

## The Dairy-Free Library: ExtraVeganZa

Every Tuesday we will feature a review from our Dairy-Free Library. This week's selection is ExtraVeganZa: Original Recipes from Phoenix Organic Farm by Laura Matthias (reviewed by jae steele, author of Get It Ripe) - I heard of this book through a vegan internet forum, and when I finally got a hold of it was surprised, given how close the food ethic in this book lines up with mine, that I'd not come across it before. Laura runs an organic farm in BC where she hosts WWOOFers and enjoys cooking vegan food. I have lived on a few organic farms in BC where I was a WWOOFer and enjoyed cooking vegan food! Laura clearly uses her garden as her inspiration, which as a girl in a Toronto apartment with no outdoor space to call her own I gotta say I envy!

Best bits: The cover of ExtraVeganZa is warm and inviting. Laura's book is filled with delicious-sounding recipes - I almost went through a whole pad of mini Post-Its marking the ones I want to try. The Mint Pea Lime Soup was thoroughly enjoyed in my house. My boyfriend made the Artichoke Dip, and while I don't believe all that olive oil was needed (and should have been heated for a whole hour, as it stopped having a clean olive oil taste), it was pretty tasty (and goodness, I was hoping it would be with \$8 worth of organic artichoke hearts in it!).

Other recipes on my to-try list include: Strawberry Jalapeno Dressing, Pumpkin Seed Yam Pate, Nutty Crackers, Almond Stuffed Mushroom Caps, Spicy Peanut Lime Cilantro Soup, Ginger Oyster Mushroom Soup, Ginger Anise Peach Muffins, Spelt Cinnamon Buns, Coffee Cheesecake, Leah's Blueberry Lavender Tarts, any of the pie crusts, Almond Apricot Rice Flour Cookies, Cardamom Mochi Fruit Crumble.

Less-wonderful bits: I was especially surprised, given Laura's science background (my thinking being that scientist have to be very specific), at the vagueness in some of her recipes. In Almond Rice Balls, for example, the first ingredient called for is "4 cups brown rice, cooked" which means that one would take 4 cups of dry rice, and cook it. That would give you about 10 cups of cooked rice, but the ingredients that follow are in quantities small enough that I wondered if she actually meant "4 cups cooked rice". In the Artichoke Heart Dip, "1 garlic bulb, peeled" was needed, but Ryan was unsure when preparing it just what size of bulb/how many cloves were needed and if they should be chopped before being put in the saucepan with the other ingredients. The method for the soup I made simply directed me to "sauté the onion and garlic in the oil on medium heat. Stir in the peas, spinach and salt, and continue stirring for another minute." Based on my years of soup-making experience I decided to allow the onions and garlic to cook for 7 minutes or so before tossing in the other ingredients, though the recipe made it sound like one should immediately follow the other.

It could be that Laura meant exactly what she said in all these cases, and I certainly don't want to put you off the book by pointing this out, I was just hoping, as a literal recipe reader, for more clarity to be sure.

Whole foods focus?: Yes!  
Vegan-friendly?: 100 percent!  
Eco-conscious?: Sure!  
Web presence?: Yup.

To Purchase: ExtraVeganZa is available on AmazonThis 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.