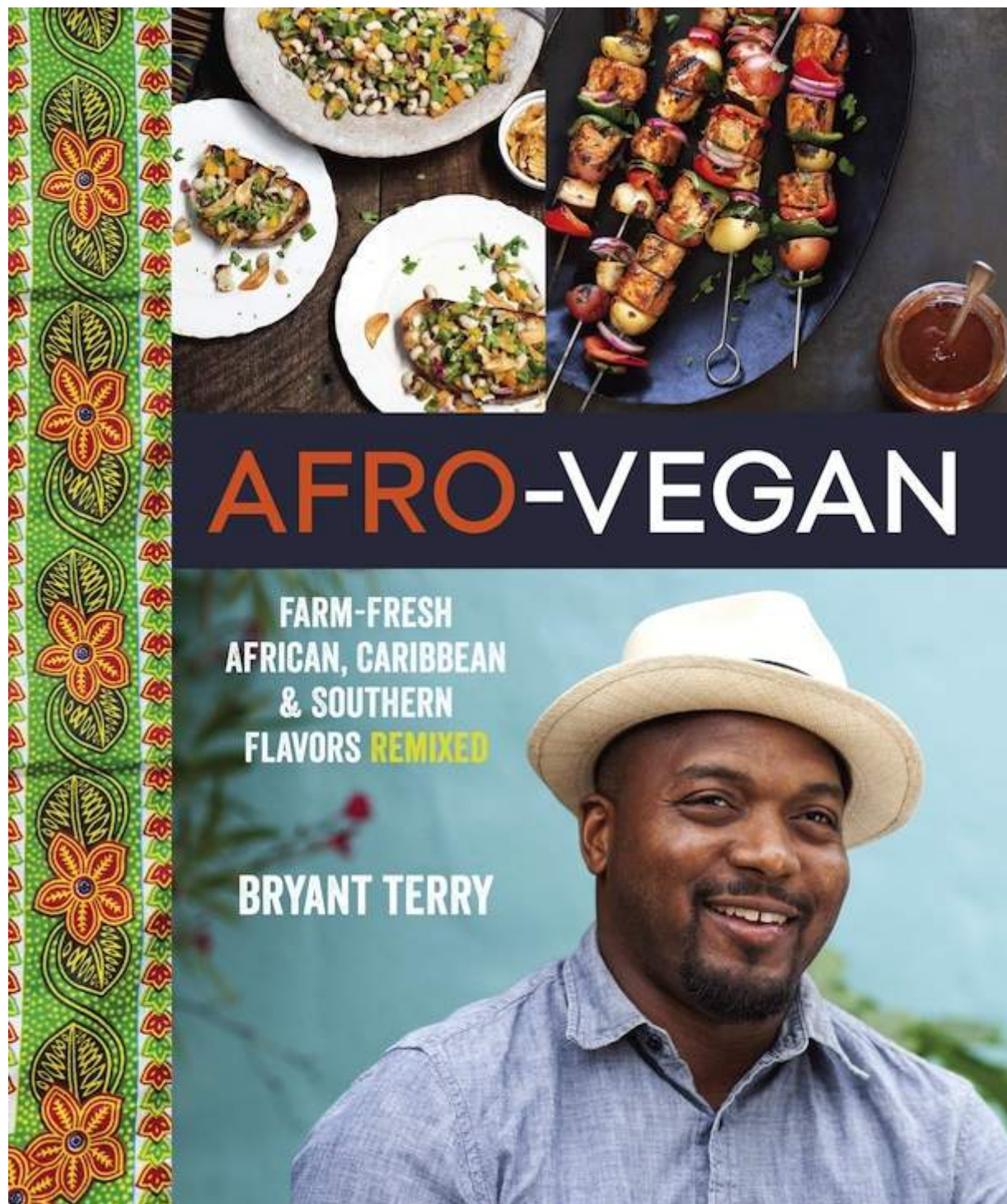


Cook the Book: 'Afro-Vegan' by Bryant Terry

KATE WILLIAMS



Thank goodness for coconut oil—and almond milk. Remember back a few years ago, before whichever group of publicists and nutritionists deemed the bright-white oil a health food, when the words "vegan cooking" could be equated with unrestrained use of soy milk and Smart Balance? (No? Perhaps you didn't spend enough time in Portland circa 2005, when all of the vegan kids were drenching their soy muffins with soy spread.) In any case, the current

popularity of two vastly superior plant-based products has seriously upped the game of anyone looking to cook and bake animal-free.

These two ingredients, plus more vegetables than most people eat in a lifetime, are the backbone of eco-food crusader [Bryant Terry](#)'s wonderful new cookbook, *[Afro-Vegan](#)*. In it, Terry lays out a colorful, fun food manifesto that's inspired by the African diaspora—minus any meat. Terry explains his unique style of cooking as the following: "Imagine if you removed the animal products from African, Caribbean, Southern, and other Afro-influenced cuisines, then meticulously cut, pasted, and remixed the food to produce recipes with farm-fresh ingredients as their heart and soul: that is Afro-Vegan." Even as a proud omnivore, this "remixed" cuisine sounds pretty great. It tastes pretty great too; all week long, I never once found myself missing my oft-used dairy and pork products.

Terry's recipes are flavor- and culture-driven first, and vegan only as a matter of course. There are no apologies or tricks to cover up the flavor of the substitutions. Through cooking from his book, I came to appreciate the subtle sweetness of freshly squeezed almond milk and the luxurious texture of pureed silken tofu. His lavish use of homemade spice blends enlivens long-simmered greens and fresh baked cornbread alike. While you'll see plenty of Terry's Southern influence in his cooking (watermelon, okra, and grits aplenty), you're just as likely to learn a bit about East African or perhaps Jamaican cooking as you are his grandmother's specialties from her home in Tennessee. Boiled peanuts snuggle up next to plantains like they were long lost friends.

Terry insists that we look towards our ancestral foodways to learn how to eat for greater health and purpose. To be sure, he doesn't advocate for a paleolithic diet; instead, he argues that we should be eating the foods that are naturally supported by our environment and history. Think heirloom tomatoes and greens grown in our own backyard. This is a kind of vegan cooking I can fully embrace.

This week, we'll travel throughout Terry's Afro-Vegan diaspora. We'll simmer a delightful hominy, tomato, and spinach soup and toss together a bright, springy pea and cabbage slaw. Later we'll fry a few batches of creole-spiced plantain chips and bake a skillet of nutty cornbread. We'll end the week with a dish that is emblematic of Terry's synthetic cuisine: savory grits topped with Ethiopian stewed collard greens.

Win 'Afro-Vegan'

Thanks to our friends at Ten Speed Press, we have five (5) copies of *[Afro-Vegan](#)* ">Afro-Vegan to give away this week. All you need to do for a chance to win a copy is to tell us **what food best celebrates your heritage** in the comments section below.