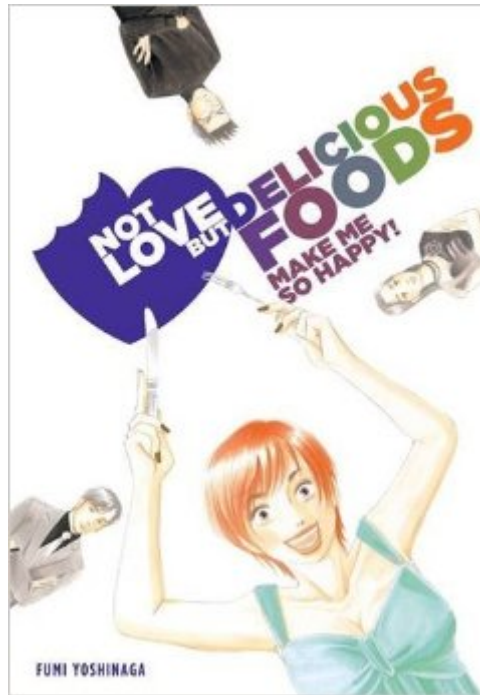


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Not Love But Delicious Foods



Synopsis

There is a Japanese saying that goes, "Hana yori dango," or "dumplings over flowers." And no one is more of an advocate of this adage than mangaka Y-naga, a woman whose life revolves around her intense work and equally intense sleep schedule. The only thing that can rouse her out of this infernal cycle of deadlines and being dead to the world? Food. As Y-naga and her friends visit restaurants around Tokyo to satisfy their appetites, their individual approaches to food add an extra dimension to their witty and comical interactions. Friendships are explored and lifestyle choices revealed, all over exquisite culinary creations that prove that variety on an empty and open-minded stomach is, indeed, the spice of life. Acclaimed mangaka and Eisner Award nominee Fumi Yoshinaga (Antique Bakery, Ooku) brings a quirky cast of characters and a delectable assortment of actual Tokyo restaurants to life in this homage to two of the greatest things life has to offer: friendship and food!

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Customer Reviews

To say that this book is presented in the traditional Manga format is about all that I can say was a positive about it. If you are looking for any kind of a story or recipe ideas, forget it. You won't find anything like that in here. This is simply a review of a few Tokyo restaurants with LENGTHY pages (pages?) trying to describe, in writing, the flavors of the dishes purchased by the author. It also includes directions, rough pricing, and hours of operation of each business at the end of each chapter. I was hoping for a story with food thrown in here and there, but this was simply a restaurant

guide by a mangaka. I was quite disappointed.

Fumi Yoshinaga is best known for *Antique Bakery* although I believe she is gaining more fans from her alternate history manga series, *The Ooku*. I became a fan of hers via the sublimely humorous, *All My Darling Daughters*. With those works in her stable, I didn't know what to expect of "Not Love But Delicious Foods" except that I'd seen reviews that ranged between "Love it!" to "Its Okay." Most criticism has been that the chapters seem similar in that Y-Naga (the main heroine, if you will) accompanies a friend (or two; maybe more) to a place to eat and they then proceed to describe the food and reactions to it. The criticism is not without merit and because I'd seen that criticism, I deliberately took breaks between the chapters so I could savor each chapter on its own. The formula is fairly simple: Y-Naga or a friend opens the chapter. There is a brief set up either to intro the character or describe Y-Naga's latest embarrassing situation. The tone is light and humorous. There is a given reason to go to a restaurant, be it for a meeting or a *goukon*, etc. Each chapter features a different restaurant and food. Sushi, Korean, Western style dining, shabu-shabu, etc. Y-Naga and her friend(s) will sit and have a little conversation, a few jokes but mostly, it is about the delicious foods. "Not Love But Delicious Foods" is more a collection of vignettes about an experience of food. There are a few threads that tie the collection together (mostly it is the relationship between Y-Naga and her assistant S-Hara) but each chapter is really a one-act play in a restaurant. Y-Naga loves her food and hence the title completely fits her. As a heroine, she is funny, goofy, and oddly modern. Her friends are as quirky as any found on a sitcom. And I enjoyed each act and Y-Naga with her friends thoroughly. Also, a bonus is that Yoshinaga provides information about the restaurant featured at the end of each chapter so it becomes a bit of a foodie travelogue. I was glad that I kept the criticism of 'sameness' in mind so I did read the manga slower than I normally would. As such, I recommend this manga highly but with the advice to read a chapter then take a break, then go back and read another. It will be a much more enjoyable experience.

This was one of those manga that makes you drool! It's not a food manga, per se, because there's no food creation, just food-eating. (but who says that's not awesome?) It showcases all sorts of little restaurants in the Tokyo area, so it's a bit like a restaurant review manga in a way; for those who are fans of her "Antique Bakery" series, the evocative descriptions of the food will probably not be a surprise. For those whom this is an introduction to Yoshinaga Fumi, this is a great manga for that.

Not Love But Delicious Foods Make Me So Happy follows the main character and her friends as

they visit their favorite Tokyo restaurants. The restaurants are all real and the focal point of each ten page chapter is essentially a review of the food. I say "essentially" because since these are all places the author obviously recommends the chapters are more incredibly detailed descriptions of various dishes than reviews. A wide variety of cuisines are represented in the fifteen chapters. I wanted to like this more than I did. The idea of food reviews via manga is intriguing, but I found the execution very dry. The art is decent and the food pretty well represented, but not to the point where it transcends the black and white palette and gives you a real idea of what the food looks like. That leaves the heavy lifting to written descriptions of the food. It's very precisely done but becomes tedious after a while, particularly since it's done as dialogue. There's no story propping these verbose, overly detailed descriptions up. The characters are just there as a framework and for some comedy beats (which are hit and miss). Despite a disclaimer in the front the characters are pretty obviously at least based off the author and her friends. I found the weird nickname style aliases really distracting. I think it all would have worked better with longer chapters allowing for more story to break up and compliment the gushing over dish after dish. Also, reading a long description of food doesn't capture my senses or really pull me in. If it was approached a little differently or if I lived around Tokyo and could actually go to these restaurants it would likely be a different story. Overall Not Love But Delicious Foods was a bit disappointing, but was still a worthwhile read for what it attempts and the care that obviously went into it.

I love comics and I love food. This is a comic about a comic artist who loves food. MATCH MADE. But it is also a great read for the exploration of friendships between different sorts of personalities. It's composed of short episodes where the main character "F-mi Y-naga" meets various acquaintances to go out to eat at restaurants she loves. Although a lot of the food is not stuff I could eat (not a meat-eater), the enthusiasm and love of the subject matter came through made this an amusing and spirit lifting read.

I love food, and I want to visit Japan and eat the awesome food I keep hearing about. This opportunity to experience Tokyo restaurants with a local foodie should appeal to anyone else who shares my interests. Fumi Yoshinaga has a very witty and self-deprecating storytelling style. That and her artistic range impressed me enough that I tried out some of her adult manga, which I also recommend (for the open-minded).

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