

Got S'mores?

By Tara Spinelli for Jersey Moms Blog

Writing you (not-so-)fresh from the conclusion of my daughter's 12th birthday campout sleepover party. Not sure if it's the coffee and Synthroid or the campers' 2:22 a.m. bathroom-snack-gossip interlude (to name one of several middle-of-the-night happenings) that has me feeling exhausted yet jumpy.

Arguments over who sleeps in what tent aside, I think the girls—10 of them—plus a little brother and his 8-year-old wingman all had a good time. (I'm in touch with my operatives—mothers whose daughters tell them everything—to find out for sure. Like me, my own daughter tends to play it close to the vest, so the in-house post-mortem is a little light on content and color.)

Left to my own devices, I might've locked the girls out in the yard for the night with some Slim Jims and water from a questionable source (on the premise that figuring out how to desalinate could be a good life skill). Lucky for my daughter and her friends, however, there's Sergeant Fancy, my pal for more years than I'm permitted to say out loud, and especially not in writing (Fancy's orders).

Sergeant Fancy earned her officer-ship this party, although the official title is just a formality as her leadership skills have always been actively applied. The Fancy part is testament to her style in party-throwing, and is in sharp contrast to my own moniker Plain (as seen on would-be TV in our imaginary cooking show *Plain & Fancy* where our renditions of the same dish live up...or down...to the promise of our names).

Thanks to Sergeant Fancy, each girl was greeted at the door with a unique tie-dye t-shirt printed with "Got S'mores? Camp Miranda 2012." The evening kicked off with snacks, bug juice, and a no-sew pillow-making craft. The tents had been pitched, festooned with lanterns and streamers, and directional signs told campers where to find the mess hall, toilets, first aid, lake, and other camp hotspots. Pizza was served, followed by swimming and s'mores cupcakes. Campers then sidled up to the make-your-own trailmix bar, and took their places for an outdoor screening of *Furry Vengeance*. Ghost stories around the campfire were followed by s'mores and a game of Manhunt. The girls turned in for the night around 12 and "slept" (read: didn't sleep at all) until Sergeant Fancy played Reveille at 8 a.m. Breakfast buffet included fruit salad, bagels, and juice. Campers packed up and became their parents' problem again by 10 a.m.

As you might've gathered, this isn't Sergeant Fancy's first foray into event planning. In fact, my children have been the lucky beneficiaries of her skilled efforts their entire lives, starting with the castle cake that Fancy made for my daughter's first birthday (something Fancy & I both coveted when we were kids in our respective copies of *Betty Crocker's Boys and Girls Cookbook*).

From the beginning and every year since, we have enjoyed the creative and delicious fruits of Fancy's labor. Since part of Fancy's pleasure is the challenge of doing something that she has never done before, there are no repeats. Fancy's relentless creativity and commitment to her vision are gifts that keep on giving. Sure, Plain has to step in at times with a reality check from her experience in the parenting trenches ("no, we can't have a pie-eating contest between the s'mores cupcakes and the trailmix bar without risk of vomiting"), but any event under Fancy's direction is guaranteed to be fun and memorable.

With my son's birthday just 2 months away, I imagine Sergeant Fancy has started the visioning and strategy process, determining how to arrange the troops, conduct the campaign, and defeat the enemy of standard-issue parties.

We salute you, Sergeant Fancy. You've definitely got s'mores, and so much more.