an orange slice.

NOM OF THE WEEK

Beet Kvass

Wake up some of baby's sour taste buds (and curb a future sweet tooth) with an amazing elixir called beet kvass. I'll admit that beets are sort of like cilantro—people tend to either love 'em or hate 'em—but they're loaded with folate, iron, and betaine, as well as good bacteria and enzymes (when fermented) to support digestion. Beets are even said to cleanse the blood—and if you make the kvass, you'll look like you're *drinking blood* . . . but I digress. Here's how to whip it up:

INGREDIENTS

3 organic medium beets
2 teaspoons high-mineral sea salt
Filtered water

Wash (but don't peel) the beets, chop into 1-inch cubes, and pile into a half-gallon Mason jar. Add the sea salt, fill the jar with filtered or spring water, cover tightly with a lid, and let sit for three days in a cool, dark place. Once your kvass is done "brewing," strain and let it chill in the fridge for a few hours before drinking. Shoot for one 4-ounce serving in the morning and one at night—if the taste is overpowering, cut it with a few ounces of fresh-squeezed OJ. Recipe makes about 16 servings.

Hate beets? Other great sour foods to include this week include lacto-fermented pickles, sauerkraut, and limeade.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Lentil Salad

Feeling hungrier now that you've hit the second trimester? Lentils are an excellent and inexpensive source of protein and fiber, which helps you feel fuller, for longer. Make an extra big batch of this lentil salad and you've got a healthy snack (or side dish) for days. Yum!

INGREDIENTS

1 pound dried green lentils (5 cups cooked)
3 medium carrots, diced
1 red pepper, chopped
½ medium onion, chopped
¼ cup fresh dill, minced
½ teaspoon sea salt
⅓ cup dried currants (optional)
Parmesan

VINAIGRETTE

4 tablespoons raw apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoons olive oil
1½ tablespoons Dijon mustard
2 cloves garlic, minced
Pinch of sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Place your lentils in a large stockpot and cover generously with water. Add a splash of raw apple cider vinegar. Let soak overnight. In the morning, drain, rinse, and return lentils to the pot. Add enough filtered water to cover lentils by 1 inch. Cook until tender but firm (about 20 minutes). Drain and chill in the refrigerator.

In the meantime, prepare the vinaigrette by whisking the ingredients together. Once the lentils have cooled, add the chopped veggies, dill, salt, and currants, top with vinaigrette, and mix well. Serve cold with some freshly grated Parmesan. Serves 6 to 8.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Banana Almond Cake

Did you know that low levels of vitamin B₁₂ and folate have been linked to hearing loss? (Seriously, what *can't* folate do?) So, this week, let's support baby's developing auditory system with some Banana Almond Cake—bananas and almonds are rich in folate, and you'll get a B₁₂ boost from the cage-free eggs. This sweet cake's texture is similar to flan, and it's grain-free and gluten-free to boot!

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 3 ripe bananas | ¼ teaspoon cinnamon |
| ½ cup creamy almond butter | ¼ teaspoon nutmeg |
| ¼ cup melted butter or coconut oil | 5 cage-free eggs |
| 3 tablespoons raw honey or organic maple syrup | ½ cup dark chocolate chips (optional) |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla extract | |

Preheat the oven to 300°F. Put all the ingredients into a blender or food processor. Whir on high until the mixture is smooth, like cake batter. Pour into a greased 9-inch round baking dish. Bake for 90 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean. Let cool, slice, and top with a dollop of whipped cream.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Cherry Chocolate Trail Mix

It can be tough to eat healthy on the go (ever try putting together a healthy meal at the airport, or—worse yet—a gas station?). Pack up some healthy trail mix, however, and you'll always have access to real food with a nice balance of fats, protein, and carbs. No matter how long your flight is delayed or how bad the traffic is, you won't have to worry about getting hangry.

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup raw almonds*

¾ cup raw walnuts*

½ cup dried dates

¼ cup unsweetened raisins

¼ cup unsweetened dried cherries

½ cup raw pumpkin seeds*

½ cup raw sunflower seeds*

¼ cup high-quality dark chocolate chips (check out Enjoy Life or Lily's)

Pinch of sea salt

Combine all the ingredients and store in a Mason jar or cloth baggie. Munch, munch, munch.

**It's best to use soaked or sprouted nuts and seeds. Refer back to page 29 for more details.*



NOM OF THE WEEK

Chia Seed Pudding

Give your baby's bones some love this week. Chia seeds have more calcium than milk, and when soaked overnight, they bloom into a glorious, gelatinous pudding. They're also an excellent yet gentle source of insoluble and soluble fiber, which will keep things, ya know, moving. Win-win!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups farm-fresh organic milk or fortified almond milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup organic chia seeds
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- 3 tablespoons organic maple syrup or raw honey, or 45 drops stevia
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup organic raisins (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl, cover tightly, and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, your pudding will be set and ready for breakfast. Yum.



YOUR *baby registry* CHECKLIST

Big-Ticket Items

- Crib, co-sleeper bassinet or pillow
- Stroller
- Car seat

Baby Clothes

- 2 Newborn hats
- 2-4 Side-snap shirts
- 4-6 Plain white onesies
- 3-4 Lounge pants
- 4-6 Footed onesie pajamas
- 2-4 Onesie-style T-shirts
- 4-6 Pairs of socks

Baby Bedding

- Crib mattress
- 2 Waterproof mattress liners
- 2 Fitted sheets
- 2 Sleep sacks
- 2 Swaddles
- White-noise machine (optional)

Cloth Diaper Setup

- 24 Cloth diapers
- Diaper pail
- 2 Diaper pail liners
- Diaper sprayer
- Eco-friendly disposable diapers
- Eco-friendly baby wipes

Bottles, Bibs, Burp Cloths, and Accessories

- 2 Silicone bibs
- 2-4 Burp cloths
- 2 Towels with hoods
- 2 Washcloths
- 1 Starter-kit glass baby bottles
- Silicone pacifiers
- Digital ear thermometer
- Bathtub
- Nursing pillow
- Infant swing
- Activity mat
- Baby carrier

NOM OF THE WEEK

Tart Cherry Bomb

Did you know that tart cherries are one of the richest sources of melatonin on the planet? In fact, at least one small study suggests that tart cherry juice can increase sleep time by as much as 90 minutes a night. I even tried it on my three-year-old (a notoriously early riser) to eke out some more shut-eye, and it worked! Tart cherries also help reduce inflammation, body aches, and swelling, all common pregnancy side effects. To get the most benefits, try it two ways:



In the afternoon, combine 2 tablespoons organic and unsweetened tart cherry juice concentrate, 8 to 12 ounces sparkling water, and a few drops of liquid stevia (but only if you want the sweetness). Serve over ice and enjoy.

Around 8 p.m., mix 2 tablespoons of tart cherry juice concentrate, 8 ounces of plain kefir yogurt, and liquid stevia to taste.

NOM OF THE WEEK

Kombucha

Can you believe we're already halfway to the big day?! If you haven't already, take a moment to relish this 20-week milestone. In fact, let's celebrate with a toast and a bit of bubbly! No, not Champagne. I'm talking about a different kind of fizzy drink: kombucha.

Made by fermenting sweetened black tea with a culture of bacteria and yeast, kombucha does contain trace amounts of alcohol, but it's generally considered safe to drink during pregnancy, if you've tried it before with no adverse reactions. Stick to small amounts: no more than 8 ounces a day, in divided doses. As for the benefits, there are plenty: kombucha is rich in polyphenols, electrolytes, enzymes, and probiotics. Some mamas swear by it to ease morning sickness (especially when it's ginger-flavored).

Not feeling kombucha? Try a Mama-mosa instead (equal parts fresh-squeezed orange juice and sparkling water) or a Tart Cherry Bomb (page 195). Just make sure to serve your mocktail in a wineglass—we're celebrating!



NOM OF THE WEEK

Coconut Chocolate Fudge

Have you been battling away chocolate cravings because you're worried it's not good for the baby? Stop! In fact, *indulge*. Researchers in Finland found that mamas who regularly ate chocolate during pregnancy had happier, livelier infants. Perhaps that's because chocolate contains phenylethylamine, which triggers the release of endorphins? Or perhaps it's just that mamas who are whacked out in chocolate bliss *perceive* their babies as being happier? Either way, you now have scientific proof that a bit of the sweet stuff is a good thing. (You're welcome, by the way.)

For an antioxidant boost, make sure you're selecting organic, fair-trade chocolate with a high cacao content (preferably over 70 percent) because you're not going to get much benefit from eating, say, a Snickers bar. Or try this delicious Coconut Fudge—it's made with antioxidant-rich dark chocolate and coconut oil, which is rich in nourishing fats. Just try not to eat the whole *pan*, as chocolate does contain caffeine. Remember, everything in moderation.

INGREDIENTS

- One 14-ounce can whole-fat coconut milk
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 ½ cups dark chocolate chips (I like the ones from Enjoy Life)
- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- ½ cup coconut flakes

In a medium-sized saucepan, empty the entire can of coconut milk. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low. Stir in honey and mix well. Let the mixture reduce by half, stirring occasionally. (This will take about 20 to 30 minutes.) Over low heat, add the chocolate chips and coconut oil. Once completely melted, add in coconut flakes and mix well. Pour the fudge into a medium-sized baking pan, cover, and store in the fridge until completely hardened. Cut into small squares and enjoy. Makes 16 to 24 servings.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Pistachio Pesto

High-risk mamas need to pay extra attention to their health, so this week we're boosting the immune system with a dose of raw garlic. It's an important ingredient in this recipe: garlic is high in vitamin B₆, vitamin C, and manganese; it may also be helpful for high blood pressure. (Take that, preeclampsia!)

INGREDIENTS

5 cups organic basil
½ cup Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, grated
½ cup pistachios (you can substitute pine nuts or walnuts if you prefer)
2 to 3 cloves garlic
½ cup olive oil
Sea salt (to taste)



Wash and dry the basil leaves, then toss all the ingredients except the olive oil and the salt into a food processor. Pulse until blended. With the processor running, slowly drizzle in the olive oil and puree until smooth. Salt to taste, and serve over warm pasta, spaghetti squash, or zucchini "zoodles." Pesto is also delicious with eggs or spread on toast. Will keep for three to five days in the fridge, or you can freeze some in an ice cube tray. Recipe makes 4 to 6 servings.

NOM OF THE WEEK

Protein Pear Pudding

Constipation tends to come and go during pregnancy, so there's no need to be too concerned if your bowels feel a little off every now and again. But when and if you do feel, well, stuck, my Protein Pear Pudding is virtually guaranteed to get the party started.

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups filtered water

2 tablespoons raw honey

12 drops stevia (optional)

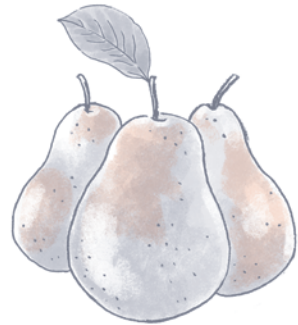
Cumin, cinnamon, and cloves to taste (optional)

6 ripe pears, washed and cubed (don't remove the peel!)

6 tablespoons gelatin protein powder (I like Vital Proteins)

2 tablespoons coconut oil

In a large saucepan combine ½ cup of water, honey, stevia, spices, and pears. Cook on medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes, or until pears are soft. Puree pears with an immersion blender or food processor. Return the mixture to the saucepan and keep warm on the lowest possible heat. In a small bowl, mix 1 cup water and gelatin, stirring quickly so the gelatin doesn't set. Pour the gelatin into the saucepan, stirring continuously until fully dissolved. Add coconut oil, allowing it to melt and blend evenly. Turn off the heat and let the mixture cool. Pour into 1-cup Mason jars and seal with a lid; place in the refrigerator for several hours until set. Pro tip: I like to leave these out for 15 minutes or so before eating, so the pudding softens a little. Makes 6 servings.



MAMA NATURAL'S BOOB AND BELLY BUTTER

Making my own personal care products is something I enjoy doing because I can control what goes in them! This is especially important to me during pregnancy. My recipe contains no parabens, phthalates, or artificial fragrances. Apply this soothing balm two or three times a day to the belly, breasts, and any skin irritations.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup raw cocoa butter

¼ cup raw shea butter

¼ cup extra-virgin coconut oil

1 teaspoon vitamin E oil

2 tablespoons rosehip oil

2 tablespoons sweet almond oil

20 drops geranium, lavender, and/or frankincense essential oil

In a double boiler, gently melt cocoa butter, shea butter, and coconut oil until combined. Pour into a glass container and cool to room temperature. Add in remaining ingredients and mix well. Chill in the refrigerator until butter starts to solidify (about an hour). Remove from fridge and whip with an immersion blender until the texture is similar to whipped cream. Pour into a glass container, seal tight, and store in a cool, dark place. (The lotion will further harden.) Apply to belly, breasts, and body as needed.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Healthy Gummy Men

Did you know the collagen molecule is too large to penetrate the skin when applied topically? That's why expensive collagen creams don't hold a candle to edible gelatin. I like whipping up a batch of these healthy gummy men. They're super nutritious, a snap to make, and great to eat on-the-go. Bonus: my kids love them.

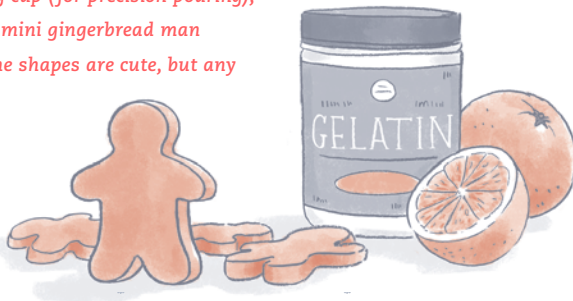
INGREDIENTS

3 cups all-natural, chilled juice (I prefer fresh-squeezed orange juice)

½ cup grass-fed gelatin protein powder (I like the Vital Proteins brand; make sure your gelatin is *not* cold water soluble—otherwise your gummies won't set!)

¼ cup raw honey or 60 drops liquid stevia

Combine the juice and gelatin in a small saucepan, and allow the mixture to sit for a few minutes until the gelatin “blooms” or expands. Then, warm over medium-low heat until the gelatin has completely dissolved. Allow to cool slightly, then add your honey. Stir until blended and taste for sweetness. (The flavors will mellow once set, so it's okay if the mixture tastes a little too sweet at this point.) Next, transfer the mixture to a spouted measuring cup (for precision pouring), then into a silicone mold. (I use a 24-cavity mini gingerbread man mold from Wilton Silicone because I think the shapes are cute, but any design will do.) Let the gummies slightly set (takes about 10 minutes) and then transfer to the refrigerator for at least one hour, or in the freezer for 10 minutes. Eat and enjoy! Recipe makes approximately 50 mini gummy men.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Fat Bombs!

Even before I got pregnant, I was a little like Big Ben. I'd be sitting at my desk in my stuffy old office, the clock would strike three, and 3 – 2 – 1 – out would come a giant yawn, followed by a full-body stretch. The midafternoon slump is real, Mama! And it was no less intense when I left the corporate world and started having kids. From running to prenatal appointments to chasing a toddler, pregnant mamas need energy to make it through the day.

Instead of sugar-rich treats, reach for healthy fats—they'll provide long-term energy without the crash. One of my favorite midafternoon pick-me-ups? I call them Fat Bombs. Funny name, I know, but they were made popular by folks following a ketogenic diet. They can be enjoyed, however, by everyone. Feel free to tinker with this recipe (add different spices or experiment with coconut oil or walnut butter). The key is to keep them fat focused.

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup organic unsalted butter
- ½ cup raw almond butter (you can use tahini if you're nut-free)
- 2 tablespoons raw honey or 30 drops pure stevia
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Over low heat, melt your butter and almond butter in a saucepan. Stir well, remove from the heat, let cool, and mix in your honey and spices. Spoon into small silicone molds (the Gummy Men molds on page 244 work great for this, too) and refrigerate for two hours. Enjoy a few each afternoon with your red raspberry leaf tea!



NOM OF THE WEEK

Blueberry Ginger Smoothie

Support baby's growing lungs this week with a blast of antioxidants. These amazing agents are excellent for supporting bronchial and capillary health and provide loads of other benefits, too. Foods that are especially high in antioxidants include goji berries, raspberries, dark chocolate, turmeric, and garlic but this refreshing smoothie utilizes berries, grapes, and ginger. The protein powder, meanwhile, adds staying power.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup frozen organic blueberries
- 1 cup frozen organic red grapes
- 1½ cups unsweetened coconut water
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated ginger
- 1 tablespoon raw honey
- 2 scoops protein powder (optional)

Toss everything in a blender (add some ice if necessary) and blend away. To keep your blood sugar steady, drink alongside eggs in the morning or with a handful of nuts as an afternoon snack. Recipe makes 2 servings.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Sauerkraut

As baby comes down the birth canal (covered in cheesy vernix), he'll pick up beneficial bacteria, which will help him establish a healthy microbiome. So this week, let's give your inner ecosystem a boost. The easiest (and cheapest) way to support gut health is to eat fermented foods, which are rich in lactic acid-producing bacteria. Unfortunately, most "fermented" foods on the market today aren't fermented *naturally*, so they don't offer much in the way of beneficial probiotics. Thankfully, you can make your own. I love this simple recipe for classic sauerkraut.

INGREDIENTS

1 small head organic green cabbage
1 tablespoon fine-grain Celtic sea salt
1 tablespoon caraway seeds
Filtered water



Finely chop the cabbage, wash and allow to dry for an hour or so, then place into a large glass bowl. Add salt and caraway seeds, and with clean hands, mix well. Let marinate for 10 to 15 minutes. Next, use your hands or a potato masher to smash the cabbage, releasing as much liquid as possible—this will serve as your brine. (If you're having trouble producing much liquid, add up to ¼ cup filtered water.) Pound and mix until you've got about ½ cup of liquid in your bowl. Transport the contents into a wide-mouthed half-gallon Mason jar. The brine should cover the cabbage as it protects it from mold. Leave at least an inch of space at the top of the jar for expansion. Cover loosely with a plastic lid or cloth, and let sit at room temperature for at least three days. Taste with a clean fork (no double-dipping) until the sourness is to your liking. The cabbage should be soft and have a zippy tang. Serve as a condiment with eggs, whole grains, burgers, or anything else that strikes your fancy. Recipe makes about thirty servings, and it should keep for about a month in the fridge.

NOM OF THE WEEK

Crunchy Kale Chips

Now that baby's winking and blinking, let's support the health of her developing peepers with a hefty dose of lutein and zeaxanthin. Say what? Okay, in *human speak*, these carotenoids are considered some of the most important vitamins for maintaining good eye health. In fact, quite a few studies suggest that they can protect against cataracts and age-related eye diseases, including macular degeneration. Kale—often called the king of green leafy veggies—is loaded with lutein and zeaxanthin (not to mention folate, iron, potassium, and vitamins A, C, and K). And for those who love to crunch and munch, these easy-to-make kale chips are an awesome alternative to, well, just about every other chip on the market.

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds curly kale (Curly kale makes for a milder, crispier chip than lacinato or dinosaur)

1 tablespoon olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

Optional toppings:

¼ cup grated Parmesan

¼ cup nutritional yeast flakes

Red pepper flakes



Preheat the oven to 275°F. Remove kale stems, wash and dry leaves well, then chop into small, bite-sized pieces. Place the pieces in a large bowl with all remaining ingredients. Massage the oil and spices into the leaves. Arrange the chips in a single layer on two cookie sheets lined with parchment paper. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes, or until chips are slightly crispy. Let cool and enjoy. Store any leftovers in an airtight container.

NOM OF THE WEEK

Savory Quiche Muffins

Suffering from unsightly swelling? I can relate. I puffed up considerably near the end of my first pregnancy, but experienced virtually zero swelling the second time around—seriously, even my wedding ring fit the same. The difference? Upping my protein intake, à la the Brewer Diet (flip back to page 32 if you need a refresher). Meat is an excellent source of protein, of course, but there are other options, too: Greek yogurt, cheese, legumes, nuts, seeds, nutritional yeast flakes, and eggs.

Speaking of eggs, they were demonized throughout the 1980s and '90s for their cholesterol content, but they're actually one of the world's most perfect foods. They're rich in vitamin B₁₂, selenium, and leucine (an important amino acid). They're also an inexpensive source of protein. But the true star player in eggs is choline, which is vital for the development of baby's brain and spinal cord. In fact, some studies suggest that choline may act like folate in protecting your child from neural tube defects. You can bake, fry, poach, or scramble 'em, of course, but try mixing it up in the morning with these savory quiche muffins.

INGREDIENTS

6 organic eggs
2 cups raw organic spinach, chopped
¼ cup organic sundried tomatoes, chopped
½ cup organic grated cheddar or Colby cheese
Salt, pepper, and hot sauce to taste

Start by preheating your oven to 350°F. Beat your eggs, then add remaining ingredients and combine. Into a greased cupcake tin (use olive oil or softened butter), pour your egg mixture, leaving a half inch of space to allow for rising. Bake for 25 minutes, or until muffins are slightly browned. Serve warm, with fresh fruit.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Quinoa Pizza

To satisfy all the pregnancy cravings, I've made sure to include recipes featuring chocolate (page 176), chips (page 283), and fudge (page 214)—all healthy versions, of course! But I would be remiss if I didn't include a recipe for the ultimate comfort food: PIZZA. Instead of a typical white flour crust, this version uses quinoa, an ancient grain that supports breast milk production, so it's a great recipe for your postpartum self, too.

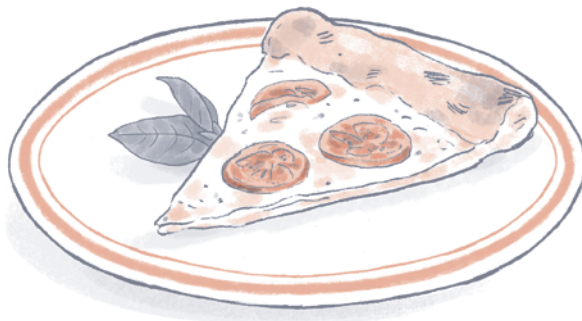
INGREDIENTS

1 cup organic quinoa (rinsed and soaked overnight)
¼ cup filtered water
1 teaspoon organic oregano
½ teaspoon sea salt
½ teaspoon organic garlic powder
1 tablespoon melted cooking oil such as ghee or expeller-pressed coconut oil

Preheat oven to 425°F. Drain quinoa and place in a blender. Add ¼ cup filtered water, oregano, sea salt, and garlic powder. Blend till smooth. The mixture should have the consistency of pancake batter. If it's too thick, add another tablespoon or two of water. (Batter must be pourable without being runny.)

Pour batter onto a well-oiled pizza pan. Bake for about 10 minutes or until the top of the crust looks cooked. Remove from the oven and carefully flip the crust, then bake for another 10 minutes or until the top of the crust looks cooked.

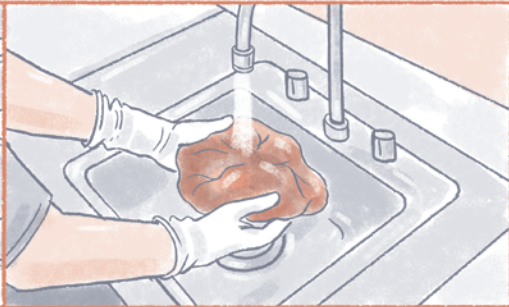
Remove from oven, add your toppings, and bake for another 10 minutes. Enjoy!



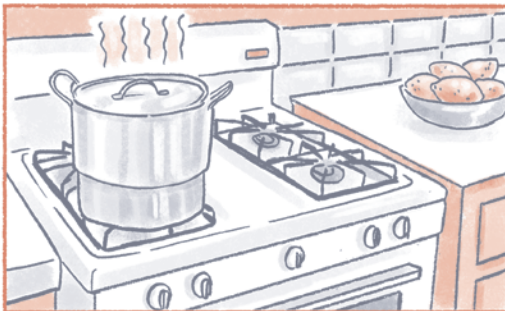
THE PROCESS OF PLACENTA ENCAPSULATION



PLACENTA IS BAGGED AND REFRIGERATED AFTER BIRTH



IN A SANITIZED WORKSPACE ENCAPSULATOR RINSES PLACENTA TO DRAIN ALL THE BLOOD



THE PLACENTA IS STEAMED LIGHTLY ATOP THE STOVE



THEN SLICED THINLY AND DRIED FOR ABOUT 18 HOURS IN A DEHYDRATOR



DRIED PLACENTA IS PROCESSED IN A GRINDER AND LOADED INTO PILLS



VOILA, YOUR PLACENTA PILLS LOOK GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT. SORTA. RIGHT?

NOM OF THE WEEK

Chocolate Placenta Truffles

If you're gonna eat your placenta, you might as well do it in style, *amiright?* So close your eyes and imagine yourself a few days postpartum: unwashed hair tied up in a messy bun, lounging in a stained nursing top and pajama pants . . . and snacking on chocolate bonbons. Not too bad, eh?

Okay, maybe it sounds a little weird to eat your placenta in dessert form, but you won't taste it this way, thanks to the bittersweet flavor of the chocolate. And if you don't plan on consuming your placenta, no problem—you can still enjoy these delicious treats, sans birth organ.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces organic dark chocolate
- ½ cup heavy cream (or full-fat coconut milk)
- 1 tablespoon honey or maple syrup
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup crushed almonds (may substitute walnuts or some other nut or seed)
- 1 tablespoon dried placenta powder (just empty it right out of the capsules)
- ¼ cup cacao or cocoa powder (optional)
- ¼ cup shredded coconut (optional)



In a double boiler (over low heat) melt dark chocolate and cream or coconut milk, stirring until smooth. Remove from heat, allow to cool slightly, then add honey, vanilla, crushed almonds, and dried placenta powder. Mix well and pour into a bowl; cover and chill until firm (about two hours). Using a melon-baller, scoop individual truffles from the hardened batter. Roll in shredded coconut, cocoa powder, or crushed almonds. Chill for an additional 30 minutes, then store in an airtight container in the fridge. One or two truffles a day postpartum should help balance your mood and give you a breast milk boost. Also worth noting: this may be the one time in your life that no one else wants to eat your chocolate! Yay!

NOM OF THE WEEK

Salmon Cakes

Since baby's brain development is taking center stage this week, let's focus on foods you can eat to support his smarts, like omega-3 fatty acids. Or, more specifically, docosahexaenoic acid (a.k.a. DHA).

Now that's a mouthful.

DHA is a primary component of brain tissue, and it's especially vital in the last three months of pregnancy. Unfortunately, many mamas don't get enough from their diet, and if you're not getting enough, baby's not getting enough, either, and that's a problem. Low levels of DHA during pregnancy have been linked to premature birth, low birth weight, and hyperactivity in children. So where can you find this miracle nutrient? Marine animals such as tuna, sardines, and anchovies are especially rich sources, but salmon is one of your best bets. In fact, this pink fish is one of the most nutrient-dense foods on the planet. Sink your teeth into a baked or grilled salmon filet for dinner this week (heck—every week!) or try whipping up these super-simple salmon cakes.

INGREDIENTS

One 14.75-ounce can wild salmon
2 pastured eggs
1 tablespoon coconut flour
½ onion, finely chopped
½ organic red pepper, finely chopped
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
2 tablespoons fresh dill, minced (optional)
1–2 tablespoons olive oil



Drain your salmon (the drier, the better). In a medium-size bowl, whisk your eggs. Add in the coconut flour and stir until dissolved. Add remaining ingredients except the oil and mix well. With clean hands, form the mixture into small cakes. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat, then add several cakes and cook for a few minutes on each side, until browned. Serve with lemon wedges and fresh tartar sauce. YUM!

Lactation Cookies

It's a wee bit early to be worried about milk supply, but it's great to have a recipe for lactation cookies on hand—and there's no rule that says you have to wait for baby's birth to try them. In fact, I've fed these scrumptious cookies to my husband, my son, and some friends that came over to visit, and nobody started lactating but me (everybody loved the cookies, though!). The secret to a good lactation cookie is lots of "galactagogues," which is a fancy word for substances that promote the formation and flow of breast milk. True, there aren't any definitive studies to support the effectiveness of food or herb-based galactagogues (as opposed to pharmaceutical varieties), but the benefit reaped by many, many natural mamas is proof enough for me. I like to freeze a few batches of dough and bake as necessary. The best part? We're eliminating all the junk—gluten, refined sugar, etc.—that gets tossed into store-brought brands.

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 2 cups organic rolled oats | ½ teaspoon sea salt |
| ¼ tapioca flour (or substitute organic cornstarch) | ½ cup almond butter |
| ½ cup organic coconut sugar | ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons coconut oil, melted |
| ¼ cup brewer's yeast flakes | 2 eggs |
| 1 tablespoon fennel seed, ground | 2 tablespoons raw honey |
| 1 teaspoon aluminum-free baking powder | ½ teaspoon organic vanilla extract |
| ½ teaspoon baking soda | |

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Add rolled oats to a food processor and pulse until you've achieved a flour-like consistency. Combine oats, flour, and all other dry ingredients into a large bowl. In a smaller bowl, combine the almond butter, coconut oil, eggs, honey, and vanilla. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients, mixing well with a spoon or clean hands. Form flat cookies about the size of a silver dollar and place them on a greased (with coconut oil) sheet pan. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, checking for the slightest bit of browning at the edges.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Clove Rice Pudding

Everybody knows the spicy flavor of clove, probably from sipping warm apple cider in the dead of winter. But did you know that cloves are a centuries-old pain-relief remedy? Forget Novocain; ancient dentists used cloves to numb an aching tooth. (Try it yourself: chew a clove and you'll experience a slight numbing sensation.) The clove is also a rich source of antioxidants, as well as a powerful digestive aid, and one of my favorite ways to use it is in this creamy, comforting clove rice pudding.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup organic long-grain brown rice (preferably sprouted)
2 cups filtered water
2 cinnamon sticks
1 teaspoon whole cloves
¼ cup raisins
2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 cup whole coconut milk
A dash each of ground cinnamon, nutmeg, and sea salt
2 eggs (optional)



Into a saucepan, add rice, water, cinnamon sticks, and cloves. Let soak at room temperature overnight. In the morning, bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Carefully remove cinnamon sticks and cloves with a slotted spoon. Cover and let simmer for 45 minutes, or until the rice is fully cooked and the water has evaporated. Add raisins, maple syrup, and coconut milk and simmer uncovered for an additional 15 to 20 minutes. If you like, you can stir in the eggs in the last 5 minutes for extra protein. Serve warm, with a dash of cinnamon, nutmeg, and sea salt, and a dollop of butter.

NOM OF THE WEEK

Mango Lassi

I remember the first time Michael and I went out for Indian food. I ordered a mango lassi—basically, a yogurt-based milkshake or smoothie—and my taste buds exploded. It was sweet, it was tangy, and I immediately went home and started tinkering with a make-at-home version. The result? This lassi is high in vitamin C, beta-carotene, and calcium, but it'll give you a hefty probiotic boost, too (excellent news if you're trying to ward off GBS).

INGREDIENTS

1 cup whole-fat yogurt
½ cup whole milk
1 cup frozen mango, cubed
1 heaping tablespoon raw honey
Dash of cardamom
Probiotic capsule (I like Klaire Labs or BioKult)

Add yogurt, milk, mango, and honey to a blender and mix until smooth. Pour into a large glass, then open your probiotic capsule and add to the smoothie. Stir well, finish with a dash of cardamom, and enjoy.



NOM OF THE WEEK

DIY Date Bars

If I told you there was a particular food that's associated with a lower risk of induction, premature rupture of membranes, and the need for Pitocin to boost contractions, you'd eat it—right? Well, a small study published in the *Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology* suggests that dates are that miracle food. More specifically, eating six dates a day from 36 weeks onward appears to result in shorter, easier labors. (Apparently, dates have an oxytocin-like effect on the body; they're also rich in fatty acids, the building blocks of prostaglandins.)

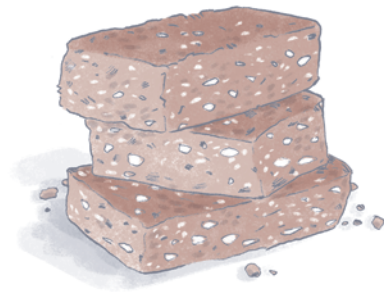
How lucky are we that this labor-inducing superfood isn't, like, mayonnaise? Or turnips? Or goat brains?

On the contrary, dates are delicious and extremely versatile, so you can enjoy them a number of ways: straight up, stuffed with almond butter (just slice 'em open and smear with a teaspoon of the sticky stuff), or blended into 2 cups of whole-fat milk (or almond milk) to make a sweet, creamy shake. One of my favorite recipes, however, is for homemade date bars. If you're watching your sugars, this is an especially great way to hit your daily date goal, since you'll be consuming them alongside protein-rich foods such as nuts and seeds, which may prevent a spike in blood sugar.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup pitted, dried dates
- 1 cup nuts of your choice (I like walnuts and almonds)
- ½ cup seeds of your choice (hemp hearts are particularly delicious)
- ½ cup nutrient-dense additions, like coconut flakes or goji berries
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 1 tablespoon raw honey

Toss all ingredients into a food processor and blend until the mixture forms clumps. Scoop mixture onto a plate. With clean hands, roll into balls or form into bars and chill to set. Store in an airtight container. Recipe makes 4 to 6 servings.



Lasagna Bolognese

The tradition of bringing easy-to-heat-up meals to new mamas is one of the great acts of service—and so needed. It takes a while to build up your depleted nutritional reserves, but you'll be so tired and busy with baby that cooking (for most mamas, at least) takes a backseat. But you will be hungry. Breastfeeding mamas, in particular, tend to have appetites like linebackers. So here's a tip: Don't just rely on friends and family. Start preparing and freezing several weeks' worth of nutrient-rich meals now. One of my all-time favorites is classic lasagna Bolognese with a power-packed twist: beef liver. Liver is loaded with iron, vitamins A, B, C, D, and E, trace elements and minerals, and the essential fatty acids EPA and DHA. It is truly one of nature's most incredible foods. But don't worry. You won't even taste it. I promise.

INGREDIENTS

BOLOGNESE SAUCE

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
1½ pounds grass-fed ground beef
½ pound beef liver (ask your butcher to grind it for you; otherwise, mince)
Two 16-ounce jars organic marinara sauce
Two 6-ounce cans organic tomato paste

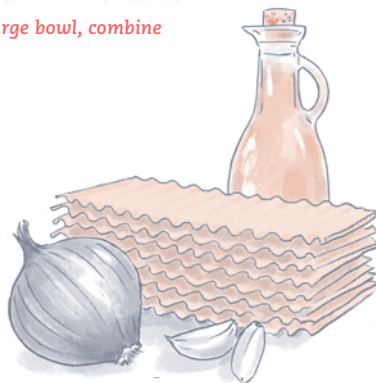
LASAGNA

1 box gluten-free lasagna noodles
2 pounds organic ricotta or cottage cheese
2 eggs
¼ cup parsley, finely chopped
2 pounds organic Swiss cheese, sliced
1 cup grated Parmesan

To make the Bolognese sauce, add olive oil to a large stockpot and warm over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until translucent. Add the ground meat and liver and cook until browned. Reserve 1 cup of the marinara sauce; add remaining sauce and all the tomato paste to the pot. Mix well and simmer on low.

Heat the oven to 350°F. Fill a large stockpot with water and bring to a rolling boil. Add the lasagna noodles and cook for about 10 minutes, or until they're just shy of al dente. Drain the noodles and drizzle with olive oil (to prevent sticking). Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine ricotta cheese, eggs, parsley, and salt and pepper to taste.

To assemble the lasagna, oil a 13 X 9-inch baking dish, then spoon one ladle of Bolognese sauce into the bottom of the dish. Layer with lasagna noodles, then meat sauce, then ricotta, then Swiss cheese. Repeat until all of the layers are formed, ending with the plain marinara sauce you reserved and the Parmesan. Bake for 55 to 65 minutes, until the lasagna is bubbling and golden brown on top. Allow to cool completely before portioning and freezing.



NOM OF THE WEEK

Turkey Chili

Still freezing meals for those first few weeks postpartum? Good, because I couldn't resist giving you another easy make-ahead recipe, this time for a super-satisfying turkey chili. Bonus points for the fact that you can eat it one-handed (with some organic blue tortilla chips)—and, trust me, you won't realize how helpful this is until you're juggling a breast-feeding newborn. It could be weeks before you sit down to the dinner table and eat with a knife and fork again!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 organic yellow pepper, chopped
- 1 organic red pepper, chopped
- 1 pound pastured ground turkey
- 3–4 cloves garlic, minced
- One 28-ounce can diced organic tomatoes, undrained
- 1½ cups red kidney beans, soaked and cooked (use canned in a pinch)
- 1½ cups black beans, soaked and cooked (use canned in a pinch)
- ¼ cup chili powder
- 2 cups homemade chicken or beef stock
- 1½ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 2 tablespoons cumin
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce (optional)



In a large stockpot, sauté onions and bell peppers in olive oil over medium heat until the onions are translucent. Add ground turkey and garlic, and cook until browned. Add remaining ingredients and stir well to combine. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve with avocado, grated cheese, and cilantro. If you're making ahead and freezing, consider making a double batch!

NOM OF THE WEEK

Red Raspberry Leaf Tea

LABOR DAY EDITION

I've sung the praises of red raspberry leaf tea for months, and now it's time to share with you the formula for my super-strong, extra-concentrated Labor Day Tea, a recipe that is near and dear to my heart; Paloma arrived the day after I started drinking it. Seriously, this is some powerful stuff. You'll want to get the go-ahead from your midwife or doctor first—you don't want to overstimulate the uterus before baby is ready to make her grand entrance—but you'll probably get the all-clear to start drinking the week of your due date. (Drinking the tea, that is. It's not time to crack open the wine quite yet.)

To make: add 1½ cups loose red raspberry leaf tea to 4 cups filtered water. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat, cover, and let simmer for 20 to 30 minutes. Strain, add a natural sweetener if you like, and sip throughout the day.

Oh, and put your midwife on speed-dial.

NOM OF THE WEEK

Spicy Pineapple

This week we've got two old wives' tales combined into one tasty treat. Pineapple is high in an enzyme called bromelain, which is thought to soften and ripen the cervix. Spicy foods, meanwhile, stimulate the bowels (similar to castor oil)—in fact, some mamas swear that Mexican food kicked their labor into gear. So is this sweet snack enough to bring on contractions, then?

Well, probably not. But this little snack combines salt, spicy, and sweet flavors, and certainly tastes delicious. Plus, it's a nice "recipe" to have on hand near the end of pregnancy, when cooking elaborate meals is no longer appealing.

INGREDIENTS

1 organic pineapple

Cayenne pepper to taste

Sea salt to taste

To make, simply core and chop or slice your pineapple, then sprinkle with cayenne pepper and sea salt. Eat with a toothpick or put on a shish kabob stick for a little extra fun. Bon appétit!



CALCULATING YOUR BISHOP SCORE

Sometimes letting baby stay is riskier than inducing labor. For example, preeclampsia, intrauterine growth restriction, and decreased placental function are all valid medical reasons to induce. But how do you know if your induction will be successful? And if you're on the fence about induction—if, say, you're 41 weeks and 5 days along and your ob-gyn is knocking on your door with an amniohook—how might you decide if induction is the right choice for you?

Enter the Bishop Score. And, no, I'm not about to enroll you in Catholic school.

The Bishop Score (invented by, yes, a Dr. Bishop back in the mid-1960s) is a simple method of predicting whether the onset of spontaneous labor is likely imminent, and whether induction—if necessary—will prove successful. The score takes into consideration five different components of a vaginal exam, awarding points in each category based on the readiness of the cervix. The higher your score, the greater chance that a medical induction will result in a vaginal delivery (as opposed to a C-section). Scores of 8 or more are associated with a high chance of successful induction. Scores of 5 or below, on the other hand, indicate that labor is not likely to begin on its own anytime soon, and that induction is not likely to be successful.

Here's how the score is calculated based on your most recent vaginal exam:

SCORE				
Cervical Position	POSTERIOR 0 points	MID 1 point	ANTERIOR 2 points	
Cervical Consistency	FIRM 0 points	MEDIUM 1 point	SOFT 2 points	
Cervical Effacement	0–30 percent 0 points	31–50 percent 1 point	51–80 percent 2 points	>80 percent 3 points
Cervical Dilation	0 cm 0 points	1–2 cm 1 point	3–4 cm 2 points	>5cm 3 points
Fetal Station	-3 0 points	-2 1 point	-1 or 0 2 points	+1 or +2 3 points
TOTAL SCORE				

WHAT TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING A MIDWIFE

The midwife you're interviewing might seem amazing on paper—intense training, oodles of experience, sterling recommendations—but if your personalities don't mesh, don't hesitate to keep looking. Keep in mind that you'll likely end up asking some of these same questions when touring prospective hospitals and birth centers, too.

- ☐ Are you licensed by the state?
- ☐ Are you certified? From where did you receive certification?
- ☐ Can you describe your midwifery training (school or apprenticeship program)? Do you take continuing education classes?
- ☐ Have you completed training in neonatal resuscitation?
- ☐ How many years have you been practicing?
- ☐ How many babies have you delivered? How many do you deliver each year, on average?
- ☐ Do you have experience with postpartum hemorrhage, shoulder dystocia, breech deliveries, or cord prolapse?
- ☐ Do you offer water births?
- ☐ Do you perform VBACs? (Vaginal Births After Cesarean—we talk more about VBACs in Week 26.)
- ☐ At what point do your clients become too high-risk to continue working together?
- ☐ What percentage of your patients end up having an epidural?
- ☐ What is your C-section rate? What about forceps assistance or vacuum extraction deliveries?
- ☐ Have you ever lost a baby or a mother during delivery?
- ☐ Do you work with a consulting physician(s)? Do you have a collaborative agreement with a doctor in place? Which physicians are you affiliated with in the event that my pregnancy becomes high-risk? Do you have personal relationships with them?
- ☐ Do you have hospital privileges?
- ☐ Do you encourage mamas to work with a doula?
- ☐ How many prenatal appointments will I have?
- ☐ What will happen during each appointment?
- ☐ Do you require ultrasound and/or vaginal exams?
- ☐ Do you require the use of a Doppler? Do you have a fetoscope?
- ☐ Can I bring a family member(s) to my appointments?
- ☐ Will I see only you for prenatal care, or a team of midwives (if interviewing at a birth center)?
- ☐ Will I be attended by you during my birth, or whichever midwife is on call?
- ☐ How long after my due date can I continue to see you before my care is transferred and/or I must be induced?
- ☐ What are my options for pain management during labor?
- ☐ What happens if I decide that I want an epidural?
- ☐ What does the first hour after birth look like for your patients? Do you encourage skin-to-skin contact between baby and mama? Do you allow delayed cord clamping? Delayed bathing? Do you encourage mamas to breastfeed? Do you have lactation consultants on staff?
- ☐ What type of payment plan do you offer and what do your fees include?
- ☐ Why should I choose you to be my midwife?

The following additional questions are intended for midwives attending a home-birth:

- ☐ Do you recommend that I see a physician at some point during my pregnancy? Do you work with a consulting physician for this purpose?
- ☐ Do you support VBACs and breech births at home? When is a home birth not recommended?
- ☐ Do you carry malpractice insurance?
- ☐ What sort of equipment will you bring with you on the day of the birth? (Midwives attending home births should be equipped with gloves, gauze, drop cloths, oxygen, a fetoscope, items to suture a tear, emergency medications, instruments to start an IV, and infant resuscitation equipment, at minimum.)
- ☐ What kinds of supplies will I have to provide?
- ☐ What preparations, if any, will I have to make to my home?
- ☐ In what circumstances might you arrange an in-labor transfer?
- ☐ In the event of a non-emergency transfer, how will I get to the hospital? What if there's an emergency?

WHAT TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING A DOULA

Just like when interviewing prospective midwives, you'll want to find a doula with whom you have professional chemistry, too. Think about other times in your life when you were stressed, overwhelmed, or confused—what brought you back to yourself? A gentle hand, a sharp fist (figuratively speaking, of course), or somewhere in between? The following questions can help you zero in on someone with the right training and skills, but at the end of the day, many mamas chose their doulas based on gut

instinct.

- ☐ Are you certified? Where did you receive your certification?
- ☐ How many births have you attended? Do you have experience with birth complications?
- ☐ Have you attended a birth that ended in Cesarean?
- ☐ Have you attended a home birth?
- ☐ How would you describe your “style” or bedside manner?
- ☐ What kinds of pain relief/pain management techniques can you offer?
- ☐ What's your philosophy when it comes to working alongside a husband/partner?
- ☐ Describe how you work alongside a midwife/doctor. What happens if we have to deviate from my birth plan?
- ☐ Do you offer pre-birth visits? How many?
- ☐ May I call or email you with questions throughout my pregnancy?
- ☐ At what point during my labor should I call you? What if I go into labor in the middle of the night?
- ☐ Will you come to my home, or will you meet me at the hospital/birth center?
- ☐ Do you have a back up doula? When and how often is she used? Can I meet her?
- ☐ Do you have experience/training in lactation consulting?
- ☐ Do you offer postpartum/follow-up care? Is that included in your fee?
- ☐ What are your fees? Do you offer a payment plan?

WHAT TO ASK WHEN TOURING A BIRTH CENTER

Whether you're touring freestanding or hospital-affiliated birth centers, or both, you'll want to ask lots of questions about the care you can expect to receive. Demand direct answers—numbers, stats, percentages; if the person giving the tour doesn't know or can't tell you, consider that a sign to go elsewhere.

- Are you licensed by the state? (Licensure and regulation of birth center varies widely from state to state. In states that don't grant licenses, birth centers could theoretically be owned and operated by, well, just about anybody, with little to no oversight. Unlicensed facilities should be approached with caution—are they accredited? Are they insured? Are the midwives licensed? Now's not the time to be shy—ask!)
- Are you accredited by the Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers?
- Does the birth center have its own staff (meaning, will you be required to see one of the center's affiliated practitioners for your prenatal care)?
- Do you have physicians (ob-gyns, perinatologists) with whom you regularly consult?
- Do you have a transfer agreement in place with a local hospital? Which hospital? (Note how far away that hospital is from the center itself.)
- When and why might I be transferred to a hospital?
- How long can I be in labor before transfer to a hospital becomes necessary? (Some birth centers will not let women labor indefinitely, due to an increased risk of complications and infection, especially after your water breaks. Freestanding centers will typically let you go longer before mandatory drug intervention, such as Pitocin, becomes necessary.)
- Do the midwives have hospital privileges?
- When and how often does the birth center rely on hospital staff vs. midwifery care (if hospital-affiliated)?
- What is your transfer rate? (Hint: it shouldn't be higher than 10 to 15 percent. If it is, ask why.)
- What is your Cesarean rate? (Hint: it shouldn't be higher than 10 to 15 percent.)
- Can I bring a doula?
- Can I bring a videographer and/or does the birth center allow photography?
- Is there a limit on how many people, such as friends and extended family, can be in the delivery room? Is there an age-limit on who may visit (meaning, can children be present during the birth)? Can my visitors stay with me during recovery?
- Do I have to be hooked up to an electronic fetal monitor or an IV during labor?
- How long is the typical postpartum stay? (Being able to go home the day-of could be a plus. At the same time, you don't want to be shooed out the door if you'd prefer to rest for a night or two.)
- What kind of postpartum care do you provide? Do you offer home visits?
- Do you offer breastfeeding assistance, or have lactation consultants on staff?

WHAT TO ASK WHEN TOURING A HOSPITAL

Heads up, Mama: the following questions are geared specifically toward standard hospital (not birth center) deliveries.

- Is this hospital baby-friendly? (Use those *exact* words. “Baby-friendly” is a real designation awarded to hospitals and birth centers that prioritize mama/baby bonding and breastfeeding.)
- Can I be attended by a midwife?
- What is your Cesarean rate? (The ideal Cesarean rate, according to the World Health Organization, is between 10 and 15 percent of all births; 33 percent of American women, however, will wind up having a C-section. Anything above 30–35 percent should raise some serious red flags. The lower the C-section rate, the better.)
- What's your epidural rate? (Some hospitals have epidural rates as high as 90 percent—it may be harder for you to decline interventions in these settings.)
- Do you have an anesthesiologist on-call 24/7? If not, what happens if I want an epidural? (Some smaller hospitals only offer epidurals during “office hours.”)
- Do you have a NICU? (There are four distinct levels of neonatal care, ranging from a Level I unit, which is a basic nursery for healthy, full-term newborns, to a Level IV facility, which can treat the most serious, acute conditions, including complex congenital defects.)
- Can I eat and/or drink during labor?
- Can I walk around and/or move freely during labor?
- Is continuous electronic fetal monitoring part of hospital policy? What about IV fluids?
- Can I choose what position I'd like to give birth in?
- Is there a “time limit” to give birth? (Be advised that some hospitals will mandate the use of Pitocin or other labor-inducing drugs if your labor stalls or doesn't progress “quickly enough,” according to their standards.)
- Can I bring a doula? (Doulas can be amazing advocates in all cases, but they can be especially helpful at hospital births. See more about doulas in Week 16.)
- Do you have natural birthing equipment, like birthing balls or birthing stools?
- Are recording devices allowed? Can I bring a photographer and/or videographer?
- Do you offer LDRs and/or LDRPs? Can I stay in the same room the entire time?
- Can my baby “room in” with me (meaning, spend the night)?
- Can papa (or a friend or family member) stay overnight after the baby is born?
- What are the hospital's visiting hours?
- Are there restrictions on who is allowed in the labor and/or delivery room? Is there an age limit or restriction for younger kids?
- How long is the typical postpartum stay?
- Does the hospital support breastfeeding? Is there an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) on staff?