



IN THE FAMILY WAY RECIPE FOR BABY

Congratulations! Whether solo or with your partner, you've decided that you want to conceive, carry, birth, and parent a child. While some choose to outsource the conceive-carry steps, you want to experience the entire process within your own body. Perhaps you feel the need to share your biology, or perhaps you just really want to experience pregnancy and birth and don't care about passing along your genetic heritage. Regardless of what led you to this moment, you feel committed and are ready for the next step.

What that next step is depends on which recipe you plan on following to craft your conception. Are you using your own eggs, your partner's eggs, or the eggs of a younger and healthier stranger? Whichever source you choose, you will need to have a visit with at minimum a gynecologist and at most a reproductive endocrinologist to determine that the eggs selected are suitable and that your body is in a place for pregnancy. Depending on your age and health history, you may pass this step with a simple exam or require lengthier tests to ensure that your hormones are at the levels needed to conceive and that your pelvic organs are functioning properly.

Depending on the results of the testing done, you may need to spend a few months taking supplements or medications to balance your hormones, even out the length of your cycle, and generally prepare your body for conception. This is also the time to make dietary and lifestyle changes that impact conception – quit your latte-a-day habit, cut out alcohol and any other substances you currently enjoy, eat a balanced diet, exercise regularly, get good sleep, and decrease your stress.

As you continue to prepare your body for conception, it's time to gather the other half of the baby-making recipe – sperm. Sources for this are as varied as the sources for eggs. You could choose to use a friend, a relative of your partner, or a paid stranger – arranged through a posted ad or a sperm bank.

If choosing a friend or your partner's relative, you need to decide if that person is going to be a co-parent, anonymous, or a special "uncle". You will want to write up whatever you agree on and have a lawyer look over the agreement. You will also need this friend to visit his doctor so he can get tested for STD's and verify that his sperm have a high count and good mobility.

If choosing a paid stranger, you will choose Mr. Right via his online profile. Depending on the bank you choose and how much you are able and willing to pay, you may get as much as an audio recording of his voice and a baby picture or as little as a brief explanation of his basic physical characteristics.

Whatever information you are given, you will need to decide what your search criteria are. Do you want him to look like you or your partner? Do you want him to be a certain race or ethnicity? Does height matter? What about level of education? Do you care if he spends his weekends playing laser tag or writing sonnets? How important is it that his immediate relatives are reported as alive and healthy? Do you want him to have proven pregnancies or does the idea of half-siblings out in the world bother you? Is it important that your child can try to track him down when they are 18-years old or would you rather he remain forever anonymous?

Some of you will choose to order full profiles on many donors and pour over each, trying to find the perfect match. Others will quickly decide that it feels creepy to build the perfect donor, choose to select your few non-negotiable characteristics, and leave the rest to chance.

The recipes for crafting a conception are varied and you will find the one that is right for you. It is no easy or light work to decide to attempt pregnancy. Consider the work and discernment you put into these early decisions as a testament to your dedication to being a parent and the first of many hard decisions you will make in the best interest of your child.

In The Family Way is written by Cathy Busha and Anna Deligio. By the time you read this Cathy and Anna will likely be the new parents to their newborn. Reach them at JustOut.com