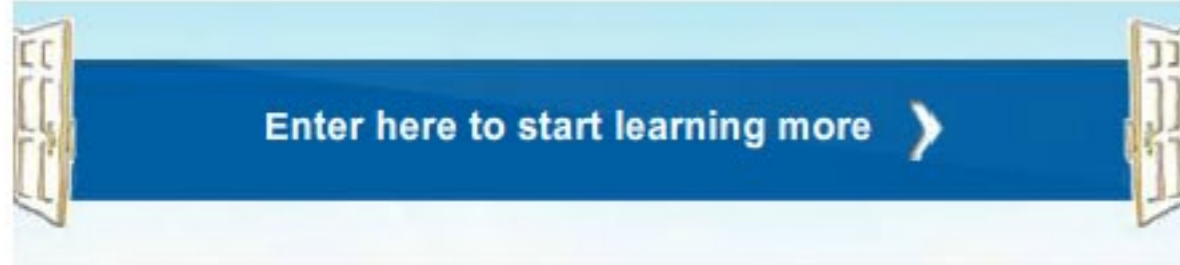


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## Call the doctor, I have 'Chanukah Fever'

by Meredith Jacobs  
Managing Editor

Even in a crowd of 5,500 at the URJ Biennial, Mama Doni stands out. When I saw the blond in the sparkly vest walk by, I couldn't help but yell, "Doni!" So we sat down over a quick lunch and talked working mommyhood, crazy latke recipes and of course, Chanukah Fever.

Doni Zasloff Thomas, best known as Mama Doni is, as she describes it, "All about making Jewish life and culture fun and hip for kids." One day, while driving in her car and listening to the "800th Christmas song," she thought, "I have to write a Chanukah CD." And she imagined that CD, the kind of CD that everyone, even non-Jews, would listen to (the same way everyone, even the non-Christians, listen to Christmas songs). Chanukah Fever was born.

As Mama Doni explains, "I wanted to include all the cool parts of Chanukah. And, Chanukah is eight days long. It's cool for kids to have an eight-day long party!"

From La Vida Dreidel to Latke Man to Funky Gold Menorah (and yes, you parents who are children of the 1980s, this is a reference to Tone Loc's Funky Cold Medina), Zasloff Thomas blends all the fun of Chanukah with a myriad of song flavors. A little Latin, a little disco, a little funk all adds up to a CD that's a whole lotta fun. And truly for the entire family.

What interested me most is that Mama Doni is also real-life mama to Millie, age 7, and Xander, age 6. So, what's a mama to do when work requires her to sing for other families on Chanukah? "It's about balance. I take it day to day," says the singer. "Who needs me today? Who do I need to love the most today? It's about choices." She jokingly referenced the story of the shoemaker's kids who have no shoes and said, "I turned away shows at the end of Chanukah so I could be with my family."

But don't worry about Millie and Xander. Their mama brings as much creativity to their home as she does to her music. To begin, let's talk about their crazy latkes. Zasloff Thomas uses a basic latke recipe but then adds broccoli (Broco-latkes), or carrots, or bananas, or even chocolate (choco-latkes). And then there's the ultimate chicken latke, that Zasloff Thomas calls baka-latkes (after the sound the chicken makes).

"Of course we exchange presents, you can't escape the presents," says this creative mama. "But we also do activities every night. We dress up like Latke Girl and Menorah Man and I ask the kids 'What would your Chanukah superhero look like?'"

"And it's also about miracles, so I ask them to tell me what miracles they are grateful for."

Zasloff Thomas, who has worked as a Hebrew school teacher, a b'nai mitzvah trope tutor, a camp drama counselor and a Jewish music teacher, makes a point of inviting friends over for a Chanukah party as a way of instilling pride. "I want my kids to be proud to host the holiday, to share our holiday with our friends."

And I bet I know what music will be playing in the background!

To order Chanukah Fever \$14.95, go to [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [Barotseland.com](http://Barotseland.com), and [mandarin.com](http://mandarin.com).



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