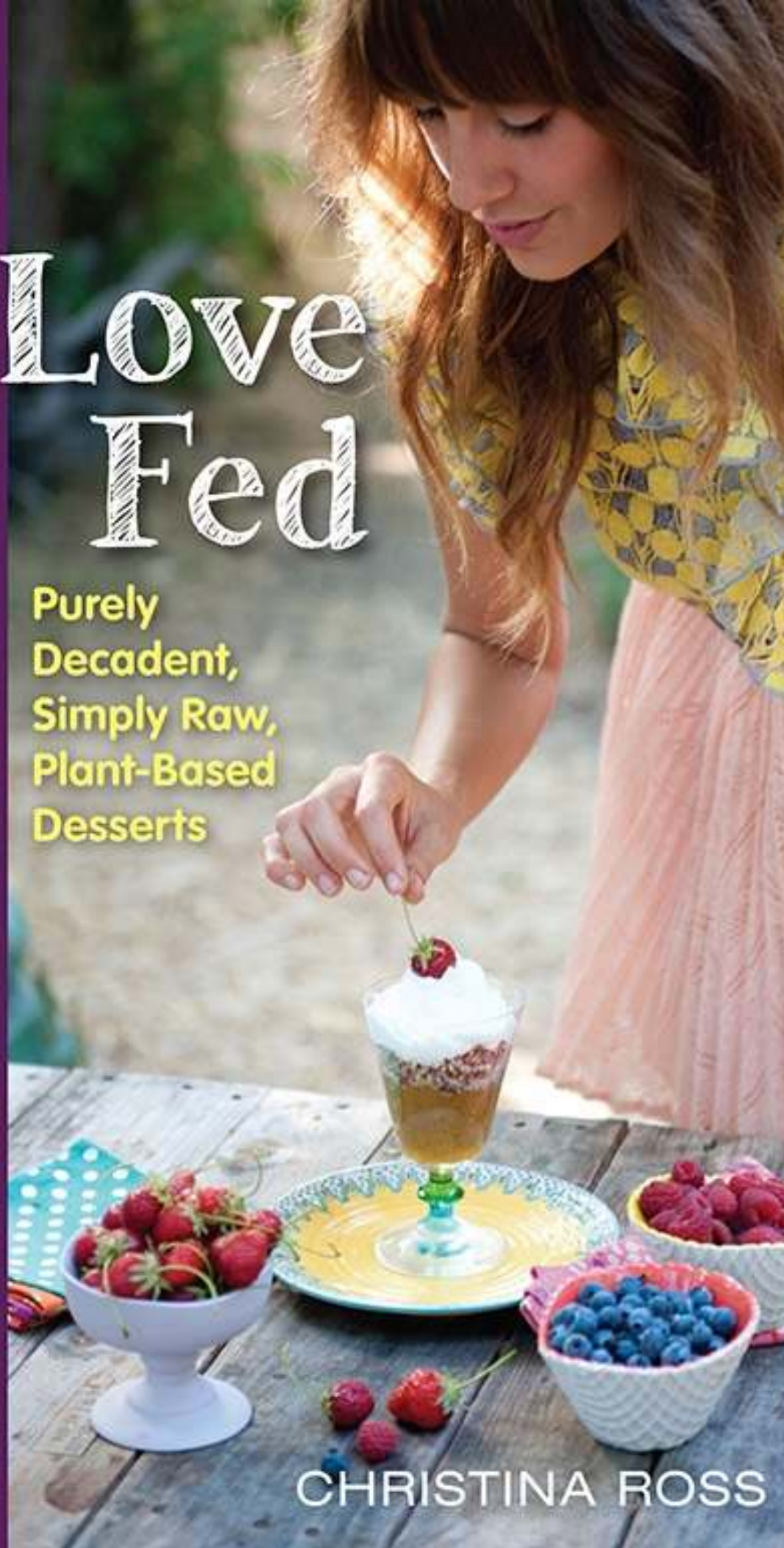




Love Fed

Purely
Decadent,
Simply Raw,
Plant-Based
Desserts



CHRISTINA ROSS

Praise for *Love Fed*

“*Love Fed* is a must-have for anyone who has a sweet tooth and dessert addiction (like myself) looking to swap out traditional sugar-laden and gluten-filled desserts for vegan guilt-free superfood goodness. Christina’s recipes will help you do good for your body.”

—ANI PHYO, health and wellness expert,
bestselling author, and champion athlete

“I’ve always believed that raw vegan desserts are the perfect gateway to a healthier lifestyle. Luckily for all of us, *Love Fed* provides the perfect caramel-covered bridge to the promised land! Christina’s decadent desserts are simple enough for novice chefs to prepare at home and full of nutritious superfoods that hardcore health foodies will swoon over. From tantalizing truffles to insane ice creams and perfect pies (oh my), I’m still wiping my drool off the pages. I can’t think of a more beautiful and accessible book to help you take the guilt out of your everyday dessert pleasures!”

—JASON WROBEL, celebrity vegan chef
and host of *How to Live to 100* on
Cooking Channel

“Forget ‘sinful’ treats without nutritional benefits. Nourish yourself with love. Christina’s creations are as healthful as they are divine.”

—MATTHEW KENNEY, chef, author,
and entrepreneur

“As an unapologetic omnivore in the tradition of Anthony Bourdain and Andrew Zimmern, I must admit, *Love Fed* did inspire drool production in my mouth, especially the Banana-Toffee Pie recipe. I suppose that makes this book drool-worthy!”

—EDDIE LIN, author of *Extreme Cuisine*
and blogger for Deep End Dining



LOVE FED

**Purely Decadent,
Simply Raw, Plant-Based
Desserts**

CHRISTINA ROSS



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DALLAS, TEXAS

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About the Author

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INTRODUCTION

One of the best ways I know to give somebody joy is to dish up a serving of dessert. Desserts make people happy! They're offerings of love. Each time I dispatch a batch of cupcakes, assemble a pie, churn a quart of ice cream, I feel like I'm preparing to send off little portions of bliss.

Now it's your turn to spread the love.

In this book, you'll find everything you need to create sweets that make people (including yourself) swoon. The fact that every *Love Fed* dessert—from the cakes and shakes to the puddings and parfaits—is made with nutritious ingredients that actually contribute to your well-being is just, well, the icing on the cake. Not that anyone will notice—biting into one of these treats is more likely to evoke thoughts of “heavenly” rather than “healthy.” Still, it's nice to know that along with pure pleasure, with these desserts you're also serving up a big dollop of good-for-you-ness free of animal products (honey being the sometime exception), gluten, and unhealthy processed ingredients.

Although all the desserts in *Love Fed* are raw as well as beegan or vegan, they're not health substitutes for the “real thing.” They *are* the real thing—indulgences that not only stand on their own but also delight people who happily eat traditional dairy- and egg-based sweets just as much as they thrill the people who happily don't. I think it may help, though, if I explain what I mean by raw, vegan, and beegan, just so you know what lies ahead. My definition of raw is food that has not been heated above 108°F. Because of the absence of heat, this food retains enzymes, hormones, vitamins, and minerals that might otherwise be lost. To me, raw food is simply more “alive.” When I use the term “vegan,” I'm referring to food that contains no animal products whatsoever: no eggs, no dairy, and of course, no meat. Beegans make an exception for honey. It's an animal product but can be produced in a very kind and sustainable way. Truthfully, I hate to put any kind of label on my own food, but if you must, call these *Love Fed* desserts equal-opportunity sweets—deliciousness for all!

Mostly, I just like to think of *Love Fed* desserts as modern. While inspired by both French pastries and conventional classics, they are thoroughly in step with the way more people are eating today. Many of us are not only interested in where our food comes from and how it affects our bodies, but we're also open to—and curious about—new ways of preparing what we eat. As much as desserts are comfort foods—and the *Love Fed* treats are no exception—it's exciting to get out of your cooking comfort zone and explore other ingredients and techniques. If this will be your first time making desserts without baking, I think you'll find that it's easy, fun, and very forgiving (preparing raw desserts doesn't demand the same nerve-wracking precision that baking does). Novices needn't feel intimidated, and seasoned cooks may even learn a new trick or two.

None of the *Love Fed* recipes requires any special equipment, and needless to say you don't even have to turn on your oven—no ingredient gets heated past 108°F in order to keep their nutritional profile as high as possible. These raw desserts also make use of an almost completely different portfolio of ingredients than conventional sweets do. If you've never used unrefined sweeteners like coconut sugar and agave, healthy fats like cacao and almond butters, dairy substitutes like coconut milk (yes, you can make ice cream with it!), and white flour swaps like almond flour, you're in for a treat. In this book, even the familiar—fruit, nuts, seeds, and dates—get used in new ways. F

example, in a recipe contributed by Jason Mraz, one of my inspirations and favorite musicians, avocado is used as a base for pudding! Some ingredients may sound exotic, but they're actually easily found at local stores or on the internet (just in case some items elude you, I'll clue you in on substitutions, too).

It used to be that delectable desserts were incompatible with the idea of eating for vitality, energy, and good health. Not anymore. *Love Fed* is here to ensure that you really *can* have your cake and eat it, too!



Desserts Made the *Love Fed* Way

The name *Love Fed* refers to both the love I put into my food and the love the earth gives to us by producing so many wonderful ingredients (I write a blog with the same name). It also relates to my philosophy about eating. Right now there's a tendency to fall into food camps: raw, vegan, beegan, vegetarian, pescatarian . . . the list goes on. My feeling is that many of us are trying to do the best we can to eat conscientiously and that judging one another on our food choices separates, rather than unites, us. *Love Fed* desserts are all raw, but they are about options, too. For instance, some of the recipes use honey, but if you're vegan, you might want to replace it with another sweetener. Other ingredients, too, can be swapped out depending on your own particular preferences. These recipes are here to guide you, not mandate what you should be eating.

Consider this book, too, a primer on lesser-known ingredients and how to use them. I also want to share tips on how you can learn to prepare food in a more creative and intuitive way. If you're more comfortable sticking to a recipe, don't worry; every recipe in the book has step-by-step details. But if you're bold and like the idea of coming up with your own variations, I'll give you ideas on how to let your creative juices flow. Having the confidence to deviate from a recipe can help with practicality—know how to make substitutions and you'll never have to worry about running out of, say, coconut milk, again—as well as free you to create your own masterpieces. If your kitchen strikes you as a dull or intimidating place—maybe just a means to an edible end—then I urge you to open your heart and mind to this luscious, raw, plant-based adventure.

Any way you slice it, *Love Fed* desserts are made with integrity, passion, and awareness. They're designed to nourish the body and satisfy the sweet tooth, and most of all to spread joy.



The Accidental Baker

In 2008, I traded in my business suits for a food processor and a life of culinary adventures. I mean, *literally* traded three elegantly tailored suits for a Hamilton Beach processor probably worth about \$30. I like to think I got the better end of the deal.

At the time, I was working as a corporate recruiter, a job I fell into after a disappointing stint at a fashion school. Since the school substituted showing reruns of *Project Runway* for actual teaching, I felt I had no choice but to quit. Nervous as I was to leave school, that jump was nothing compared to the leap of faith I took when I left my solid, well-paying job to explore brave new gastronomic worlds. And yet it couldn't have worked out better: it wasn't long before I was selling my line of raw and vegan desserts to Whole Foods and local cafes around town. That was something no one who knew me—*including myself*—would have ever expected.

I consider myself somewhat of an accidental baker, as someone who went from doing no cooking at all to running a food business. It was like getting in a car and going from zero to sixty in the blink of an eye. Fast! I do, though, have a little bit of cooking DNA in my genes. When I was born, both my mother and my father were working as bakers. They'd met while training to be hairstylists several years after my mother had moved to the United States from Italy. But after they married, they both took jobs as bakers.

One of the great joys of my youth was watching my father as he made calzones, pizzas, cookies, and cakes, splashing flour everywhere as he cooked, yet also handling the dough super gently (especially for such a big guy). I loved helping my parents in the kitchen, but I never had a knack for the technical tasks involved. Timing, meticulous measurements, and all the other precise requirements of baking never resonated with me. So, instead, I simply stuck to decorating, filling, embellishing, and devouring their baked creations. Especially that last one—I was a very grateful recipient of my parents' baking expertise.

It wasn't just baking that I shied away from. Until I began playing around with dessert recipes, I never cooked anything for anyone. I didn't even cook for myself, relying instead on friends, family, and roommates to feed me, doing the dishes in return. When I first met Alex, my partner in both life and business, I could barely make toast without burning it!

The series of events that eventually led me to write *Love Fed* began with a period of detoxing. Early in our relationship, Alex and I decided to embark on a journey into what you might call alternative eating. We'd thought about doing the Master Cleanse—an all-liquid diet—but, frankly, we didn't think two active people such as ourselves could hack it. Instead, we decided to try a raw food cleanse. Just for two weeks. That was the deal.

We began by eating only foods prepared at 108°F or below and also crossed dairy, gluten, grain, meat, seafood, and sugar off our list of acceptable foods. What we were mostly left with was salads, guacamole, salsas, and smoothies. At least in the beginning. Once we got the hang of preparing meals in a raw way we started making things like vegetable lasagna and zucchini spaghetti and things got decidedly more interesting. For breakfast we would make what we called squirrel plates that consisted of banana, nut butters, hemp or flaxseeds, and raw chocolate and nuts. This unconventional b

completely delicious meal would fuel us up until lunchtime when we'd usually have a salad. Middle we'd often have a snack of guacamole or hummus scooped up with endive leaves. For dinner, we'd go a bit fancier, creating pesto or salsa to toss with raw veggies like portobello mushrooms or zucchini.

The two weeks we'd committed to flew by, and then, before we knew it, two weeks turned into two months, then four, and we just kept on going. Both of us were amazed at how energetic and clear-headed we felt; we were waking up at five in the morning, full of ideas and eager to get on with our day. We shed pounds and gained insight. It was a revelation.

There was only one problem. After a while, our cravings for something sweet and indulgent became hard to ignore. Fruit just wasn't cutting it; we needed *real* dessert. In the old days, before committing myself to eating a raw, plant-based diet, I might have just walked to the corner store and grabbed an ice-cream bar. That wasn't an option anymore, so one day, more as an act of desperation than anything else, I took out an old blender and began contemplating what I could possibly make that would allow me to stay committed to my new way of life, yet also satisfy the overwhelming urge for sweetness I couldn't seem to shake. I opened the cupboard. Following my intuition (and the limitations of what was there), I threw some cacao powder, vanilla, bananas, coconut oil, cashews, and a little agave syrup into the blender and gave it a whirl. Then, with some trepidation, I took a taste.

Yum! It tasted so delightful that I shocked myself. Was it deprivation talking? Maybe it just tasted so good because I had abstained from sweets for so long. Alex had gone out surfing and I couldn't wait for him to come back and give me his opinion. In the meantime, I put the concoction into the refrigerator and it developed a pudding-like consistency that made it even better. Alex not only liked it, but he also encouraged me to keep experimenting.

In the months that followed I spent hours trying out new recipes, failing and succeeding in equal measure, and trying to learn from my mistakes as I went along. Still at my corporate recruiting job at the time, I'd bring my creations into the office and share them with my colleagues, asking for their feedback in return. Taking my inspiration from conventional classics, I began making raw, plant-based versions of cinnamon rolls, cheesecakes, and ice cream, only to find that they were far superior in taste, texture, and, of course, nutrition than the desserts that had inspired them. One of my earlier creations was tiramisu, a nod to my Italian heritage, and it, too, seemed refreshingly superior and delicious. Suddenly, I was eating sweets more than ever before; at times, I even ate them for breakfast (it was research!).

Because Alex is from France and grew up in Paris, he had exacting standards for pastries, which allowed him to serve as a wonderful critic and food tester extraordinaire. And because he loves me and wanted me to succeed (and because he's French!), he was always honest. Eventually, I got to a point where what I was doing felt like more than just fun—it was a calling. Now I just had to get up the courage to turn it into something other than a delicious hobby.

My first step was to test it out on the greater public. On busy art walk and event days, Alex and I would stand out on Abbot Kinney Boulevard, the main drag in our Venice Beach neighborhood, and hand out samples of desserts. People liked them—loved them even—but would they pay for them? The positive response convinced me that they would. I just had to figure out how to turn it into a business.

I quickly learned that creating a start-up food company (even a teeny, tiny one) is no simple task. Once I made the decision to embark on this wild ride, I asked everyone I knew (and many people didn't) for advice. Nirvana was discovering that my neighbor was director of the Health Department Wholesale Division—that is, he was the guy with all the insider information on running a food business. Nirvana, though, quickly turned to dejection once my neighbor graciously came over one evening and gave me the lowdown on what it would take to get up and running. The fees! The health rules! The horror stories about people who don't follow the guidelines! By the time he left, I was

tears.

And yet, I persevered. Then, remarkably, things started coming together. I needed to create a home test kitchen, a prohibitively expensive project, but one day, while walking down the street, Alex found stainless steel countertops that someone had put out with the trash. On another day I stumbled upon stainless steel storage racks and a rolling rack also abandoned on the street. It was as if fate was willing me into a life of making delectable desserts. One thing that I believe deeply, and which guided me to this day, is that you have everything you need at a given moment. It was like that first day of dessert making when I opened up my cupboard and found all the ingredients I needed to create something delicious—and change the course of my life. Now here I was, quitting my job, trading my suits for a food processor, and signing the lease on space in a commercial kitchen. Before I knew it, Alex and I had maxed out our credit cards and christened our new dessert business PatisseRaw, a play on the French word *patisserie*. What magic!

Still, I had to get back to reality. How were we going to get these great-tasting, good-for-you treats into stores? Together we began approaching small natural foods markets to see if they'd carry PatisseRaw, until Alex encouraged me to put aside my jitters and talk to store managers on my own. "You've got it; you can do it alone," he said, and so I did. I'll never forget the day I approached the Holy Grail—Whole Foods—with just my samples and ambition along for company. "Do they sell?" I asked the buying manager. "Yes," I said, even though I'd never sold them in a store before. Fortunately, my little fib (or wishful thinking, as I prefer to call it) panned out. Once Whole Foods started stocking my chocolate, mango, and raspberry cake bites, as well as my carrot cupcakes, they flew off the shelves. Now we really *were* in business.

Even as making desserts has become my livelihood, one thing hasn't changed: I still use the same creative process to develop new desserts as I did back when it was just fooling around in my home kitchen. I set an intention to create something loving and pure that will bring happiness to others, but if ideas aren't flowing, I walk out of the kitchen. Coming up with new ideas for food is the same as any artistic endeavor, in that putting pressure on yourself to create something when all the signs are telling you it's not the right time only results in work you're ultimately not happy with. But when the timing is right? You can count on something delicious!

That's a bit of wisdom I hope you'll take with you whenever you decide to take one of the *Low Fat* recipes and turn it into a dessert that's uniquely your own—which I heartily encourage you to do. Maybe you'll even be inspired to write your own recipes from scratch. I hope you will. I can say from experience that it's a doubly satisfying experience. How many endeavors enable you to feel the thrill of creation *and* get something scrumptious to eat in the bargain?

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