

Suddenly Shabbat has become very trendy.

Or so it would seem from this week's latest edition of *Vogue* which featured an article entitled "How to Host a Shabbat Dinner and Why You should – Even if You Aren't Celebrating." I will admit that I approached this piece of journalism with more than a little bit of skepticism, wondering what of significance a women's fashion and lifestyle magazine could possibly have to say about the holiest day of the Jewish week. But instead of finding suggestions for chic table-settings or hipster Friday night apparel, I actually found some thoughtful insights reflecting substance rather than mere style. (The full text of the article can be found here [www.vogue.com/article/how-to-host-friday-shabbat-dinner](http://www.vogue.com/article/how-to-host-friday-shabbat-dinner) although you may need to cut and paste the address into your browser rather than click directly from this message.)

Ariel Feldman, the author of the *Vogue* article, describes herself as someone who is neither Orthodox nor extremely-observant, and many of the Shabbat rituals explored in her piece reflect an idiosyncratic fusion of ideas that in more traditional circles could be criticized for being inconsistent or "not entirely kosher" but to me feel both practical and authentic. One woman rides the subway to her parents' each Friday night but intentionally refrains from cell phone use in order to disconnect, unwind, and make quality time for friends and family. Ariel herself speaks of the centrality of savoring good food to creating an atmosphere of Shabbat and mentions roast chicken as the iconic Friday night dish, but she also indicates that Shabbat dinner can be falafel or tacos or even take-out, the community created by dining together far more important than the particulars of the meal itself. Her Shabbat table is routinely populated by Jews and non-Jews alike and includes sharing a moment of gratitude from the past week just ending.

*Halakha* [Jewish law] plays an important role in my own life and is a strong value of our community but too often I worry that the "strict" becomes the enemy of the good, that families feel that they can't do Shabbat because they're not sure of the blessings, or because Mom and Dad don't get home before sundown, or because they're ordering pizza, or because kids will be on their iPads later. And while I might encourage all of us to think about what we could do to bring even more of a traditional spirit of Shabbat into our homes, I very much believe that Judaism is not an all or nothing proposition. Given the realities of modern life, it is not always possible to act out our Judaism in the most complete way possible and, if we haven't been engaging in a particular practice previously, it can be quite daunting to begin. Feldman's advice is to start where you are and build from there! This, it seems to me, is real wisdom couched in the pages of a glossy magazine.

Shabbat, as Feldman mentions, touches upon grand themes and ideas that are now more relevant than ever in our modern day and age; in her words Shabbat is "an ancient antidote to our modern ailments." Shabbat speaks to notions of mindfulness, gratitude, and disconnecting from the unremitting demands of technology; to making quality time for loved ones and replenishing the mind, body, and spirit with food and rest; to taking a sacred pause, cultivating deep conversation, nourishing our souls, and luxuriating in the gift of time. To realize this opportunity, we need but start however small!

This week we Jews can perhaps congratulate ourselves for being very much on-trend. More importantly, we can feel proud of our tradition that has always understood the value of rest.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rabbi Annie Tucker