

Cookbook doesn't live up to expectations

By Kathryn Reed

Some people read cookbooks like they are novels. That's what my friend Toni does. I approach them as books with recipes – not much more.



Now, it's not quite that simplistic. I often go to cookbooks to try something more, to challenge myself, to make something special, to use an ingredient I have leftover from something else but don't know what else to do with it, or because I'm tired of making all my regular dishes.

What intrigued me about getting a copy of "Clean Start" by Terry Walters is the approach to eating well. The 100 recipes are vegan and gluten-free.

With a cousin and good friend who have celiac disease, which means they can't eat gluten, I thought I might find something in here for them.

While there are plenty of recipes, I didn't find many I would want to make. Part of it was the names – Cabbage Sauté with Tart Cherries and Crisp Apples, Pinto Beans with Stewed Tomatoes and Spinach, and Ginger Shiitake Soup with Cabbage and Edamame Beans. Maybe it's just me, but none of those sounds good.

I will say the photography makes the food look good.

However, reading the recipes flustered me at times either because I didn't know what it was (arrowroot powder or mirin) or figured I wouldn't be able to find it in South Lake Tahoe

(brown rice syrup).

I love the premise of the book. Walters writes, "For one person, eating clean may mean eliminating preservatives and artificial ingredients. For the next, it may mean giving up processed foods altogether. And for yet another, it may mean going directly to the farm. What matters most is not where you are in this continuum, but that you identify opportunities to move closer to the source and are empowered to act on them."

I embrace what Walters has to say. I'll just be choosing other recipes.

The one recipe I tried was for baked apples. It's OK, but way too sweet for me. I felt like I wasted the special pippins a friend had picked up for me in Apple Hill.

Decide for yourself.

Baked Apples with Raisins and Toasted Almonds

4 baking apples of choice

$\frac{1}{2}$ C sliced almonds

$\frac{1}{4}$ C raisins

$\frac{1}{2}$ C maple syrup

$\frac{1}{2}$ C apple cider or juice

2 tsp grated fresh ginger

2 tsp lemon juice

1 T lemon zest

Freshly grated nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Halve apples and scoop out cores. Halve again and fit apples

close together (flesh side up) in an 8 x 8-inch baking dish in one layer. Sprinkle almonds and raisins evenly over apples.

In small saucepan over medium heat, combine maple syrup, apple cider, ginger and lemon juice, and heat briefly. Remove from heat and pour evenly over apples. Sprinkle lemon zest and nutmeg evenly over the top, cover tightly with foil and bake 45 minutes or until apples are soft. Remove from oven and remove foil. Preheat broiler. Broil apples 1 minute to brown tops. Remove from oven, cool slightly and serve apples with extra cooking liquid as desired.

Serves 6.

Variations: Substitute pecans and dried cranberries for almonds and raisins. You can even substitute pears for apples.