

oh you *skinny* *Bitch*

It's irreverent, blunt and borders on bullying. Yet some people are finding nutritional nirvana in the latest diet to be embraced by the fashion set.

Rory Freedman has no bathroom scales in her house, doesn't know what she weighs and appears in no hurry to pinpoint the number. For any woman conscious about health, this seems unusual. But Freedman is a former Ford model agent and best-selling diet-book author. Now we're talking radical.

Then again, when your book is titled *Skinny Bitch* (co-written with Kim Barnouin, a former model with a masters in holistic nutrition) conventional diet practices probably aren't your forte. "We know the title is provocative but we wanted to get people's attention so they could change their lives."

Skinny Bitch (Running Press) was released a year ago to no fanfare, but has become the sleeper diet book hit of 2007. There are now 100,000 copies in print, with its devotees ranging from young women to grandmothers and men. Sales have also probably been helped by the fact that wafer-thin Posh Spice was photographed in LA recently, flicking through a copy. A follow up cookbook, *Skinny Bitch in the Kitch*, will be published in December (www.amazon.com).

This eating plan isn't for anyone looking for a quick, easy fix. It's 100 per cent vegan and holistic, meaning no eggs, dairy, meat, fish, refined sugar, simple carbs or caffeine. Some would call it punishing.

"People think we're militant lunatics, but we're preaching health," Freedman, 32, says. "Then again if you had told me 13 years ago I would be eating like this, I would have called you crazy. But I'm an animal lover and stopped eating meat after learning about factory farming, and that got me interested in learning about nutrition."

The tone of *Skinny Bitch* pulls no punches. "You are a total moron if you think the Atkins diet will make you thin," they write. In *Skinny Bitch* parlance, sugar is the "devil", diet drinks are "liquid satan", simple carbs like white flour are as nutritionally beneficial as "toilet paper". But with more than 200 sources referenced, they're confident there is science behind their swagger. Meat and fish



A TYPICAL DAY...

Breakfast: Fresh pressed apple juice, wholegrain bagel with peanut butter and jam (organic and sugar free) and sliced banana.

Lunch: Mediterranean platter with hummus, eggplant, grape leaves, falafel, peppers, olives, tomatoes.

Dinner: Vegetable burrito with pinto beans, brown rice, guacamole, soy cheese, lettuce, tomato, salsa.

must be removed from your diet, they insist, due to the hormones, antibiotics and (ocean) contaminants present. "People eat way too much protein, which puts pressure on your kidneys, leaches calcium, and can damage tissues." Eggs? "You are ingesting all the hormones as if you were eating the chicken." They link dairy to acne, anxiety, irritable bowel syndrome and mucus. "And forget organic, it's still milk." Caffeine is targeted for raising stress hormone levels, while they reserve special loathing for refined sugar products. Yet they refuse to let you seek solace from artificial sweeteners, claiming they have been associated with everything from migraines to reproductive disorders. Beer and wine with sulfites is verboten, but organic red wine makes the cut.

"Fighting the low-carb craze has been tough," admits Freedman, who does not advocate counting calories. "Particularly the resistance to fruit."

On the *Skinny Bitch* plan, fruit (preferably organic) is praised as "the most perfect food in existence", providing enzymes, carbohydrates, fibre, vitamins, minerals, fatty and amino acids, and should be eaten daily. Nutrient-packed vegetables are your best friend, while complex carbs such as brown rice, potatoes and whole wheat pasta are encouraged. "They give you a steady source of energy, fibre and vitamins."

Protein is to be eaten in nuts, tofu and legumes, while chickpeas, broccoli and soy provide calcium. Essential fatty acids normally derived from fish now come from flaxseeds, nuts and soybeans. Instead of sugar, try stevia. And they do allow junk food,

albeit healthy junk. "We love organic corn chips, ice-cream and non-dairy chocolate."

Both Freedman and Barnouin are naturally slim, but admit even they lost some weight when they became vegans. "Yet what we really noticed was more vitality and less lethargy."

But is veganism a dietary change one should commit to? Bonnie Taub-Dix, dietician and spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association, says it can be healthy, but you must educate yourself. "Veganism takes work. You need to be able to balance out food properly: getting enough protein can be difficult. A vegan diet does not guarantee weight loss. You can eat nuts all day and gain weight."

"I think including more complex carbs, fruits and vegetables is wonderful," she adds, but questions eliminating dairy. "Dairy is a rich source of potassium and calcium. As for eggs, they're a complete protein. I think there is room for eggs in our diets."

Sydney-based nutritionist Cherie Lyden also advises followers of a vegan diet to supplement with B12, iron and zinc. "A drawback of veganism is possible vitamin B12 deficiency, which is usually found in animal foods, fortified soy products and fortified cereals. The exclusion of animal products could also mean possible low iron and zinc stores. Iron and zinc are more readily absorbed from these sources, compared to plant proteins."

Freedman admits that the first 30 days will be the hardest. "But those moments pass. We say don't make excuses. You need to get healthy if you want to get skinny."

By Sharon Krum