

# Books for Embracing a Vegetarian Diet

Posted by Karma Bennett January 15, 2015 at 11:27 am



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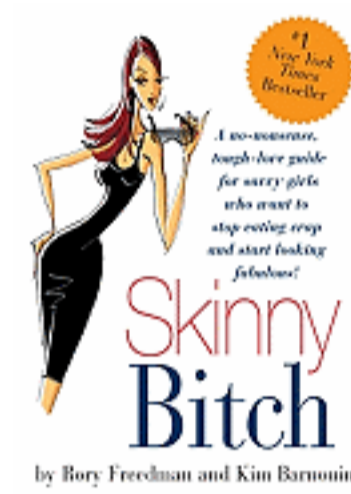
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## The All-Time Best Vegetarian Books

January has most of us trying to shape up and attain new fitness goals. Numerous large-scale studies suggest that vegetarians live longer, and they have lower rates of heart disease, diabetes and cancer than their meat-eating neighbors. If you're looking to slim up, note that vegetarians consistently have lower rates of obesity, even when other lifestyle factors are taken into account. If you aim to get fit, these vegetarian books may be just what you need to embark on a healthier year.

I am going to be real with you in presenting both the pluses and minuses to these books, so you may choose not only the best vegetarian book, but the best one for you.

### *Skinny Bitch*



*Skinny Bitch* and its empire of spin-offs have all been huge bestsellers. You'd never know from the title or the marketing that this is a book promoting a vegan lifestyle...perhaps that is part of the reason for its success. However, *Skinny Bitch* is not for everyone: author Kim Barnouin unkindly cajoles her readers into embracing a healthier lifestyle. This style of writing is partly to put some humor on topics that in more gentle words might be serious, or depressing. On the other hand, if you don't mind a verbal kick-in-the-butt to nix your bad habits *Skinny Bitch* might be the perfect book to get you back on track.

For example, in chapter one of *Skinny Bitch*, Barnouin writes: "Coffee is for pussies.

Think about how widely accepted it has become that people *need* coffee to wake up. You should not *need* anything to wake up. If you can't wake up without it, it's because you are either addicted to caffeine, sleep deprived, or a generally unhealthy slob."

If you find this offensive, go on to the next book because that tone is pervasive. I am not so easy to offend, so I found that paragraph motivational—why do I feel like I need a chemical just to roll out of bed? That's crazy! And I begin to understand why *Skinny Bitch* was a huge hit.

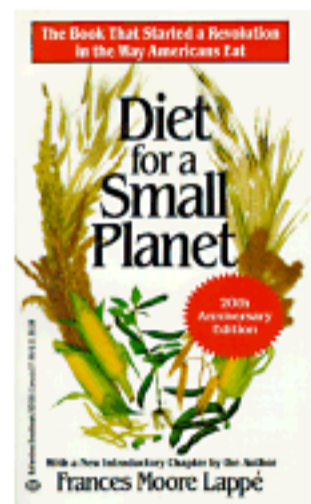
### *Diet for a New America*

John Robbins is a rebel: his father, Irvine Robbins, founded the ice cream empire we all love, Baskin-Robbins. John Robbins gave up his delicious legacy to become the poster boy for veganism. If the idea of giving up ice cream sounds too difficult to fathom, imagine the personal family hardship, and huge financial loss Robbins faced when he walked away from his family's company to publish *Diet for a New America*.



This book is a tome. If you want the most comprehensive and detailed book on the vegetarian lifestyle, in this book's page count you'll get your money's worth. This is the book for anyone who is eager to learn more about the vegetarian diet, and ready to learn all the dirty details, beyond the mere health benefits. You may cry a little, but you'll also put down that chicken cutlet for good.

### *Diet for a Small Planet*



The first and original book that launched a generation of vegetarians was Frances Moore Lappe's *Diet for a Small Planet*. When the book was written, there were many concerns about whether or not a vegetarian diet could get enough protein. If you know someone who may be interested in vegetarianism but shares this concern, Lappe covers this topic in great detail. However, this is both a plus and a minus for the book, in that some vegetarians claim she spends too much space on protein combining, which scientists are not so concerned with as they were in 1971. For this reason I recommend picking up the 20th-anniversary edition as she has updated the research since this classic book was released so long ago.

In any case, *Diet for a Small Planet* was written in a time where there was no vegetarian movement to speak of, so she will present a case for the health and ecological benefits of vegetarianism that would even appeal to the swinging disco fiends of the "me generation." Thus it is the polar opposite of *Skinny Bitch*, a serious book with a gentle tone.

### *Mad Cowboy*

*Mad Cowboy* may not be as famous as the other books in this list, but it has many merits that make it my favorite gift to those considering a vegetarian diet. If you don't remember the name Howard Lyman, you may remember his appearance on Oprah. Years ago, Oprah had to go to court because in the state of Texas it is possible to commit libel against meat products. Let me say that again: Howard Lyman and Oprah Winfrey were sued for saying unpleasant things about meat... keep that in mind next time you order a poorly made sandwich in Dallas! In order to defeat the lawsuit, Lyman had to prove that every single thing he said on that show was true. He (and Oprah) won the case.




But that is not what makes *Mad Cowboy* a great book. It's who Lyman is: a cattle farmer, raised by a long line of cattle farmers. When Lyman tells you that farmers are still using chemicals banned by the EPA, you believe it because he's in a position to know. Often it is the case that meat-eaters feel defensive around vegetarians, but there is no room for that here, as Lyman has not only eaten his lion's share of lamb (so to speak), he's also responsible for raising it and killing it.

*Mad Cowboy* traces Lyman's own journey from cattle rancher to vegan activist to author of the original Organic Foods Act. At 224 pages, it concisely covers everything you need to know about the vegetarian diet. His humor tends towards understatement, which is the perfect tone for a topic so wrought with hand-waving and exclamations. I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

## Have You Ever Considered a Vegetarian Diet?

Many are surprised to learn that the majority of people who are vegetarian do so primarily for health reasons. That being said, if year after year you face the same resolution to get fit, why not give it a try? The harsh facts in these books may be just the right push to motivate compassionate readers to put down that drumstick. And if you fail, at least you can take heart in having spared a turkey or two.



**Karma Bennett**  
Loves nachos, Oakland, and books.

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