



Lifetime of eating disorders births helpful *sweet* dessert cookbook

Words: Richard Bruinsma Photos: Contributed

The struggles of a lifetime of eating disorders has birthed a new cookbook of delicious, healthy desserts that is helping a young former Sunshine Coast woman deal with the horrors of poor self-image.

Tabitha Schutz first battled with bad eating as a young teen, to try to take control of feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth, but this caused many years of weight fluctuations and mental stress.

Her love of natural foods and healthy desserts, however, motivated Tabitha to create a cookbook, My Journey Back to the Sweet Life, to help her along the path toward self-love and complete healing.

'I believe this book gives me hope, and it makes me feel everything I've been through is for a purpose,' Tabitha said of her place in life today.

'I'm still judgemental on myself, but to the point where now I can actually sit back and breathe and I can still say, "Wow, you're awesome, look how far you've come," which makes me feel good. I've come to more acceptance.

'I just don't feel like I've put my body through hell for so many years for nothing; so basically, I've been through something that is seen as being harsh on myself, but I've actually birthed something beautiful from my journey as well.'

My Journey Back to the Sweet Life includes 42 recipes for unique, sweet desserts - among them, Apple-Nutty Pie Fingers, Choc Chunk Beetroot Ice Cream, Golden Cashew Cookies, Banoffee Banana Bread Cake and Strawberry Dream Mousse Cake - all made of wholefood and healthy ingredients, gluten free, dairy free and without processed

1. Coconut Cashew Cookies
2. Raw Choc Mint Tart
3. Apple Nutty Pie Fingers

sugar. The recipe pages are interspersed with short stories about Tabitha's life, dealing with self-love and eating challenges.

Tabitha lived for years on the Sunshine Coast, operating as a hairdresser out of Forest Glen and Palmwoods. She moved back to her home in South Australia late last year.

'I've come from a background of many, many years of disordered eating, so I guess that's where the title comes in, I'm coming back to the sweet life,' Tabitha explained.

'But also, they are all desserts because that's the way I find I can express myself; I can get quite creative in the kitchen, and it allows me to just drop into my heart and get out of my head.'

Tabitha is personally and painfully aware of the common links between emotions and diet - as a 13-year-old schoolgirl battling feelings of poor self-worth, she started restrictive eating, which caused massive weight loss. In a matter of years, however, she gained back a considerable, unhealthy amount of weight as her family and friends, out of concern for her health, cooked and baked for her.

Today, at 38, she is just 34kg, but her weight is stable, and she is aware of her health needs.

'It's related to distortion of body image issues. I see myself in a big body compared to being skinny; I've been into under-eating restrictive diets, but I've also been a binge eater where I've over-eaten and made myself feel really sick too. It's a very unbalanced lifestyle with food,' Tabitha said.

'I don't want to feel these symptoms that I get from being underweight, anymore. It's not fun, it's tiring and to keep up with the demand of my business, it makes it quite challenging.'

My Journey Back to the Sweet Life is a great achievement for Tabitha and has been a benefit to her own life, and she hopes others dealing with emotional eating can receive inspiration from her book for their own situations.

'Anyone who reads those stories is probably going to say, "Hey, this is a girl who is trying to find herself, she's lost," and that is what I want people to see, that I'm not recovered from this, and I'm still on my journey,' Tabitha said.

'The vision of the book has always been to share healthy dessert recipes with people who truly want to put their health first, in hope that I can show them all how delicious, wholefood ingredients can recreate some of the world's best desserts.

'I hope to gain a feeling of peace in knowing that my recipes, and the stories I share within, touch the hearts of people and create change for them to move forward with more health and happiness.'

Follow Tabitha's cooking and life adventures on Instagram @tabitha_eat_share_love

To purchase My Journey Back to the Sweet Life, visit: www.tabithaeatsharelove.com

