

Sublime Pizza and Appetizers from a New Vegan Restaurant Cookbook

The sleek, clean look of The Sublime Restaurant Cookbook immediately caught my eye. It isn't filled with glossy pictures, yet it is aesthetically pleasing, very simple to follow, and offers dozens and dozens of restaurant-quality vegan recipes that are surprisingly un-intimidating. I haven't been to the Sublime Natural & Organic Restaurant and Bar (located in Ft Lauderdale, Florida), but I am impressed with their mission - they donate 100% of their profits to organizations that promote animal welfare and a vegan lifestyle. Of course, if their charitable ways don't win you over, then the recipes in this cookbook just might. I was enticed by the sushi recipes, but my dairy-free colleague Sarena the Non-Dairy Queen was the first to actually trial the recipes, and she decided to start with the pizza and move onto an appetizer ...

"I don't know why, but making pizza is so therapeutic for me! I know when I make it at home, it will take a little time (mostly for the preparation), but the end result is so worth it! On the positive side, homemade pizza really does not take that much time at all. I know there are places out there that make pizzas with soy cheese or without cheese, but I am never as satisfied with the pizza experience or confident that the people behind the counter understand contamination issues.

So, I pulled out The Sublime Restaurant Cookbook by Nanci Alexander to try out their pizza dough recipe. This book is full of different types of recipes from appetizers to desserts, ranging in cuisine from Asian to Southern to Italian. It is very easy to understand and the recipes are written well. In the entree section, the book even recommends other recipes in the book that will go well with that particular recipe.

I went with what I had on hand for the pizzas; I made one "cheese" and one with grilled zucchini, sauteed peppers and baby basil leaves.

The funny part about this meal is that it was thrown together with three pieces of "cheese" (dairy free for those of us who can't have the dairy - or none because you just don't need it), tomato paste, 1 fresh tomato, 2 cloves of garlic, a zucchini, a handful of frozen peppers (all that was left) and a few baby basil leaves. We really needed to go to the grocery store, but we were seeing how far we could get with the odds and ends in the kitchen. The crust from The Sublime Restaurant Cookbook was really simple and it came together in 30 minutes total! It bakes up so fast...you can have restaurant quality pizza at home in less time than it takes to order delivery! I was very impressed with the pizza dough recipe and couldn't wait to try more. I really want to try out the Seven Layer Pizza soon, but next on the list was the Baba Ganoush ...

Well, I loved it, but the garlic is killing everyone else! I don't know if the head of garlic I had was just super strong, but WOW! I have an extreme fondness of garlic, so the flavor was calling me from the fridge, but my husband was begging me to stay away! Along with it, I made some mini flatbreads out of the pizza dough recipe from the book.

With the remainder of the baba ganoush, I made mini chickpea baba ganoush burgers.

Since I don't eat meat, I live on any kind of bean burger. We are constantly making bean sprouts too, so I threw in some of those. The garlic was definitely not overpowering when I used the baba ganoush in the burgers - it was delicious!"

The Sublime Restaurant Cookbook uses ingredients which are fairly easy to find, and they do an excellent job of keeping the ingredient lists uncomplicated. They do use vegan substitutes in some recipes (dairy alternatives such as vegan "cheese" and meat alternatives), some of which are store bought, some which they provide from-scratch recipes for. Overall it is a natural food cookbook using rich and flavorful whole foods, but since they are replicating restaurant dishes, oil, refined flour, and sweeteners are used for optimum taste. Something to keep in mind if you prefer your vegan cookbooks on the "crunchy" side.

The Sublime Restaurant Cookbook is available on Amazon