



Between the dog parties and e-mail propositions, it's been a fun two years

By Amanda Pazornik
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It's been two years, j. readers. That's right. Two years of spilling stories, pondering Torah portions and writing about the latest events, newest books and coolest people to hit the Bay Area Jewish community.

So it's only fitting that I mark my July milestone with a look back at some of the memorable moments I've captured in this space.

I'll start with my foray into three simple words: life, love and lox.

Not so long ago (in fact it was my most recent column), I wrote what I perceived to be a fun and fresh piece about "Life, Love, Lox," a book that celebrates the single gal in a sassy way.

Finally, I had a reason to weave the words "Beyoncé" and "Juicy sweatsuit" and the phrase "too cool for shul" into my writing.

Some took the column to mean I needed a date. A reader (who shall go unnamed) went so far as to ask me out, via e-mail. Then someone I was interviewing asked if I'd like to meet his son.

To be honest, I was flattered, and it hit me just how personal I've made these columns. The fun continues ...

In 2009, I resurrected from my closet a black tie–appropriate dress for the Tails of Love gala, a dog-friendly event at the Ritz Carlton held by the American Friends of Hebrew University.

Now, I've attended my share of parties, but this was unlike any of those soirées. Around me, four-legged guests in designer tutus, bow ties and collars munched on gourmet treats at the "Bark Bar." Their owners sipped cocktails and bid on silent auction items, such as a weekend of pampering — for their pets, that is.

Pet boutiques set up shop along the perimeter of the cocktail area (think Rodeo Drive for Fido and Fluffy), selling everything from organic dog snacks and pet caricatures on T-shirts to holiday portraits with your pooch.

Dog walkers ready to take the leash of an unruly hound wandered the space, as guests entered the festively decorated ballroom. “Marley & Me” author John Grogan delivered the keynote address, dinner was delicious, and I found myself wanting to share the evening — not with another person, but with my Bichon poodle mix, Maddie. As Grogan pointed out that evening, “Dogs make us better people. They bring to us an awareness of the beauty of the moment. That’s why we all love our animals.”

It may come as no surprise that a month later, I became a vegetarian and “flirted” with the idea of becoming a vegan. That’s the lingo actress-turned-activist Alicia Silverstone employs in her book, “The Kind Diet.”

Influenced by her love of animals, Silverstone (who is Jewish and grew up on the Peninsula) swapped childhood favorites like shepherd’s pie and pork chops for miso soup and soy cheese.

I’m happy to report that I have maintained my vegetarian diet since writing that column in December. But that doesn’t mean a girl can’t enjoy a little chocolate.

Earlier this year, I treated myself to a late birthday present by sampling high-end dark chocolate and sipping dessert wines in a culinary series event at Temple Israel in Alameda.

Those who know me can attest that it doesn’t take much to rouse me out of bed on a wintry Sunday morning in January if wine and chocolate are involved. Such was the case when I crossed the Bay Bridge to hear tales of truffles, chocolate-dipped strawberries and grapes — oh, the glorious grapes that create Merlot, Petite Syrah and Zinfandel.

Yes, I was slightly jealous of guest speaker Sabrina Aller, who stumbled upon a job at Godiva that required her to taste (sorry, “learn about”) truffles, nuts, caramels, and milk and dark chocolates so she could converse with customers.

I left the event with two bottles of Dashe Cellars’ late-harvest Zin and enough chocolate to satisfy my sweet tooth. You can’t have a dessert wine without dessert, after all.

Clearly, it’s been a great two years so far. But as I mentioned in my first column way back in July 2008, I’m always up for ideas. So let me hear ’em.