

The Dairy-Free Library: You Won't Believe It's Vegan!

Every Tuesday we will feature a review from our Dairy-Free Library. This week's selection is *You Won't Believe It's Vegan!: 200 Recipes for Simple and Delicious Animal-Free Cuisine* by Lacey Sher and Gail Doherty (reviewed by jae steele, author of *Get It Ripe*) - Last summer there was a syndicated review circulating the Associated Press of my book and two others, one of which was this one. The reviewer said: "Well, with recipes such as raw cashew aioli and tofu hot wings, you probably will believe it. But that doesn't mean you won't like it. Sher and Doherty offer some inventive and appealing takes on vegan cooking." The quote really cracks me up, because I know how conventional eaters are about "alternative" diets, and I know what the authors meant, which is what many of us are trying to prove: that vegan eating can be delicious and nutritious. (With coverage like this, is it really still an issue? Sigh....)

Best bits: You can tell that the authors are professionally trained chefs (training I envy quite frankly - they attended the Natural Gourmet School in NYC) by the amount of creativity in the recipes and the culinary techniques they use (I can think of a few people in my life who'd get nervous if you asked them to dredge something - only because they wouldn't be sure what it meant). And to that end, I have great confidence that any recipe I made from the book would turn out as promised. There's a well-rounded selection of everyday recipes (tofu scramble, veg stock, black bean soup, peanut sauce, mushroom gravy, "eggless salad", Earth Burger, tofu cheesecake, chocolate and vanilla cakes) and those that are more culinarily adventurous (like Coconut Seitan, Samosas, White Bean Crepes with Balsamic Grilled Tempeh and Basil "Butter", homemade Rosemary Spelt Gnocchi!).

I love that they have a whole 20 pages of Live Foods complete with raw cheeses, pizza, nachos, maki rolls, raw granola, and raw lemon pie. They also have a little section for feeding kids at the back, which is great, and I hope vegan parents who have the book use it as their suggestions are all nutritionally sound (though I would go for other nut butters over peanut butter).

Less-wonderful bits: The personality of the authors doesn't really shine through for me, but I don't think it's a big deal as many of us don't need to feel the urge to become BFFs with the authors of their culinary go-to books. I'm assuming neither of them are big bakers, as I don't think I've ever seen a vegan cookbook with just one muffin recipe (no matter really, there are lots of other vegan cookbooks to fill in the blanks). There are some recipes that call for "Florida Crystals" - and it took a bit of searching to discover it's just a brand name for evaporated cane juice (so, I wonder, why not just say "evaporated cane juice"?). If I were to get really picky I'd comment on the samey-ness of the food photography (two pics on one page, both with red cabbage garnish; same white square plate used in 5 of the 9 recipes), but really, don't get me wrong, they're still nice photos.

Whole foods focus?: Sure.

Vegan-friendly?: 100 percent!

Eco-conscious?: Only in that it's vegan.

Web presence?: I couldn't find one.

To Purchase: *You Won't Believe It's Vegan!* 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.