T here are few times as celebratory as the birth of a baby. It is the beginning of a new life and a new family configuration. Indeed, overnight, everything is about to happen after the birth. Another friend who had lived in the Middle East for many years chose to have a belly dancer at her baby shower. The women in attendance practiced their ‘birthring’ moves and then soaked the expectant mother’s feet and massaged her hands. In some Afghan families and in some Jewish households, the celebrations of birth happen after the baby is born and it usually involves bringing food for the entire family. The gifting of food is common among many traditions and today many women continue this by asking guests to bring a frozen meal to their baby shower in preparation for the exhausting weeks to come.

A number of today’s expectant moms are turning to something called a Blessing Way, which is supposedly derived from a Navajo tradition, and focuses on nurturing the woman in preparation for the birth, providing support from her community, and using small “blessing” rituals. For instance, the women attending might share a few words of strength and encouragement for the mom-to-be and then tie their wreaths together with a beautiful “cord.” Each woman will wear a bit of the cord as a bracelet and when they are told that the expectant mother is in labour, they each think of their labouring friend and cut their bracelet. The mom can wear the bracelet as a reminder of all those women cheering her on during this time. Or, something similar can be done with beeswax candles that a woman burns during her labour and her girl friends and family burn in her honour as a way to share connection. Some women today use their Blessing Way to make a plaster cast of their pregnant belly, which can make for a fun runkeeke. Others simply ask their friends to bring a particularly meaningful note, prayer, or poem to share. These can be compiled into a beautiful book and saved.

B aby showers are, no surprise, a relatively new tradition brought to us via post World War II America. The culture of ‘stuff’, especially of stuff for children, was born at that time and it wasn’t born into a vacuum. Throughout time and across cultures birth has always been celebrated. What most of these traditions have in common – that often gets lost in today’s baby shower – is the aspect of ‘mothering the mother’. Nurtured mamas nurture healthy babies. This nurturing (both physical and psychological) is crucial in a mother’s breastfeeding success, in helping prevent postpartum depression, and in how often gets lost in today’s baby shower – is the aspect of “mothering the mother”. For this postpartum period. It is the beginning of a new life and a new family.

Creating a baby shower that reflects your new family’s configuration. Indeed, overnight, everything is about to happen after the birth. Another friend who had lived in the Middle East for many years chose to have a belly dancer at her baby shower. The women in attendance practiced their ‘birthring’ moves and then soaked the expectant mother’s feet and massaged her hands. In some Afghan families and in some Jewish households, the celebrations of birth happen after the baby is born and it usually involves bringing food for the entire family. The gifting of food is common among many traditions and today many women continue this by asking guests to bring a frozen meal to their baby shower in preparation for the exhausting weeks to come.

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Don’t register at places like Babies ‘R Us unless you are prepared to get all the other stuff Great Aunt Matilda is going for to help little Johnny when she goes there to get the one organic toy you wanted. Instead, register at your cool, local, green baby store. This way you can go there and see for yourself what you love, take a cloth diapering class, and then register for what you want online. Then, local friends can go to the store and out-of-town friends can just as easily shop online. Also, if something goes wrong and you want to return something, you already know you like lots of what is in the store. If you want to compile a registry of a variety of specific, green things, including a cloth diaper service, an organic mattress, and maybe even a home-made baby bed from Etsy, you can do this at BabyIt. My favourite registry is www.babysnapsregistry.com and is run by the charitable organization Center for a New American Dream. This amazing registry allows you to register for a donation (say to cause like supporting midwives in remote locations), for that organic mattress you’ve been wanting (but want a number of people to pitch in to help buy), and register for time: getbacks. For example, you take Tuesday to do laundry, Wednesday to make dinner, and Thursday to hold the baby so you can bathe.

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