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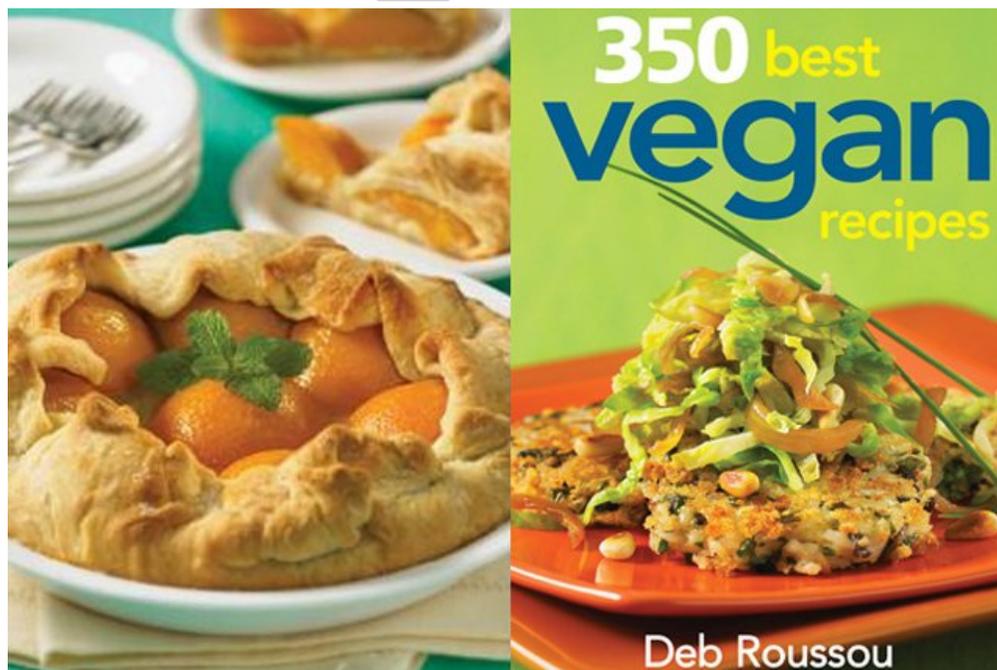


Photo: Colin Erricson

Saturday, June 9, 2012 - Culinary Quest by Linda Mensinga

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Linda Mensinga



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CYPRESS, Calif. June, 2012—As a semi-vegetarian, I've made dozens of plant based dishes but am delighted to discover new ones in Dev Roussou,s new cookbook, *350 Best Vegan Recipes*. Her chapters include everything from starters to desserts plus drinks, from scratch and spice blends. Seasoning is key to the bright flavors in her food.

Her approach makes substitutions easy for purists and the less committed alike. She devised a vegetable bouillon, done largely in the food processor for ease in preparation. The vegetable bouillon recipe, is in the section called Vegan From Scratch. It is for dedicated vegans who may not have access to vegan versions of ingredients such as mayonnaise,

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sweetened condensed milk, sour cream and seitan.

For those in a hurry her salads are fast, easy and fresh. The sweet mini peppers and broccoli slaw is dressed with mayo, lemon, agave, dry mustard and salt. Raisins or grapes are suggested add-ins. I threw one together quickly and was pleased with a much revitalized slaw.

Chesapeake bay cakes, a kind of vegan crab cake don't taste especially crab-like but are a veggie burger revelation. Hers are so much better than any commercial ones available, you'll eat them as snacks.

The other recipe I tried was the one for Choccolte espresso cookies. Amazing yumminess without butter or eggs. Ground flax seeds, espresso powder and cinnamon make the difference. Throughout the book substitutions are given making life easier. Her replacement for espresso powder in the cookies for example is to pulverize ground coffee into a fine powder. Useful since espresso powder never appears on the shelves of supermarkets in my area.

Other recipes to try include a spinach pumpkin curry soup, a Swiss chard ravioli, mushroom topped polenta tart with mushroom sauce, Mandarin rice and walnut stuffed acorn squash.

Ms. Roussou took the time to answer some questions.

What was the inspiration behind book?

Due to the lack of an active labor board in our town I was raised in my family's restaurant with a very strong work ethic. When I was asked by Robert Rose Publishing to write a "Best" book with 350 recipes my work ethic compelled me to write a book that really did have 350 great recipes with no fillers.

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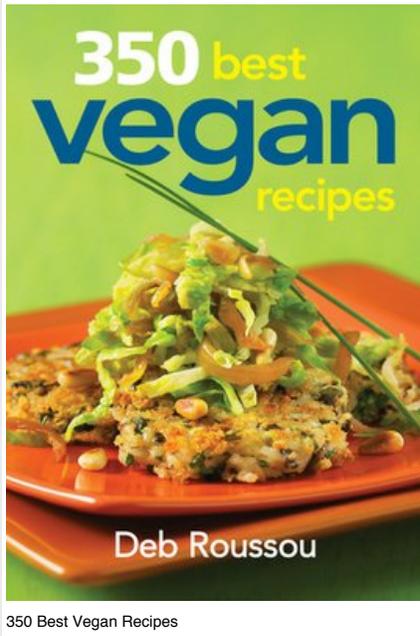
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I think inspiration builds upon itself. As I got into writing the book I found it sometimes difficult and expensive to source vegan recipe ingredients and that lead me to develop the Vegan From Scratch chapter. I was determined to create a vegan Irish cream recipe and had a hard time finding vegan heavy cream, vegan dark chocolate sauce and vegan sweetened condensed milk so I decided to make my own.

My kitchen became my science lab and after much experimenting I ended up with recipes for kitchen staples sans fillers and preservatives. I loved the results so much—the chocolate sauce is to die for and the heavy cream gets thicker and thicker as it refrigerates—that I was inspired to create a whole chapter of Vegan From Scratch.



350 Best Vegan Recipes

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2) Why vegan?

My lovely grandmother, Sunny, believed you are what you eat and at a young age I was introduced to the teachings of early health gurus like [Jethro Kloss](#) and [Dr. Bernard Jensen](#). I grew-up with a heightened awareness of healthy eating, living and environmental issues. In the early 70s this meant hiding wheat germ and spirulina in my children's smoothies.

The world has changed and it is essential that we each seek out information and take responsibility for what we put into our bodies. I do see an expanding awareness. I live in a small northern California town and even here doctors are recommending a vegan diet to their patients.

In my cooking classes I see more aging baby boomers looking to change their diets as a way to control or reverse diseases. I have just started teaching a vegan cooking class series, which would have been hard to fill a year ago.

3) How do friends that aren't vegetarians respond to the dishes?

I feel that good food is good food no matter what the label. Because flavor is so important to me I did not try to get cute and re-create dishes that would not benefit from the omission of a very small range of foods. Rather, I developed tons of dishes using a huge range of foods that can be enjoyed by everyone and the result is a cookbook filled with great recipes!

My friends know they can count on me to serve really tasty dishes so most were more than willing to be testers. Some crowd favorites are the Maple Bourbon Tempehacon, Almond Bear Claw Muffins, Greek Herbed Soy Feta in Olive Oil, Korean BBQ, Stuffed Sopapillas, Shallot Saffron Soup and of course the cocktails. The Mexican Velvet Elvis is delish!

I included Suggested Menus to help plan any occasion for all in attendance, even your non-vegan or vegetarian friends. Like I said in the introduction, 'From artisan breads to fresh summertime grills, this cookbook offers 350 great recipes to choose from and I feel certain you will find just the right ones. You can always start with the cocktails.'

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Slideshow of the band Get the Led Out appearing at Wolf Trap's Filene Center on June 7, 2012.

(Photos by Jacquie Kubin)

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guyjones • a month ago
A trick to make brownies (or other baked goods) healthier is by cutting out the butter and using coconut oil instead. Natural coconut oil is one of the healthiest fats. Brownies made with coconut oil instead of butter come out just as good, if not better. No one can tell the difference. Soy lecithin granules can also be used to substitute for egg.
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