

1 "Badah Bing Badah Bang Sukkah"

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It all began on a Sunday morning. My husband, Michael and I had decided to build our first sukkah. Actually, it was more my decision. Myself being a Jew-by-choice and my husband having lived most of his Jewish life as a "cultural" Jew, made this both exciting and daunting. My husband had aspirations of being a carpenter a la many lazy weekends of watching "This Old House" and adamantly proclaiming "I could do that". He earnestly believed we did not need a "pre-fab" sukkah. What is the fun in that? Snap 1-2-3 and it's together, no way, not for us, the man who had something to prove to Bob Villa and the woman who had something to prove to herself as a Jew!

I of course awoke first, pulling out the hammer and nails and charging into the bedroom to wake up my "carpenter in crime". I knew we were off to a bad start when he asked if I wanted to go to the beach instead. After a bit of persuading, and french toast made from challah, he saw the error of his ways. Off to the top of our apartment we trekked with chuppah poles, sheets in hand, and stars of David in our eyes. We weren't quite sure where to begin so the United Nations negotiations began. I thought the sheets I got so cheap at Ross would be great for the walls. Just place the poles where we want, hammer in a cross beam to the top, and throw the sheets over and secure them at the bottom. Badah bing badah bang and we have a sukkah. Wrong! Our miscalculation you wonder? Wind! With one big gust our first sukkah was ready to go sailing off the top of the roof.

So now, on our second trip to the hardware store that day I decided to enlist the help of the nice gentleman who was cutting our wood slats for our newly revised sukkah plan. To Michael's chagrin I began explaining our plan to this stranger. It was now getting to be lunch and I knew his patience was as thin as those cheap sheets. Michael turned to me and said, "why did you have to tell him we were building a sukkah, isn't it enough were building it on top of our apartment for all of LA to see?" I had this Titanic flash with my husband standing on our roof shouting "I am the biggest Jew in the world!".

After a big lunch we climbed the stairs to the roof this time with beers in hand and a radio, I thought this would ease the tension. Wrong again! We began to lay the wood down to hammer it to the poles. Then the record scratched to a stop- we discovered the nails were too short! On the third trip to the hardware store Michael began to calculate the amount of money being spent on our endeavor. It wasn't pretty but I was smart, I didn't go with him. I thought it best after our last trip. While he was gone I took the opportunity to hack down the palm fronds from our building, they were a little overgrown anyway. I think I had redeemed myself in Michael's eyes, or simply scared him, given the dirt on my face, knife in hand and palms on the ground. He knew I was serious. There was no turning back. Failure was not an option. With the correct nails and a lot of patience we hammered, tied, fussed and decorated our very first sukkah!

It was fabulous! I had gathered all the faux fall fruits and veggies I could get my hands on from the craft store. As a Jew-by-choice the experience of creating this sacred joyous space can be compared to the feeling of decorating a Christmas tree. There is a

wonderful sense of comradery and festiveness in making something beautiful with someone you love. There were gords, cranberries, pumpkins and Rosh Hashannah cards hanging above our heads. Along with exhaustion we felt a great sense of pride. That first night we shook the etrog and lulav with all our might.

As Jews we are commanded to only experience joy during the eight days of Sukkot. Once again our resolve would be tested. The second night we trekked up the stairs, food in one hand and flash light in the other. When we turned the corner and flashed the light on our sukkah and we saw a pile of wood, sheets and palm frons. Our Sukkah had fallen like a house of cards! We looked at each other and laughed until we cried. We knew it was supposed to be flimsy but this is ridiculous. Then we quickly remembered we must only experience joy. So joy it was, joy in the fact that we built it together, joy in the fact that we spent one night in it, and joy in the realization that we must relish our moments together because who can say what the future holds. Next year snap 1-2-3 badah bing badah bang sukkah sounds good but I wouldn't have changed this years moment for anything.