



## Vegetarian Cooking with Compassionate Cooks

Review by [Geoffrey Kleinman](#) | written November 23, 2004

It's unfortunate there just aren't many good regional classes out there for people who are interested in exploring a Vegetarian Diet. Most people turn to books like *How It All Vegan* or *Becoming Vegan* as their key source for tips, recipes, information and guidance. As good as these books are, they can never quite replicate the experience of taking a cooking class. To address that very problem the *Vegetarian Cooking with Compassionate Cooks DVD* brings the cooking class experience home with a great resource for people looking to explore and experimenting with a meat free diet.

*Vegetarian Cooking with Compassionate Cooks* runs just over an hour and it includes instruction for six dishes: Eggless Egg Salad, Mouthwatering Chocolate Chip Cookies, Hearty Three Bean Chili, Tofu and Vegetable Stir-Fry with Peanut Sauce, Harvest-Stuffed Acorn Squash and Magic Chocolate Cake. All the recipes on the DVD are pretty quick and easy to prepare, so the odds of success when trying these out for the first time is pretty high.

The DVD is hosted by Colleen Patrick-Goudreau and Alka Chandna, both of which seem comfortable in front of the camera. The two hosts banter back and forth varying from what seems like scripted material to more personal and anecdotal stuff. One of the nice things about this DVD is just how 'real' it feels. Unlike a show on the TV Food Network where everything is mega polished, *Vegetarian Cooking* feels a lot more like a cooking class, where the two hosts interrupt each other, have fun with cooking and generally let the genuine experience of cooking shine through.

The overall tone of *Vegetarian Cooking with Compassionate Cooks* is an introductory one, so in addition to preparing each dish, the hosts talk a lot about the use and preparation of various vegetarian ingredients. In the first section while they prepare the Eggless Egg Salad, they go into some good depth about the various varieties of Tofu, how to select the best one for what you are doing and how to handle and prepare it. This is really helpful information, especially for people less familiar with the ingredients, or for those just beginning to venture into a vegetarian diet. During many of the segments, factoids and information pop-up on to the screen. This is especially helpful during the baking segments like Mouthwatering Chocolate Chip Cookies, where you can read the exact measurements for the ingredients used.

Through out the six recipe segments, such vegetarian fundamentals as Tofu, Tempeh, Trans-Fat Free Margarine, Flax Seeds, Nuts, and other Soy products are thoroughly covered. A special segment on the DVD 'Vegetarian Products in Your Supermarket' gives a complete tour of many of the key vegetarian items you'll find at the store and gives very specific recommendations on brands and types of products.

In addition to talking about specific ingredients Colleen Patrick-Goudreau and Alka Chandna both spend a good amount of time talking about the health effects of a vegetarian diet as well as spend time debunking many common misconceptions about being vegetarian. You might expect a DVD entitled 'Compassionate Cooks' to be much more heavy handed when talking about meat and vegetarianism, but the two hosts strike a really great balance between advocacy and education, and so you never feel like you're being 'preached to'. The

approach is more to inspire with good vegetarian cooking rather than demonize eating meat.

One of the great segments on the DVD is the preparation of the Harvest-Stuffed Acorn Squash. The segment ends with a look at a vegetarian Thanksgiving plate, a good illustration for people who might think that Tofurky is the only veggie Thanksgiving option.

### **Final Thoughts**

Vegetarian Cooking with Compassionate Cooks successfully captures a fun and informative cooking class onto a real solid DVD. It's a great introduction to vegetarian cooking and is jam packed with good information. The best part of this DVD though is the food itself. Colleen Patrick-Goudreau and Alka Chandna have succeeded here by picking tasty dishes which are both quick and easy to prepare. Ultimately the best cooking programs come down to what ends up on your plate, and here, what ends up is simply divine. **Highly Recommended.**

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