

The Dairy-Free Library: The Balanced Plate

Every Tuesday we will feature a review from our Dairy-Free Library. This week's selection is *The Balanced Plate: The Essential Elements of Whole Foods and Good Health* by Renée Loux (reviewed by jae steele, author of *Get It Ripe*) - I first sought out Renée after watching the doc *Go Further*, where she joins Woody Harrelson and some friends for a bike tour down the west coast of the US. In the film she enthusiastically explains the composition of her decadent raw Chocolate Avocado Pie. From that quick clip you can tell Renée's energy is contagious. Renée is a celebrity chef, perhaps most known for her interest in living/raw foods. For many, her second book may seem more approachable than her first. Not because this one's better (they're both great), but because it offers an assortment of both raw and cooked recipes - proving that the best approach is a balanced one.

Best bits: An impressive resource for information on whole foods ingredients, organic and local produce choices, water filtration and other home projects, not to mention nutrition from a number of different angles, including Ayurveda and Macrobiotics. There are easy-to-follow charts on things like seasonal produce and roasting veggies, and symbols to indicate if a recipe is macrobiotic, raw-friendly, gluten-free, rates low on the glycemic scale, and what Ayurvedic type it helps balance. I trust Renée's recipes because they're clearly written, and she introduces them with an enthusiasm that makes my mouth water every time.

Some of the ones that make the top of my "To Try" list: Endive Cups with Pine Nut Creme Fraiche, Fresh Figs, and Olives; Roasted Corn and Tomato Soup; Raspberry Lavender Lemonade; Roasted Beet Carpaccio; Pear and Pecan Torte with Lemon Ginger Cream.

Less-wonderful bits: There are a number of recipes that the average cook won't be able to whip up from the ingredients that we generally have in our pantries. It's time to get to know umeboshi plums and lotus root. Save recipes like Andalusian Gazpacho with Avocado Sorbet for some time other than a lazy weeknight.

Whole foods focus?: indeed!

Vegan-friendly?: as long as you mentally switch any mention of "raw honey" to "agave nectar";

Eco-conscious?: yes!

Web presence?: yup.

To Purchase: *The Balanced Plate* is available on Amazon. This is a third party review by jae steele, author of the award-winning cookbook and health resource, *Get It Ripe: a fresh take on vegan cooking and living*. She is also a registered holistic nutritionist who practices in Toronto, Canada. A lover of cookbooks for many years, her collection to date boasts over 120 volumes, and is slowly taking over her kitchen. You can keep up with her food blog at *Domestic Affair*, and take a peek at her cooking videos.