

GET IT RIPE

A Fresh Take on Vegan Cooking & Living

jae steele



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 *To all the fine folks in whose kitchens I have cooked.* 

PREFACE

The book you hold here in your hot li'l hands is the product of almost a decade of self-education, formal education, work-exchanges on organic farms, family dinners with meat-eaters and wheat-eaters, and a whole lot of time in the kitchen – my kitchen, my parents' kitchen, kitchens I shared in co-op houses, my friends' kitchens, my friends' parents' kitchens, a vegan restaurant kitchen, and a vegan bakery.

In high school I quit eating meat, but I admired the commitment of my peers who were full-on vegans, bestowing them with a kind of rock-star status. It got personal a couple of years later, though, when I fell in love with someone who was vegan. He was charming, and passionate about wanting nothing to do with the consumption of animals – in the food he was eating or the belt that held up his pants. I wish I could boast that my conversion to more ethical eating habits had been based on political action, but in truth, that came later. The boy soon left to work for an animal rescue organization in California, but the veganism stuck, and it changed my life. Truth be told, when I started writing and collecting the information that came to be this book, I was writing it for me. After a twenty-year romance with dairy, I was doing my darndest to learn how to be vegan, and do it well.

The more I got into food – whether it was

devouring cookbooks like trashy romance novels or studying holistic nutrition – the more I wanted to share what I was learning with others. I had been making zines – cut 'n' paste-style magazines – since high school and at first this seemed to be the perfect way to share what I was learning. It all started with a cookzine I called *Vegan Freegan*, then I published four issues of *Ripe*, then *Root* came along, and one simply titled *Cookie Zine*. I've made it my mission to make food that is satisfying for everyone, steering clear of bland, overcooked dishes or those with unappetizing flavor combinations that vegan cuisine can be in its least-inspired state. My most enthusiastic project has been to create vegan baked goods that don't taste stereotypically vegan. You know what I'm talking about – muffins that look like hockey pucks, or cake that isn't decadent enough for you to crave a second slice. And I want to make this kind of information available to the folks who wholeheartedly embrace all things DIY (do it yourself) – as in cooking with fresh whole food, from scratch, in your own kitchen – in a personal context that is more accessible than what is found in glossy food magazines.

Writing cookzines led to creating a food-based blog called *Domestic Affair* (domesticaffair.ca). Online, my recipes are immediately

available for scores of people to see. I swoon when I think of the thousands of cookzines and blog print-offs in kitchens around the world, pages spattered with squash soup or globs of peanut sauce. And it never ceases to thrill me that something I tried out in my kitchen one afternoon has been recreated by someone I don't even know for a road trip picnic or a kid's birthday party, all by way of a zine or blog. For me, this excitement is rooted in a sense of connectedness. Community action and grassroots efforts are important to me. I worry that we shell out tons of cash to faceless big businesses that churn out additive-packed meals, and then raise our eyebrows at organic broccoli selling for three dollars a pound at our local food co-op. By creating my cookzines, I hoped to encourage a food-positive movement that supports DIY cooking with whole foods instead of insta-meals from a box: food that really nourishes us, that we can build community around.

Now, with a couple hundred recipes in print, my handmade cookzines have become the building blocks for a full-fledged cookbook. I've taken the recipes that I've developed over the years, picked my favorites, seasoned them with more nutritional information, and now offer them to you in a palatable, perfect-bound cookbook.

As a holistic nutritionist, I of course believe that how we eat has a strong impact on how we feel and how our bodies function. Working with clients, I have found that when people need more calcium in their diets, a suggestion like "Eat quinoa" is not helpful enough. We need to know why eating whole foods is better than taking a supplement. We need

to know how to pronounce it (keen-wah) so we can ask for it in our local grocery or health food stores. And then we need to know what to do with it so that it doesn't just sit there in the pantry gathering dust or is prepared in a less than delicious way that leaves us uninspired to try it again. If we don't consider the nutritional factors of foods, we're not allowing foods to nourish us the way they were meant to, and we're certainly not getting the full spectrum of nutrients we need. If we want to "get it ripe," we need all the information to help us make the best choices for our body, mind, and spirit.

You can spark up a conversation about food with almost anyone. (My knowledge and opinions have served me well in many social situations, helping to avoid awkward silences.) Food – what with all the media buzz around considerations like organics, local foods, antioxidants, and omega-3s – is a hot topic these days, but it's also very personal for people. Dishes reminiscent of our childhoods are comforting for us. We celebrate with food all the time. We go out to eat, be it at a fancy restaurant or an inexpensive hole-in-the-wall, to experience exciting tastes, textures, and colors that differ from the day-to-day fare we have at home. But in this age of information and choice, we also have to consider where we should get our food (the farmers' market or the big box grocery chains?), and who we're supporting (local farmers or profit-driven agribusinesses?).

"Oh, I don't like vegan food," my yoga teacher said to me one summer evening as we were leaving class.

"No?" I teased. "Sweet potato soup with

coconut milk, or chai cake with cardamom frosting doesn't appeal to you?"

Anyone can, and should love food that just happens to be vegan, as long as it's prepared right. Vegan or not, we could all use the nutritional benefits of eating more vegetables, and have fun doing it. This book, full of food and health information and plant-based, whole-foods recipes, is not just for animal rights activist types or those who are allergic to dairy or intolerant to wheat, this book also is here to help uncover both the delectable goodness and health benefits of choosing foods that the earth naturally provides us. This vegan cookbook is for everyone.

GF, SF, NF & R

What the Symbols Mean

I have included the following symbols with my recipes for you to be able to easily spot which recipes can be complementary to any of your dietary requirements. Note that the symbols may not apply to any suggested substitutions, side dishes, or accompaniments.

GLUTEN-FREE (GF)

Indicates recipes that are safe for those with Celiac's Disease or others avoiding gluten. You must, however, check that the brand of non-dairy milk, tamari soy sauce, pasta, and/or vegetable stock called for in the recipe is gluten-free. I have not marked recipes containing oats as "gluten-free" because oats come from "contaminated sources" more often than not. For more detailed information, please refer to the Canadian Celiac Association: celiac.ca.

SOY-FREE (SF)

When this symbol is noted, you must, however, check that the brand of food, non-dairy milk, or margarine called for in the recipe is soy-free.

NIGHTSHADE-FREE (NF)

This means that recipes are free of tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, and peppers (both bell and hot). For info on nightshades, check out The World's Healthiest Foods website (whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=george&dbid=62#answer).

RAW/LIVING (R)

Recipes denoted as raw/living food recipes may not be completely 100% living ingredients; it's up to you to ensure all your ingredients are, in fact, raw. For example, you have to make sure any non-dairy milk, nut butter, soy sauce, miso, sweetener, cocoa, or carob powder called for would be raw.