

## Skinny Bitch and Skinny Bitch in the Kitch - "Overhyped, Underperformed"

The books: Skinny Bitch and Skinny Bitch in the Kitch  
Review by Roxanna Bennett

Preamble/Overall feeling: Reading New York Times best-sellers Skinny Bitch and Skinny Bitch in the Kitch by Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin made me feel like I was getting beat up in my high school bathroom by a couple of popular cheerleaders. While the aim of the books is to convert as many people as possible to a vegan lifestyle (and the fact that a celebrity like Victoria Beckham has been seen in public with a copy of Skinny Bitch no doubt adds to the hype around both books), the overall tone is completely abusive and deliberately provocative. I ordered the books from the internet during a bout of low self-esteem, thinking it might help me shed some weight, and promptly forgot I'd placed the order. When they arrived in my mailbox, I was surprised and ashamed that I'd even considered reading something with such an abrasive title. The shame was underscored by the very first page of Skinny Bitch wherein I was informed that healthy = skinny and unhealthy = fat. (Tell that to the millions of people trying to overcome anorexia, or suffering from malnutrition and starvation.) The notion that fat is unhealthy is so grossly simplistic as to be totally insulting.

Best bits: Although Freedman, a former agent for Ford Models, and Barnouin, a former model, gleefully denigrate the reader with insults and cheap blows, they don't pull any punches when they describe the meat processing industry and agribusiness in general. With reference to a great many well-researched books that detail the American government's coziness with the meat industry, the Skinny Bitch authors paint a convincing argument for opting to put your ethics where your mouth is by mistrusting media and ending a diet of crap. Skinny Bitch in the Kitch is full of faux meat recipes intended to ease the reader into a vegan diet like the recipes for a "Tuna" Salad Sandwich and Onion Rings. It is also stuffed with veganized familiar comfort food recipes like Macaroni and Four Cheeses, Shepard's Pie and Potatoes Au Gratin. A glossary at the end of the book is helpful for new converts.

Less-wonderful bits: Throughout the first chapter alone of Skinny Bitch, the reader is referred to variously as a "fat pig", a "pussy", a "drama queen" and a "lazy shit" - just what I needed to bolster the flagging self-confidence that led me to purchase the books in the first place. The no holds-barred language of the books seems to be part the appeal. The shock of being called out for being fat and lazy must be a selling point for the majority of readers. It seems to be a tough love tactic that people think will help them in their quest to lose weight, however the authors themselves have added a P.S. at the end of the book to let the reader know that their first intention is not that the reader becomes skinny, but that the reader adopts a healthier lifestyle. This last page from the authors feels like a total cop-out, or something their publishers made them add in, as it is hidden at the back of the book behind the footnotes.

Skinny Bitch in the Kitch feels like a tacked-on afterthought, a way to ride the coattails of Skinny Bitch's popularity. The recipes seem slap dash and not very well thought out. From their write-ups, recipes like Greek Salad or Sloppy Joes sound less than inspired. Most of the recipes call for processed foods like fake meat and dairy replacements. The lack of photos reinforces the haphazard nature of the book. The emphasis is definitely not on fresh or organic produce and I would be surprised if anyone switching to the diet proposed in the cookbook would lose weight as promised.

Whole foods focus?: No way.  
Vegan-friendly?: Yes.  
Eco-conscious?: Not so much.  
Web presence?: Yes.