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Emma Sawko

Wild Recipes

Plant-Based

Organic

Gluten-Free

Delicious

Flammarion

"It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living."

-Sir David Attenborough





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#introduction living in harmony with yourself

by Emma Sawko

All around me, the city is throbbing, bursting with energy—sirens wailing, horns honking, funk music filling the air. An ordinary day in New York.

Leaning against a food truck in Brooklyn with my eyes closed, I bask in the sunshine as I bite into a delicious pizza. It's one of the best you can find here, and I savor the light, crisp crust and the well-rounded, tangy flavor of fresh tomatoes. I'm a native New Yorker, but I'm also a citizen of the world. Born to Parisian parents, I grew up in the Swiss Alps. I'm truly a child of my generation, one of those who've lived in several cities in the world, including Dubai, a place that sprang up out of the sand dunes. But first and foremost, I'm French—French in my passion for all that is fine, beautiful, and delicious.

That afternoon, I could well have been in the Middle East or in Paris. But it was there, in the Big Apple, that I began giving serious thought to this book. What would it contain? What would my message be? What recipes would I include? Who would I be writing for, and why? How would I tell my story in just a few pages? Above all, how would I recount the adventure of Wild & the Moon? I really wanted to get things moving along, to play a key role in the changes I felt were coming.

What if we could change the world with every meal we ate?

I finish off my pizza, thinking of what to include in my book. The recipes would be tasty, light, and vitamin-rich; food that comforts, is full of flavor and easy to make, food that respects our bodies and our planet. Recipes to make for yourself and for others, recipes to regale the guests and children sitting contentedly around your table. In short, the recipes that made Comptoir 102, my first concept store in Dubai, a success, and those that have become cult favorites at the Wild & the Moon juice bars. The book would necessarily include reflections on the state of our world, on the doors we can push open, the lines we can shift, the paths we should take, and the happiness that comes with imagining a different future.

I walk on, and passing another food truck—this one selling the very epitome of junk food—I smile as I think how the love of real food, sourced and cooked with care, is so closely intermingled within me with the food of my memories. What could better epitomize New York than its street food? What memories, and what inspiration. I want good food to be as accessible and as affordable as fast food. In other words, let veggies save the world!

Green is good and green foods rock!

A CHILD OF NATURE

A nomad I was born, a nomad I'll always be.

For as far back as I can remember, I've lived on the move. I was born on the banks of the Hudson, in New York, but three years later my family moved to Geneva, where I grew up beside Lake Leman, with mountains, bright skies, lakes, and meadows all around me. My parents chose to send me to an international school, where I was immersed in the rich environment of a multitude of religions, languages, colors, and cultures from around the world.

As a child, I dreamed of pointe shoes, of gliding and whirling through fouettés. One, two, three, entrechat! I took more and more ballet classes, admired Rudolf Nureyev, Jorge Donn in Ravel's *Boléro*, and Sergei Polunin, who are still my heroes today. My holy grail was to become a professional classical ballet dancer, and I even reached professional level.

In winter, we spent every weekend in the mountains, and even now I still feel they are my sanctuary. Mountain tops intoxicate me and I get drunk on oxygen, powder snow, and speed. If sport is the main pillar of my daily well-being, food follows close behind, and here I've been doubly lucky. My mother cooked divinely, and each meal was a time of shared joy. Always eager to learn new things, she became interested in nutrition very early on, understanding instinctively the link between food and good health.

My mother's core ethos was "health through diet," as advocated by Dr. Catherine Kousmine. She also drew inspiration from German naturopaths and soon turned to raw, organic food. Although we weren't vegetarian, we were already eating very little meat, and only meat from high-welfare animals. As for fruit and vegetables, they were on our plates at every meal, as were pulses and grains: there were lentils, chickpeas, flaxseed, buckwheat in abundance—so much,

in fact, that my friends called our home the "seed house." My sister and I were raised on Budwig Cream, a combination of sprouted almonds, bananas, apples, virgin flaxseed oil, fresh fruit—a concoction that those same friends dubbed "gloubi-boulga," the favorite food of dinosaur Casimir, a character in a popular children's television program at that time.

In summer, we would leave Switzerland for the Basque region in France, where my parents' roots lay. Far from the beaches, from Biarritz and its surfers, we spent our time inland, near the little village of Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, surrounded by an expanse of green hills, where my great-uncle Batita had his farm. I can still smell the tomatoes we picked in the vegetable garden and taste the green beans and the eggplant fritters my great-aunt would make. Their wonderful flavors have stayed with me and have never been surpassed. There were also animals of all sorts: cows, sheep, chickens, pigs, and I'd live in symbiosis with them over the summer months, even insisting on sleeping in the hay with the newborns. Every year, when the month of August came to its inevitable end, I'd be heartbroken to leave, and today I realize just how fortunate I was to have had the opportunity to live so close to nature. Not everyone is lucky enough to become aware at such a young age of how important all things living are, of the inseparable link between the Earth and its inhabitants. Feeling the energy from beneath its surface, grasping the importance of living things, feeling the strength and force of the elements—all of these gifts have undoubtedly played a significant role in what I do today. The distance from "pitchfork to fork" isn't so great after all. And these enlightening experiences were as fundamental and irreversible as they were pleasant, joyful, and stimulating.

It goes without saying that during my teenage years I was a rebel, rejecting everything, cramming burgers, and abandoning ballet (still my greatest regret) and competitive skiing. It was a classic rebellion, a time when I wouldn't listen to anyone. However, what did prevail was the importance of cooking for me and a profound belief in respecting both food and my body. Today, this belief underlies all my habits: vegetables galore, whole cereals, nuts, healthy oils, light cooking, plenty of sport, and boundless respect for Mother Nature. My upbringing has caught up with me and branded me indelibly.

MY SINGLE GIRL YEARS

Who am I? Where am I going?

After a year studying at a hospitality management school in Switzerland, with little idea of what I was going to do, I landed a job in an advertising agency in Paris, with its big-city lights, bustling energy, and new people to meet. Soon, I was living life in the fast lane, working hard by day and going out every night with a bunch of friends, who soon became a second family to me. Every evening after work, we'd head out and party. I'd come home at dawn, exhausted but vibrant with life. After a reviving shower, I'd change and rush off to the office. I was hungry: hungry for life, for parties, for action, and for new experiences.

If you fly too close to the sun, you'll get scorched. The shock of my life came during this crazy time when I lost someone I thought of as my brother, my trusted confidant, and my soul mate, in a car accident. It took me years to recover from the grief. I realized I was not immortal, I had to slow down and take care of myself. To get back on track, I clung to my trusty life-jackets: sport and healthy food, the two solid foundations that had helped me get through my past excesses. My upbringing and the healthy lifestyle that had been inculcated in me prevented me from going off the rails. They acted as safeguards and showed me the way forward.

In my late twenties, I met the man who was to become my husband. He was working in banking and I was still in advertising. Into sports as much as I was, he was a man with a zest for life who loved friends and partying. We had a lot in common, including our values, and we soon had a baby daughter, Thaïs, whose arrival totally changed our lives. Thanks to her, at age thirty-two I was transformed, and it was the most beautiful of any of my experiences. I fell in love with motherhood. My transcendent love for Thais was overpowering and straight away it brought me a new awareness. What world had she been born into? What kind of planet would I leave her? For the first time, I was overcome with a feeling of responsibility and I realized that I aspired to a world of greater justice. These thoughts were barely nascent, so little was I aware of them, but I began asking myself how our planet's resources were managed, wondering about ecology, the sharing of opportunities, and people's actions and reactions to these topics. My mind was spinning. Shouldn't I change (everything)? Live differently? Take action? No matter, I did not slow down because, as Wonder Woman, I had to excel on all fronts. I was running to and fro between my baby, my job, my friends and social life. I was also a frequent flyer to New York where I oversaw large budgets. I was traveling at high speed—too high. At thirty-four, I was pregnant



again and then my world almost fell apart. My second life-changing blow. At six and a half months, I gave birth prematurely to Joseph. There was so much anxiety, sleepless nights, doubts, and tears, but then a true gift of life as Joseph was in good health. Sixteen years later, Joseph is a strapping teenager: sporty, competitive, charming, and funny, and he bears no traces of his traumatic birth.

But life had taught me a lesson and I decided to take it seriously. We can't spend our lives running: to catch a subway, a train, a plane, or to arrive in time for a meeting. It's simply an illusion to think we can control everything, unrealistic to think our bodies and minds are machines that our will can control. We have to press "pause" and learn to prioritize. In fact, I didn't have the choice and it was almost reluctantly that I was forced to slow down. In the words of Anna Gavalda, "life is stronger than you are," that's for sure.

After Joseph was born, I realized I needed to take time for us. I decided to work less so I could devote myself more to my children and my family. With hindsight, I understand just how right that decision was and how lucky I was to be able to make it. I had to call a halt to the whirlwind, take time to breathe; take time to get to know my children, to appreciate them and share their joys, both small and big. Time is a luxury and it's good to be able to take time to think, to reflect on one's needs and values, and answer questions that are just taking shape. When Vladimir, our third child, was born in 2006, I finally learned to slow down, to take care of my well-being, and at last find a genuine balance between my personal and professional fulfillment, as well as stability with family and friends. I'd made my choices and they were the right ones.

BITING INTO THE BIG APPLE

Early in 2006, my husband's company transferred him to New York. For a Franco-American, crossing the Atlantic meant the joy of returning to the city of my birth, the pulsating metropolis I love so much. It was with serenity that I agreed to stop working to follow my husband and settle back there, wondering what the city held in store for us as a family.

We didn't just like New York, we all fell in love with it. I quickly adapted to the rhythm of the city, starting my days with an hour of sport, then criss-crossing the city, visiting art galleries and museums; I was happy to get around much more than I had in Paris. In this whirlwind of energy, I began two activities that are now part of my routine: yoga and Thai boxing. Once out of the gym, I would go to juice bars where I discovered the pleasures of intensely green

juices, packed with herbs and chlorophyll. At the time, freshly cut wheatgrass, that cleanses you and leaves you ready to conquer the world, was a new trend. It dawned on me just how powerful an effect a purely plant-based diet, where juices and raw foods were predominant, could have on my physical well-being, giving me greater awareness, more edge. On the East Coast and the West Coast, Americans were adopting the new wave of raw food, and I was initiated into veganisim, whose highly developed concepts I found inspiring. Juice bars were everywhere, I read widely, and the general environment was conducive to a finer understanding of the essential role that food plays in our health. In this prevailing atmosphere, I began cooking differently, gradually eliminating animal protein from my diet. I reflected more and more on our planet, our modes of consumption, my personal shopping habits, my impact on nature and the living habitat, as now I had the time and energy to devote to these issues, with no distractions. Little by little, ideas took root and grew, as did convictions and a feeling of personal responsibility. A desire for more far-reaching action began to take hold.

We had been in New York for three years and our children were thriving. I felt in sync with the city and sufficiently at ease to want to go back to work. A small voice inside me was whispering, "Create what you are missing." But what did I miss? A beautiful concept store for children—one that had all the brands I could only buy on my trips back to Paris. For a whole year, I worked on my project, finetuning it, getting the details right, listing the brands, making contacts, doing my market research, analyzing the competition, and imagining how I would decorate the interiors. When I found an attractive boutique, ideally located on Lexington and Third Avenue, everything seemed to be falling into place. Overjoyed, I was about to sign the lease when my husband announced we were leaving for Dubai. A meteorite falling at my feet could not have come as more of a shock. My project collapsed. What a kick in the teeth! I went from denial to anger to sadness. I was furious with fate and with life itself—I would have to leave New York and start over from scratch, far from the city I loved so much, where I had found a sense of balance and where I was about to launch my own business.



THE CHALLENGE OF DUBAL

February 2010. The first family visit to Dubai.

I hated everything about it—passionately, instinctively, viscerally. I hated the places, the atmosphere, the food, the sheer bling of it all. I wanted to run away, far from the endless miles of highways, the skyscrapers jutting out of the sand, and the chilly air-conditioned shopping malls with their rows of luxury boutiques. I was overwhelmed by a feeling of utter artificiality.

My days were spent visiting soulless mansions in gated communities. I searched desperately for a juice bar, a healthful restaurant, a boutique with some soul, or an art gallery. Dubai may appear to be the American dream on the shores of the Persian Gulf, but for me it was nothing short of a total nightmare. Nothing could be more superficial. I boarded the plane back to New York with my children, certain I could never be happy there. Spring passed and the kids finished their school year. My husband was flying back and forth between Dubai and New York and time dragged on. I had to resign myself to another move and reinvent my life. Again.

Children and baggage in tow, I landed in Dubai, determined one way or another to adapt the place to my needs and what I wanted, rather than adapt to it. The heat was torrid, the air humid, the wind full of sand. Fortunately, our trips to the sea and into the desert brought me some calm and the sunsets were breathtaking, but once the children were in school, I started wondering: How would I manage? What would I do? How would I survive?

"Create what you are missing." That same inner voice was whispering inside me again. This time the response was immediate: for as long as I can remember, I've always loved fashion and design. I'd create a haven selling all the things I love—somewhere that offered an alternative to high-end luxury and low-end cheap, the only options currently available locally. It would be my very own style, with, as ever, a touch of rock 'n' roll.

It would be a variation of what I'd planned for New York: a French-style concept store, for adults this time, selling all those cool, fashionable, stylish basics by brands not yet available in Dubai, with a café alongside. No question of conforming to local conventions and no mall location for me! I found a villa in one of the old quarters of the city, near the sea. And, of course, I wanted to be able to eat the kind of food I like: healthy, organic, mainly plant-based, and flavorful. All this in the capital of fast-food! Fundamentally, I'll never change.

The comments I had to put up with! "You'll never succeed." "A sugar-free menu with no soft drinks won't work here." "In the middle of the desert, nothing grows without chemical fertilizers." For months on end, I worked and reworked my ideas, countering prejudices, learning the rules of the country, finding allies, and tweaking my business plan. I signed contracts with my favorite brands. Gradually, my project was becoming a reality. The premises I found would be the perfect showcase for my "Comptoir 102," and I persuaded all those around me to put their trust in me.

But life brings nothing but surprises, and they're not always happy ones. My husband was suddenly called back to his company headquarters in Paris. My head was spinning, I was living the nightmare all over again. How should I react? Give up once again and return to Paris, with no plan or work? Or stay in this city, a city I still did not like but where I had a project? Prioritize our family or believe in my dreams? I was sleepless for weeks, tossing and turning through the night. My thoughts raced endlessly as I focused on this dilemma: follow my husband or stay alone with my three children? Stay. Leave. Try. Hang in there. Or not. It was torture. And then one morning, I woke up and my decision was made. I announced to my husband that this time, I would not be following him. I'd be staying in Dubai to pursue my dream: I'd be opening Comptoir 102.

The words of American author Marianne Williamson brought me inspiration:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be?... Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.... And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Marianne Williamson, A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles

I was going to think of myself.

My dreams were important, too, and were worth fighting for. I felt very deeply that this time I had to put them before those of others, even though my own husband and children were directly concerned. I would dare to affirm myself fully, make a plea for equality of opportunity, true egalitarianism. I would not put up with condemnation and I would not condemn myself. I was going against customary behavior, against norms. I would not follow my husband for the moment, I'd seek fulfillment there in Dubai, and I was sure of my decision, braving the misgivings of others and the disapproval of many. It was *my* moment and the moment for Comptoir 102. I knew, as did everyone close to me, that nothing would stop me.

THE REVELATION OF COMPTOIR 102

And it worked!

This concept store stocked fashion brands that I love, designers I hold dear, jewelry both quirky and elegant, chic and bohemian objects, and all sorts of items guaranteed to delight. There was also a shaded terrace where customers could sip a homemade almond mylk smoothie, lunch on a seaweed-quinoa salad with cashew sauce, or enjoy a black sesame vegan ice cream-it was a little dining room to share with those I loved. My idea was that, with eight to ten tables, at least a few friends and my family might come to eat there, but I couldn't have been more wrong. The restaurant was packed, bringing a constant stream of customers to the boutique. Expats who hankered after healthy food and locals wanting to try something new were soon all addicted to the menu that was chalked on a large blackboard by hand and changed daily. Our menus were created around the produce delivered to us each day by an organic farm that had succeeded in growing fruit and vegetables in the sand, without the aid of chemicals but through their own tenacity and ingenuity. Plants at the farm were watered with a drip irrigation system, their chickens laid the most delicious eggs, and everything was tasty. Soon Comptoir 102 was full and I had to expand the restaurant. We received accolades and won several prizes. including best healthful restaurant in the region. It seemed unbelievable and my heart overflowed with joy.

Not far from there, I found a lovely house for my family. I remodeled it, redecorated it, and built an XXL kitchen. After school, the kids would arrive at Comptoir 102 on their scooters to keep me company. In the early morning, while it was still cool, I'd go jogging along the beach or take a yoga or boxing class. When I arrived there, the idea of pursuing a "chic yet green" project had seemed totally impossible, but I knew all along that it would be my life project. The life I was

leading suited me because I had created it for myself. I had made the right choice and I was doing well again. I was breathing.

I quickly became aware of the growing interest in plant-based diets and that such healthy food could be tempting for people in other parts of the world. I was also thinking about my own situation as, even if my kids adored Dubai, I was missing Europe and was fully aware that we were living in a city where we didn't really belong. I could see the children growing up in an environment that was totally different from our culture. My husband was becoming tired of his trips between Paris and Dubai and I was missing him, just as I was missing Paris, my friends, and my family being together.

Gradually, I was coming to realize that we had to return to Europe. Not by giving up Comptoir 102, as that was unthinkable-I was far too attached to it—but I had to dream of something different. Once more, I had to create the environment I needed for my own fulfillment. I wanted to go back to Paris with a plan in mind and, furthermore, this time my husband wanted to launch a new enterprise with me. The moment had come to envisage something new that we could do together. We would promote the importance of a plant-based diet as being beneficial to our planet, and we could play a part, even if only a modest one, in helping the environment. In late 2015, I made my decision and left Dubai with my kids, ready for the next leap. I wanted to think big, to fully incorporate an ecological project into my upcoming plans. It would be clean, virtuous, constructive, and positive, I made a commitment to myself that I would not contribute to the widening of any gaps—the gap between what is benefical and detrimental to the planet, or to our health-but, on the contrary, try to bridge them. I am convinced that there is no better business than a business that does good. Wild & the Moon would be our contribution.

THE WILD & THE MOON ADVENTURE

Paris, where my heart lies.

Very quickly, the French capital felt like home again. I got together with my friends, my family, my group of girlfriends from way back, and was once more in the cultural swing of things. We returned to our apartment in the center of Paris, not far from the Tuileries Gardens, where I resumed my boxing training. The classic Hausmann-style façades, the zinc rooftops glistening in the rain, the café terraces, the vibrant culture—every detail was intoxicating, and I suddenly realized how much I'd missed it all.

We were kept busy, trying out ideas, few of which made the cut. We discussed the name; I wanted one that would be inviting and inspiring, offering the promise of new possibilities, of space, of surprises and dreams. We racked our brains. It would be a place where we could serve juices, of course, but as a Frenchwoman, it was also important to me to serve food that was healthy and, above all, good—no boring, tasteless organic dishes for me! After trying out every conceivable name, we settled on "Wild & the Moon." Not everyone was convinced by it, but I was and it carried the day.

Meanwhile, I was working on the menu. I devoured French and English cookbooks for ideas, endlessly trawled blogs, and drew on recipes from Comptoir 102; I tested countless versions of plant-based lattes, squeezed gallons of juices and prepared gallons of almond mylk, baked batch after batch of cookies, and experimented with soups, salads, and cashew nut cheeses. Our kitchen resembled a madman's laboratory until Sati, a talented Californian veggie chef, perfected my recipes. We had a new "seed house," just like the one where I grew up.

We were also on the lookout for the perfect premises, well located and in tune with our market and our target customers. I was carried along, carried away, consumed by the project, but I was happy and felt completely alive, despite doubts as to whether the French were ready for charcoal juices and ginger-pepper-turmeric shots.

Life went on. It was beautiful, intense. Our project was coming to life.

The first Wild & the Moon restaurant opened in February 2016, at 55 Rue Charlot in the Marais district of Paris, in the third arrondissement. Behind a modest façade with windows filled with hanging plants was a welcoming space, featuring industrial furniture, stripped walls, and all natural rather than synthetic materials (wood, glass, concrete). There was a large white bar where customers waited for their orders for smoothies, lattes, and other drinks to be made. At the entrance were fridges containing freshly prepared salads and bottles of juice and plant-based mylks, and ingredients were clearly displayed on our menus. The public flocked in, often sharing tables.

It was all beyond my wildest dreams. We proudly proclaimed our philosophy on posters around the restaurant: organic, plant-based, additive-free, gluten-free, cold pressed, unpasteurized, no plastic, and the healthiest, least processed, seasonal, and local ingredients. With the exception of "Marco Polo" products (those that don't grow in France, like avocados and cacao), we try to source



everything from small farms and, naturally, we use the best we can find. "Good for you, good for the planet, and delicious" is our motto.

One of my main concerns has been to get rid of plastic containers as I can't claim to be green if I add to the vast amount of plastic in the oceans. I'm kept up at night by the thought of the microplastics that are produced when debris breaks down, contaminating the seas and fish in them. When we launched Wild & the Moon, I was particularly concerned about this issue, which has taken the most time, perseverance, and greatest effort to overcome, but today we have managed to replace all plastic containers with a biodegradable plant-based material (cornstarch or sugar cane). It comes at a cost, but we're proud of it.

Naturally we must avoid food waste as well, so at Wild & the Moon we recycle everything by planning what we make ahead. For example, the almond pulp left over from making almond mylk is added to cracker and cookie dough. Our display cases are not overflowing with baked goods, as we prefer to run out rather than throw away any that are left over.

There is an expression coined by M.K. Fisher that I'm very fond of: "First we eat. Then we do everything else!" It's because everything else takes second place that I attach so much importance to the quality of what I eat and, naturally, what I serve to Wild & the Moon customers. I also believe in the benefits of superfoods. Spirulina, matcha, goji berries, maca, guarana, turmeric, and many others that help boost your energy, well-being, and health feature throughout the recipes in this book.

ACHIEVING BALANCE IN MY LIFE

Today, I divide my time between France and the Middle East, between our premises in Paris and in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. On a daily basis, my life is crazy, but I enjoy being "devoured" by Wild & the Moon, which is growing very fast indeed.

Despite all this, I ensure I maintain my balance by following a few simple rules:

- Every day I set aside one hour for a sports activity, generally in the morning, to rid myself of stress and feel in top form for the rest of the day.
- I make sure I spend time with my family and friends, often over a good meal.
 Eating well is one of my greatest pleasures, one I could not do without.
- No matter how busy I am, I make time for proper meals. In the morning, I prepare a banana smoothie with homemade almond mylk and some superfoods. I switch between a bowl of porridge with cacao and a chia pudding