

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

Sister act

Siblings create quirky, easy-to-use cookbook

By: Wendy Burke

28/10/2009 1:00 AM | [Comments: 0](#)



[Enlarge Image](#)

Bite Me grabbed me.

A cookbook with a cheeky title and a very quirky visual sensibility, combined with clear, to the point cooking instructions, *Bite Me* (Pinky Swear Press Inc. \$29.95) brings a lot of fun into the kitchen. Author-siblings Julie Albert and Lisa Gnat describe it as a cookbook that collides with a coffee table book and explained how sisterhood was powerful enough to get it into print.

Born and raised in Toronto, the sisters grew up in a house where mom loved to cook and dad loved to eat.

"We grew up in a Jewish household, and the mantra there is: Eat, eat!" says Albert. "So we love to eat, and we love to feed others."

The close-knit girls took different career paths, with Gnat getting her pastry chef papers and Albert heading for journalism at Ryerson. But later, as two moms busy raising three kids apiece and both unable to find a "go-to" cookbook for everyday meals, sisterly instinct told them that two heads were better than one.

"Our whole life, our dad has called us the twisted sisters, because we're so close and we can 'talk' to each other with our eyes," says Albert. "We like to tell people that we're twins two years apart."

"There's no rivalry, we admire what the other person does so much that it was the perfect division of duties. Lisa really took care of all the recipe development in the book -- she's such a perfectionist -- one grain of salt and she's up all night worrying about it. And me on the other hand, I really think about the font, look of the book, the sentence structure of the book and the photos."

They had a clear sense of what they wanted to do and set about doing it. But they hit a snag when they talked to a big publisher.

"The turning point for us was when we met with a large publishing house," says Albert. "They were only interested in celebrities, and they told us to go get a profile or a TV show."

"We sulked in our bathrobes for the entire weekend," says Gnat. "And then on Monday we said to each other, 'OK, let's just do this then!' We had come so far."

And because they self-published, they could break the rules their way. "We didn't have anyone telling us we couldn't put a little toy skier on a pile of risotto and call it a picture," says Gnat.

"We're not about shellacked chickens, or being culinary perfectionists," says Albert, "For me it was walking in the aisles of the dollar store, and seeing what tickles my fancy -- the idea of the shrimp hanging from the clothesline -- I was walking in the dollar store and I said, 'Oh! Clothes pegs! Those are very attractive! We're gonna hang shrimp with those!'"

The result is very "pop culture," with a retro feel that says, "I'll have a pink martini with that."

"Our hope is to provide a feast for the senses -- to bring the outside world into the kitchen and say, 'You know what? It doesn't all have to be so strict and uptight,'" says Albert.

And while there is fun to be had in the kitchen, the recipes are serious business.

"Because Lisa has written the recipes in such a step-by-step manner, and all the ingredients are readily available, I would say just know that the recipes are dependable. They work, and your confidence in the kitchen will grow," says Albert.

Along with attention to the instruction, Gnat adds there is one other very important thing. "I'm all about fresh ingredients," she says. "That really enhances everything you make. Love what you do and take that little bit of time."

The "twisted sisters" will be in Winnipeg for a book signing (with sampler tray in tow) on Tuesday, Nov. 3, at noon at the Indigo bookstore in Kenaston Common on Kenaston Blvd. Bite Me is the first cookbook listed as a "Heather's Pick" at the store. Visit them online at www.bitemecookbook.com/.
